

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Why did I say sorry? Apology motives and transgressor perceptions of reconciliation

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Summary

Despite the importance of apology in reconciling interpersonal transgressions, little research has focused on the people engaging in the behavior. Why do transgressors apologize in the workplace, and do apology motives shape transgressor perceptions of reconciliation? We conducted three field studies using qualitative and quantitative methodologies to examine these questions. In Studies 1 and 2 (total $N = 781$), we identified four distinct apology motives—self-blame, relational value, personal expedience, and fear of sanctions—and developed self-report scales to measure the motives. In Study 3 ($N = 420$), we examined relations between apology motives and transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness and relationship reconciliation through the lens of motivated cognition. We found that apologizing due to self-blame, relational value, and personal expedience increases perceptions of victim forgiveness, whereas apologizing due to fear of sanctions decreases perceived forgiveness. Moreover, mediation analyses revealed that motives indirectly influence transgressor perceptions of relationship reconciliation through perceived forgiveness. Taken together, our research presents a novel multidimensional perspective on apology-giving in the workplace, suggesting that why transgressors apologize can affect their perceptions of reconciliation. Overall, our research highlights the need to incorporate transgressor cognitive and motivational processes into reconciliation research.

KEYWORDS

apology-giving, apology motives, interpersonal conflict, relationship reconciliation, transgressor perspective, workplace transgressions

1 | INTRODUCTION

Apology is often said to be an effective mechanism for resolving interpersonal offenses. This is because apology often elicits victim forgiveness (see Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010). When victims forgive, they undergo intrapsychic processes of “letting go” of negative thoughts and emotions, and increasing empathy toward the offender (McCullough et al., 1998). In turn, victim forgiveness elicits reconciliation, which is an interpersonal outcome that reflects the restoration of the relationship to a functional state (Bies, Barclay, Tripp, & Aquino, 2016; Palanski, 2012).

Despite the importance of apology in eliciting forgiveness and reconciliation, very little research has paid attention to this process from the perspective of the people who are offering the apology—namely, transgressors. Rather, research on the reconciliation process has focused almost exclusively on the victim perspective (e.g., Bies et al., 2016; Fehr et al., 2010; Fehr & Gelfand, 2010; Skarlicki, Folger, & Gee, 2004). In fact, reconciliation in the workplace has been defined explicitly as an “effort by the victim [emphasis added] to extend acts of goodwill toward the transgressor in the hope of restoring the relationship” (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006; p. 654).

Increasingly, management scholars have emphasized that reconciliation must be conceptualized as a property of the victim-transgressor relationship, requiring both victims and transgressors to believe that the relationship is restored to a functional state (Bies et al., 2016; Palanski, 2012). Under this view, "true" reconciliation occurs when both victims and transgressors perceive the relationship to be restored. Given the preponderance of research from the victim perspective, scholars have thus called for more research on the apology-forgiveness-reconciliation process from the transgressor perspective (Palanski, 2012).

Research in this vein is important because, from the perspective of transgressors, apology may not necessarily be perceived as efficacious in eliciting victim forgiveness, nor in facilitating reconciliation. In fact, apologizing can be a negative experience for transgressors. For example, research on close relationships has found that transgressors can experience negative outcomes after they apologize, such as feelings of regret and reduced sense of personal power (Exline, Deshea, & Holeman, 2007; Okimoto, Wenzel, & Hedrick, 2013). As such, the act of apologizing may not, in and of itself, promote transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness and reconciliation. To the extent that transgressors vary in their post-apology perceptions, research is needed to examine transgressor-specific antecedents to such perceptions in order to advance theory and research on the dyadic conceptualization of reconciliation.

Accordingly, in the present research, we set out to provide a systematic examination of the apology-forgiveness-reconciliation process in the workplace from the transgressor perspective. We adopt a motivated cognition approach (for a recent review, see Barclay, Bashshur, & Fortin, 2017) to suggest that transgressor perceptions of the reconciliation process will be shaped by the motives that underlie their decision to apologize. By motives, we refer to internal representation of desired states, where states are broadly construed as outcomes, events, or processes (Austin & Vancouver, 1996, p. 388; also see Cox, Bennett, Tripp, & Aquino, 2012). In short, we suggest that transgressor perceptions of reconciliation will depend on why they decided to apologize. We conducted three field studies using qualitative and quantitative methodologies first to identify apology motives in the workplace context (Study 1) and develop self-report scales to measure them (Study 2) and second to examine relations between apology motives and transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness and relationship reconciliation (Study 3). In the next sections of the paper, we discuss each study in turn.

In addition to directly answering calls for more research on the transgressor perspective in the apology-forgiveness-reconciliation process (see Bies et al., 2016; Palanski, 2012), our research makes at least three important contributions. First, we systematically examine why transgressors apologize for workplace interpersonal offenses. As detailed more in Study 1, scholars have made assumptions about motives for apologizing, but little empirical work exists. We uncover several distinct apology motives and develop self-report scales to assess the motives. Thus, our research presents the first multidimensional perspective on apology-giving in the workplace, which promotes novel avenues for future theory and research.

Second, our research highlights the utility of using a motive-based framework to understand the transgressor perspective on reconciliation. As with research demonstrating that victim forgiveness motives influence victim post-forgiveness experiences (Cox et al., 2012), we suggest that transgressor apology motives can affect transgressor post-apology outcomes. For example, depending on why they apologize, transgressors may be overly attentive to negativity in victim responses, leading them to perceive the victim as unforgiving, and in turn that the relationship is unreconciled. In this event, transgressors could actively avoid the victim, leading to further interpersonal conflict. Thus, our research has implications for better understanding when and why apology may fail to promote relationship reconciliation. In addition, more broadly, our approach suggests that future theoretical models of reconciliation should consider motivational and cognitive processes occurring within transgressors.

Finally, our research has practical implications for how managers attempt to resolve interpersonal offenses between coworkers. For example, through dialogue with transgressors, it may be possible for managers to activate certain apology motives that effectively promote reconciliation for both victims and transgressors. More generally, our findings emphasize the practical importance of attending to the transgressor perspective, in addition to the victim perspective, to promote dyadic reconciliation (also see Shnabel & Nadler, 2008).

2 | STUDY 1: IDENTIFYING WORKPLACE APOLOGY MOTIVES

Scholars have long speculated about transgressor apology motives, despite the lack of empirical research. For example, researchers have postulated that transgressors apologize to reduce feelings of guilt (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994), to preserve valuable relationships (Okimoto et al., 2013; Tavuchis, 1991), to reaffirm one's own self-image as a good or moral person (Okimoto et al., 2013; Scher & Darley, 1997), and to symbolically remedy the social imbalance created by the transgression (Reb, Goldman, Kray, & Cropanzano, 2006). Consistent with this theorizing, apologies are often defined as an attempt by the transgressor to acknowledge and take responsibility for the harm they caused, to express regret for their actions, to convey respect for the victim, and to promise forbearance (Bies et al., 2016; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Tomlinson, Dineen, & Lewicki, 2004).

Despite presumptions regarding transgressor apology motives, virtually, no systematic empirical evidence exists. In an exception, Exline et al. (2007) asked university students to report the reasons why they apologized to their intimate partners after having transgressed against them. Examining students' open-ended responses, the authors identified three apology motives: to restore the relationship, to reduce feelings of guilt, and to avoid anger from their relationship partner. Although this preliminary study is promising, to our knowledge, no research has examined apology motives in the workplace. This is important, because, as noted by forgiveness scholars, it is not clear whether reconciliation findings from intimate relationships research

will generalize to the workplace in light of different relationship dynamics between the two settings (Cox et al., 2012; Palanski, 2012).

The purpose of Study 1 was to uncover potential reasons why transgressors apologize in the workplace context. To do so, we used a grounded theory approach to develop themes about transgressor apology motives (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablinski, 1999). Specifically, we conducted a qualitative survey asking employee transgressors to explain (in open-ended format) the reasons why they apologized for a recent transgression in their workplace. Using a blended deductive-inductive approach to the content analysis, we identify higher order themes within text responses.

2.1 | Method

2.1.1 | Participants and procedure

Participants were recruited via StudyResponse, a research participant pool hosted by Syracuse University (<http://www.studyresponse.net>). Employed adults in the United States were invited to fill out an online survey using Qualtrics in exchange for \$5 USD. After providing informed consent, recruits were eligible to participate only if they could recall a recent offense for which they apologized to someone in their workplace (coworker, supervisor, subordinate, or client). If eligible, participants were prompted to describe the apology incident using the critical incident technique adapted from Exline et al. (2007). Then, participants were asked to provide up to five reasons explaining why they apologized. Finally, participants were thanked, debriefed, and paid for their participation.

With the eligibility criteria described above, 280 usable surveys were received. Of these, 56 were excluded based on unintelligible responses to open-ended questions (e.g., random strings of text), resulting in $N = 224$ (80%) valid participants. Among valid participants, 48.7% are female with an average age of 38.6 years (median = 36; $SD = 8.81$), an average organizational tenure of 7.9 years (median = 7.5; $SD = 5.12$), and an average position tenure of 5.79 years (median = 4.42; $SD = 4.86$). On race, 78.6% identified as Caucasian, 5.4% as Black/African American, 4.9% as East Asian, 4.5% as South Asian, 4.0% as Hispanic/Latino, and the rest as "other." On educational attainment, 59.6% had a university degree, 33.6% had a college/trade school degree, and 6.7% had a high school degree.

2.1.2 | Apology motives content analysis

To sample the content domain as comprehensively as possible, participants were encouraged to provide up to five reasons for apologizing. Each apology reason was treated as an independent coding unit. After truncating duplicates within responses provided by each individual participant (i.e., when the same response was repeated more than once by a participant), a total of 588 apology reasons were obtained. On average, participants provided 2.6 apology reasons ($SD = 1.7$).

Following established content analysis guidelines (Smith, 2000), we developed a coding scheme to categorize all of the apology reasons into higher-order themes. First, prior literature on apology motives

(described above) was reviewed to guide theme generation. Next, all of the open-ended responses were evaluated by the first author for commonalities and trends, with similar responses being grouped together on the basis of higher-order themes. Finally, precise definitions and clear examples were written for each theme. After developing the coding scheme, two independent raters were employed to code all of the apology reasons based on the coding scheme. The raters first independently coded all of the reasons and demonstrated acceptable inter-rater agreement, $\kappa = .62$ (Landis & Koch, 1977). Then, raters discussed and resolved all disagreements. The final codes (with all disagreements resolved) were used to compute the frequency of each apology motive theme (see Table 1).

2.2 | Results

Six general themes emerged from our content analysis. For the present purposes, we labeled these: self-blame, relational value, personal expedience, guilt reduction, fear of sanctions, and professionalism. Each of themes is discussed below (also see Table 1).

2.2.1 | Self-blame

Consistent with the prevailing definition of apology as a reconciliatory mechanism (e.g., Bies et al., 2016; Tomlinson et al., 2004), many transgressors explained their apology as being driven by both a recognition that they had committed a wrongdoing, and a desire to correct their previous misdeed. Examples include the following: "I was wrong," "I screwed up," "I realized my mistake," and "I should not have yelled."

2.2.2 | Relational value

Consistent with theorizing about apologies being driven by a desire to preserve valuable relationships (e.g., Okimoto et al., 2013; Tavuchis, 1991), many transgressors explained their apology as caused by caring, liking, or otherwise valuing the relationship (often described as friendships) between themselves and the person they offended. Examples of this motive include the following: "I care about her/him," "I like the person and value our friendship," and "I will continue to work with this same person and want to have a good relationship."

2.2.3 | Personal expedience

This motive is derived from cases in which transgressors explained their apologies as purely instrumental to quickly move on from the initial conflict. Examples of this motive include the following: "end the drama," "I didn't have the energy to fight," and "it seemed a quick way to resolve an uncomfortable situation."

2.2.4 | Guilt reduction

Consistent with apology motives reported by Exline et al. (2007), transgressors reported feeling guilty about their previous wrongdoing and apologize to relieve such guilt. Reasons categorized as guilt-

TABLE 1 Studies 1 and 2: Apology motive themes, definitions, and items

Motive	Definition	Items
Self-blame^a (41%)	The transgressor truly believes that he/she had engaged in a wrongdoing and is motivated to correct their previous misdeeds by apologizing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I was at fault^a 2. I disapprove of the way I acted 3. I was responsible for the situation^a 4. I realize the error I made^a 5. I don't usually act that way 6. It was the morally right thing to do
Relational value^a (20.1%)	The transgressor feels liking, care, or affection (friendship) toward the victim and is motivated to apologize in order to maintain a valued interpersonal relationship.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I caused him/her harm 2. I wanted him/her to feel better 3. I liked him/her as a person^a 4. The relationship is important to me^a 5. I viewed him/her as a friend^a 6. I wanted to continue this relationship
Personal expedience^a (10%)	The transgressor views apologies as a conflict mitigation tactic. The transgressor is motivated to quickly resolve conflict and offers an apology in hopes of appeasing victims and moving past the situation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I wanted to end the conflict quickly^a 2. I didn't want to drag out the conflict^a 3. It was an easy way to end the conflict 4. I didn't want the conflict to affect my work^a 5. I just wanted to get on with work 6. I still need to work with him/her
Guilt reduction (7.8%)	The transgressor feels guilty about transgression and is motivated to apologize in order to relieve her/his feelings of guilt.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I felt guilt 2. I felt bad about what happened 3. I felt burdened 4. The event was bothering my conscious 5. I needed to get it off my chest 6. I wanted to feel better
Professionalism (4.6%)	Workplaces typically prescribe acceptable conduct and role expectations. The transgressor believes relationship conflict is detrimental to performance and is motivated to	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conflict is unprofessional 2. I felt like I had a professional obligation to apologize

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Motive	Definition	Items
	maintain professional character by apologizing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What I did was unprofessional 4. Conflict is unacceptable in the workplace 5. I wanted to appear professional 6. I need to follow workplace rules
Fear of sanctions^a (3.7%)	The transgressor fears not apologizing may cause backlash against them and is motivated to apologize to avoid retaliation from victims or reprimands from higher authority or other parties.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Others told me to apologize 2. I felt like I was forced to apologize^a 3. I was afraid of what he/she might do if I didn't^a 4. Others might hold it against me 5. I might be punished if I didn't^a 6. There might be negative consequences if I didn't

Note. All items were prefaced with the stem: "I apologized because ..."

Parentheses after motive names contain frequency of each theme (12.8% of apology reasons were ambiguous and did not fit into any of the themes).

^aMotives and items retained in final apology motives typology and scales.

reduction were very similar to those categorized as self-blame, but here participants did not explicitly recognize their wrongdoing. Examples include "I felt remorseful for what I had done," "I felt guilty," "I felt sorry," "it had been bothering my conscience so much," and "I needed to get it off my chest so to speak."

2.2.5 | Fear of sanctions

Exline et al. (2007) described "fear of anger from victims" as a motive for apologizing among students who transgressed against their intimate partners. Our study revealed a similar theme, but not surprisingly in the workplace context, the source of fear was expanded. Employee transgressors indicated that they apologized due to fear of retaliation or reprimands from coworkers, supervisors, or clients. Examples of this motive include "I want to save my job," "I did not want the manager to feel negatively about me," and "she is our director of human resources and I like being employed."

2.2.6 | Professionalism

This motive is derived from cases in which transgressors described professional role expectations as the driving factor for apologizing. This theme is similar to personal expediency but also includes explicit mentions of professional obligations. Examples of this motive include "I was unprofessional" and "I wanted to appear professional."

2.2.7 | Summary

Study 1 revealed a number of motives underlying transgressor apology after a relational conflict at work. Out of the 588 apology reasons, 241 (41%) were coded as self-blame, 118 (20.1%) were coded as relational value, 59 (10%) were coded as personal expedience, 46 (7.8%) were coded as guilt reduction, 27 (4.6%) were coded as professionalism, and 22 (3.7%) were coded as fear of sanctions. In addition, 75 (12.8%) of reasons were considered “ambiguous” and did not fit into any of our six themes. For the most part, these reasons were vague (i.e., one-word responses) or incoherent for coding purposes (i.e., “remove contradictions” and “Unlock the misunderstanding”).

2.2.8 | Post hoc supplementary analyses

To follow up content analysis, we explored whether key participant characteristics predicted endorsement of apology motives. Specifically, we examined the degree to which participant gender and organizational tenure predict the likelihood of endorsing each apology motive¹. To do so, we created dummy variables to represent endorsement of each apology motive. The endorsement of each motive was scored as 1 (endorsed) or 0 (not endorsed). For each apology motive (e.g., self-blame), participants received a score of 1 (endorsed) if any of their apology reasons had been coded as the focal motive or a score of 0 if none of their reasons had been coded as the focal motive. We then conducted a series of logistic regression analyses, separately regressing these dummy variables on participant gender (0 = female, 1 = male) and organizational tenure (in years), to determine if the odds of endorsing motives differ as a function of participant characteristics.

Results generally failed to indicate that endorsement of motives is significantly predicted by gender or tenure. For self-blame, the odds of endorsement did not differ significantly by gender (OR = 1.15, $p = .63$, 95% CI [0.66, 1.99]) nor tenure (OR = 0.98, $p = .42$, 95% CI [0.93, 1.03]). The odds of endorsing the relational value motive also did not differ by gender (OR = 0.67, $p = .16$, 95% CI [0.38, 1.17]) nor tenure (OR = 0.98, $p = .46$, 95% CI [0.92, 1.03]). The odds of endorsing the personal expedience motive also did not differ by gender (OR = 1.09, $p = .80$, 95% CI [0.56, 2.15]) nor tenure (OR = 0.95, $p = .18$, 95% CI [0.88, 1.02]).

For the guilt reduction motive, endorsement did appear to differ significantly by gender, with the odds being 60% lower for male versus female participants (OR = 0.40, $p < .01$, 95% CI [0.18, 0.81]). However, endorsement did not differ by tenure (OR = 0.95, $p = .18$, 95% CI [0.87, 1.02]). For the fear of sanctions motive, endorsement also differed by gender, with the odds being male 73% lower for male versus female participants (OR = 0.17, $p < .01$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.54]). However, endorsement did not differ by tenure (OR = 1.02, $p = .63$, 95% CI [0.93, 1.11]). For the professionalism motive, endorsement did not differ by gender (OR = 0.50, $p = .12$, 95% CI [0.20, 1.18]). However, endorsement did differ by tenure, with the odds of endorsement

decreasing by 12% for each additional year of tenure (OR = 0.88, $p = .04$, 95% CI [0.78, 0.98]).

Overall, these exploratory analyses suggest that participant characteristics do not appear to predict endorsement of apology motives consistently. We see some evidence that women are more likely to endorse the guilt reduction and fear of sanctions motives compared with men, whereas employees with longer tenure were less likely to endorse the professionalism motive. Nonetheless, more research is needed to validate these exploratory analyses.

2.3 | Discussion

Our main goal in Study 1 was to sample the content domain of apology motives. Given the paucity of empirical research on apology motives, we took a blended deductive–inductive approach and looked for themes among input from employee transgressors themselves while considering existing theory. Interesting, many of the themes that emerged resonated with prior scholarly speculations about apology motives (e.g., self-blame, relational value, guilt reduction, and fear of sanctions). Although we identified six themes, the qualitative and nonindependent nature of our data restricts our ability to examine distinctiveness among these themes. Thus, in Study 2, we used these themes to stimulate the development of scales to measure apology motives.

3 | STUDY 2: APOLOGY MOTIVES SCALE DEVELOPMENT

In Study 2, our main goal was to develop self-report scales to measure the extent to which transgressors attributed their apologies to the motives identified in Study 1. Following established scale development guidelines (e.g., Hinkin, 1998), we created state-specific scales on which transgressors can self-report the degree to which each motive influenced their decision to apologize for a particular transgression. We first generated items and conducted content validation on a sample of undergraduate students. Then, we used data from two employee samples to assess the psychometric properties (i.e., factor structure and reliability) of our scales.

3.1 | Phase 1: Item generation and content validation for apology motives scales

We generated items based on our definitions and example responses from participants in Study 1. Specifically, we generated six items for each motive, for a total of 36 items (see Table 1). To ensure that our items tapped into their intended motives, content validation was conducted with a sample of undergraduate students. We took an analysis of variance approach to content validation by asking respondents to rate the correspondence between each item and each motive definition, and testing whether items have higher correspondence with their intended construct than other constructs (Hinkin & Tracey, 1999).

¹We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting these supplementary analyses.

3.1.1 | Participants and procedure

Undergraduate students from the University of Waterloo Research Experience Group were recruited to participate in an online study for partial course credit. Participants were first asked to review all the definitions from the apology motive themes outlined in Table 1. Then, on separate pages, participants were randomly presented with one of the six themes and asked to rate the extent to which each of the 36 items (in randomized order) reflects that particular theme on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *completely*). In total, participants rated the correspondence level of each item six times, once for each theme.

A total of 107 recruits participated in this study. Of these, 13 were excluded for failing to complete the survey and three were excluded for failing attention checks, resulting a total of $N = 91$ (85%) valid participants. Among valid participants, 76.9% were female. In terms of race, 41.8% identified as Caucasian, 26.4% as East Asian, 16.5% as South Asian, 8.8% as Middle Eastern, 2.2% as Black/African, 1.1% as Hispanic/Latino, and the rest as "other." In terms of education, 48.4% were in the first year of postsecondary studies, 16.5% were in second year, 9.9% were in third year, 23.1% were in fourth year, and the rest were above fourth year.

3.1.2 | Analyses and results

Our primary interest in content validation is to ensure that each item have the highest correspondence with its intended theme. We conducted a series of repeated-measure analyses of variance with Sidak-Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons (Šidák, 1967) to compare the correspondence ratings of intended theme against correspondence ratings of all other themes. For example, for the "I was at fault" item (intended for self-blame motive), we compared its correspondence with the self-blame theme against its correspondence with all other themes (e.g., relational value and personal expedience).

Results suggest that with the exception of three items ($n = 1$ for relational value; $n = 2$ for personal expedience), all other items showed significantly higher correspondence with their intended theme than other themes (see Table 2). Therefore, all items were retained for further analysis with the caveat that they would be dropped if they showed other problems.

3.2 | Phase 2: Factor structure of apology motives scales

After the item generation phase, data from two samples were collected to assess the psychometric properties (i.e., factor structure and reliability) of our apology motives scales. Data from Sample A were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to determine the factor structure of the scale. Importantly, although our items tapped the six motives identified in Study 1, it is not clear whether they are empirically distinct. Thus, we utilized parallel analysis (PA; Hayton, Allen, & Scarpello, 2004) to empirically make factor retention decisions. As described below, results from the PA and EFA suggested

four empirically distinct factors (motives). We then revised definitions for the motives as needed. After revisions, data from a larger Sample B were used to validate the motive scales via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

3.2.1 | Sample A: Initial factor structure

U.S. participants were recruited via StudyResponse in exchange for \$10 USD. Eligibility criteria and initial procedures were the same as Study 1. If eligible, participants were prompted to describe the apology incident. Then, participants were asked to complete the apology motive scale by rating the extent to which each of the 36 apology motive items factored into their decision to apologize on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*). Finally, participants were thanked, debriefed, and paid for their participation.

From this sample, we received 296 usable responses. Of these, 81 were excluded for failing attention checks, resulting in a total of $N = 215$ (72.6%) valid participants. Among valid participants, 54.4% were female. The average age was 42.3 (median = 41; SD = 9.46), with an average organizational tenure of 9.9 years (median = 8.67; SD = 7.05) and position tenure of 7.06 years (median = 6.04; SD = 5.16). In terms of race, 85.6% of participants identified as Caucasian, 4.2% as East Asian, 3.7% as African American, 3.3% as Hispanic/Latino, 2.3% as South Asian, and the rest as "other." On educational attainment, 57.2% of participants had a university degree, 34.9% had a college/trade school degree, and 7.9% had a high school degree.

Parallel analysis

Given that our initial apology motive themes were derived through qualitative analyses, we had little theoretical reason to specify the distinctiveness of each motive a priori. Thus, following recommendations from Hayton et al. (2004), we conducted a PA to make factor retention decisions. First, we generated 50 random datasets that match the real dataset on number of observations ($N = 215$), number of items ($v = 36$), and item characteristics (1-5 scales). Next, we used maximum likelihood extraction on the random data to create a distribution of eigenvalues for each EFA factor ($v = 36$). Then, we computed the average and the 95th percentile values for each distribution. Finally, we extracted eigenvalues from the real dataset using maximum likelihood extraction. Factors were retained if its associated eigenvalue is greater than the 95th percentile of the distribution of eigenvalues derived from the random data. Results of the PA suggested that four factors should be retained (see Table 3).

Exploratory factor analysis

Following the PA, we conducted an EFA using maximum likelihood extraction with oblimin rotation, whereby a four-factor structure was forced on the items. After extraction and rotation, items were retained if the absolute value of its loading on one factor was greater than 0.60, and at least 0.20 higher than the absolute value of its loading on any other factor (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). Seventeen items (of 36) failed to meet these criteria and were dropped, resulting in 19 retained items. We labeled each factor as a scale based

TABLE 2 Study 2: Analysis of variance content validation results

Item	SB	RV	GR	FS	PE	PF
I was at fault	4.16 ^a	2.72	3.45	1.85	1.76	2.19
I disapproved of the way I acted	4.47 ^a	2.60	3.46	1.79	1.81	2.45
I was responsible for the situation	3.98 ^a	2.67	3.20	1.91	1.96	2.58
I realized the error I made	4.03 ^a	2.70	3.14	1.78	1.99	2.27
I don't usually act that way	4.54 ^a	2.26	2.67	1.76	1.75	2.07
It was morally the right thing to do	4.82 ^a	2.40	3.00	1.75	1.79	1.93
I caused him/her harm ^c	3.62 ^b	3.98 ^b	3.26	1.96	1.79	1.96
I wanted him/her to feel better	2.97	4.22 ^a	3.10	1.98	1.76	1.89
I liked him/her as a person	2.45	4.47 ^a	2.40	1.74	1.63	1.75
The relationship is important to me	2.48	4.67 ^a	2.52	1.82	1.82	1.94
I viewed him/her as a friend	2.51	4.48 ^a	2.39	1.74	1.75	1.79
I wanted to continue the relationship	2.44	4.75 ^a	2.34	1.91	2.07	2.08
I felt guilty	3.13	2.47	4.92 ^a	2.03	1.70	1.89
I felt bad about what happened	3.80	2.89	4.61 ^a	1.93	1.73	1.97
I felt burdened	2.88	2.24	4.39 ^a	2.18	1.85	1.90
The event was bothering my conscious	3.82	2.48	4.72 ^a	1.96	1.79	1.88
I needed to get it off my chest	2.88	2.28	4.35 ^a	1.87	1.85	1.81
I wanted to feel better	3.13	2.44	4.57 ^a	2.06	1.80	1.89
Others told me to	1.64	1.95	1.81	2.90 ^a	2.06	2.31
I felt like I was forced to	1.51	1.74	1.94	3.40 ^a	2.30	2.80
I was afraid of what he/she might do if I didn't	1.88	2.47	2.16	4.75 ^a	2.01	1.99
Other might hold it against me if I didn't	2.26	2.93	2.55	4.44 ^a	2.25	2.58
I might be punished if I didn't	1.72	1.73	2.03	4.67 ^a	2.26	2.80
There might be negative consequences if I didn't	2.17	2.35	2.19	4.79 ^a	2.69	3.06
I wanted to end the conflict quickly	1.93	2.33	2.16	2.67	4.60 ^a	2.93
I didn't want to drag out the conflict	2.06	2.53	2.08	2.40	4.28 ^a	3.06
It was an easy way to end the conflict	1.83	2.37	2.15	2.49	4.20 ^a	2.84
I didn't want the conflict to affect my work ^c	2.02	2.20	2.17	2.36	4.60 ^b	4.19 ^b
I just wanted to get on with work	1.81	1.92	1.91	1.99	4.79 ^a	3.78
I need to work with him/her ^c	1.90	3.08	2.04	2.24	4.18 ^b	3.93 ^b
Conflict is unprofessional	2.07	2.16	1.83	1.91	3.17	4.82 ^a
I felt like I had a professional obligation to	2.03	2.04	2.04	2.11	3.30	4.88 ^a
What I did was unprofessional	2.31	2.11	2.00	1.83	2.80	4.73 ^a
Conflict is unacceptable in the workplace	2.02	2.07	1.84	2.25	3.26	4.76 ^a
I wanted to appear professional	2.19	2.07	1.79	1.94	3.22	4.88 ^a
I needed to follow workplace rules	1.91	1.84	1.80	2.37	3.34	4.74 ^a

^aNote. $N = 91$. Values are mean level of correspondence between item (in row) and theme (in column). SB: self-blame; RV: relational value; GR: guilt reduction; FS: fear of sanctions; PE: personal expedience; PF: professionalism. Mean levels of correspondence across each row were compared using repeated-measures analyses of variance with the Sidak-Bonferroni adjusted pairwise comparisons.

^aSignificantly higher than all other means.

^bAcross the same row means were not significantly different.

^cItems that failed to show evidence for content validity as correspondence on its intended theme was not significantly higher than correspondence with all other themes.

TABLE 3 Study 2: Parallel analysis results: Actual and random eigenvalues

Factor ^a	Actual data eigenvalue ^b	Random data average eigenvalue ^c	Random data 95th percentile eigenvalue ^c
1	9.970 ^d	1.879	1.981
2	4.953 ^d	1.766	1.841
3	3.046 ^d	1.666	1.733
4	2.187 ^d	1.600	1.659
5	1.281	1.544	1.593
6	1.104	1.480	1.528
7	1.071	1.428	1.477
8	0.999	1.380	1.423
9	0.895	1.331	1.376
10	0.786	1.283	1.311

^aNote. Parallel analysis based on guidelines from Hayton et al. (2004). All eigenvalues extracted using maximum likelihood extraction.

^aOnly first 10 extracted factors (out of 36) shown to preserve space (remaining data available upon request).

^bEigenvalues extracted from Study 2 Sample A dataset.

^cEigenvalues computed from vectors of eigenvalues extracted from randomly generated data with same characteristics as the actual dataset ($N = 215$, $v = 36$, 1-5-point scales).

^dRetained factors with eigenvalues >95th percentile eigenvalues from randomly generated data.

on the surviving items, including (a) self-blame, (b) relational value, (b) personal expedience, and (d) fear of sanctions (see Table 4). Except for the self-blame scale, which included one item initially intended for the professionalism theme (i.e., "what I did was unprofessional") and one item for the guilt reduction theme (i.e., "I felt guilty"), all other surviving items matched their intended themes.

In summary, our initial factor analysis resulted in a four-factor structure, suggesting that our apology motive typology includes four distinct motives. Given the inherently exploratory nature of EFAs, we were cautious and wished to gather more evidence to increase confidence in our scales. Thus, we conducted a CFA with another sample to ensure replicability of these results before finalizing the scales and motive typology.

3.2.2 | Sample B: Factor structure validation and scale revisions

U.S. participants were recruited from CrowdFlower (<https://www.crowdfunder.com/>), an online crowdsourcing platform in exchange for \$2 USD. Procedures were almost exactly the same as described for Sample A above, except that when indicating apology motives, participants were only presented with the 19 surviving items from the EFA from sample A (instead of the original 36 items).

For this sample, we received 367 usable surveys. Of these, 26 were excluded for failing attention checks, resulting in a total of $N = 342$ (93.2%) valid participants. Among valid participants, 44.7% were female. The average age for participants was 33.1 (median = 30; SD = 10.72),

with an average organizational tenure of 6.7 years (median = 4.0; SD = 17.70) and position tenure of 4.5 years (median = 2.7; SD = 8.16). In terms of race, 72.2% of participants identified as White/Caucasian, 9.1% as Hispanic/Latino, 4.4% as Black/African American, 5.6% as Native American, 3.5% as East Asian, 2.9% as South Asian, and the rest as "other." On educational attainment, 43.7% of participants had a university degree, 34.3% had a college/trade school degree, 20.5% had a high school degree, and the rest did not complete high school.

Confirmatory factor analysis

We sought to validate the factor structure of the apology motives measure using CFA. Specifically, we tested the four-factor measurement model based on Sample A's EFA results using SPSS AMOS 23, Chicago, IL. Testing the EFA-derived model produced the following fit indices: $\chi^2 = 598.27$, $df = 146$, $p < .01$, confirmatory fit index (CFI) = .86, root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .10, which did not appear to meet acceptable goodness-of-fit criteria based on Hair et al.'s (2006) recommendations ($CFI > .90$ and $RMSEA < .08$). Thus, following recommended procedures for scale revisions during CFA (Brown, 2015), we revised our scale by examining standardized residual covariances to investigate and remove problematic items (e.g., with three or more significant residual covariances).

Scale revisions

The item reduction process above resulted in dropping seven items: one from the relational values factor ("I wanted to continue the relationship"), three from the fear of sanctions factor ("others told me to", "others might hold it against me", and "there might be negative consequences if I didn't"), and three from the self-blame factor ("what I did was unprofessional", "I felt guilty", and "I disapproved of the way I acted").

Fit indices from the revised measurement model suggested acceptable model fit based on Hair et al.'s (2006) recommendations ($\chi^2 = 96.5$, $df = 48$, $p < .01$, $CFI = .97$, $RMSEA = .05$). Given that the original and revised measurement models differ in the number of items and are thus non-nested models, we examined the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1987) and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC; Raftery, 1995) to compare model fit. The revised 12-item measurement model has lower AIC and BIC values (AIC = 156.50, BIC = 271.54) than the original nineteen-item measurement model (AIC = 686.27, BIC = 855.00), suggesting that the revised measurement model fits the data better (Brown, 2015). We replicated this analysis using data from Sample A and found that again, the revised twelve-item measurement model showed better model fit ($\chi^2 = 87.67$, $df = 48$, $p < .01$, $CFI = .97$, $RMSEA = .06$, AIC = 147.67, BIC = 248.65), than the original nineteen-item measurement model ($\chi^2 = 342.02$, $df = 146$, $p < .01$, $CFI = .91$, $RMSEA = .08$, AIC = 430.02, BIC = 578.12). In light of the improved model fit from these CFA analyses, we finalized our apology motives scales to reflect the revised twelve-item (four factor) measurement model. Furthermore, we combined data from Samples A and B (A+B) to test our purported measurement model against alternative nested models. Results suggest that one-factor, two-factor, and three-factor models all had worst

fit than our four-factor model (e.g., significant $\Delta\chi^2$; see Table 5), further supporting our revised measurement model.

The final measurement model included 12 items, which were averaged into four apology motive scales. All scales included three items (see Table 1), and reliabilities were assessed (in the A+B combined dataset) via Cronbach's alpha. Scales were identified using the same labels as the original motives: self-blame (e.g., "I was at fault"; $\alpha = .87$), relational value (e.g., "I liked him/her as a person"; $\alpha = .88$), personal expedience (e.g., "I wanted to end the conflict quickly"; $\alpha = .77$), and fear of sanctions (e.g., "I might be punished if I didn't", $\alpha = .81$).

3.3 | Discussion

In Study 2, we followed established scale development guidelines (Hinkin, 1998) and used appropriate analyses (e.g., PA, EFA, CFA) to develop our apology motives typology and scales. Using data from three samples, we developed state-specific scales to assess endorsement of four distinct apology motives, including (a) self-blame, (b) relational values, (c) personal expedience, and (d) fear of sanctions (see Tables 1 and 4).

Interestingly, our results failed to show empirical support guilt reduction and professionalism themes identified in Study 1. We suspect that feelings of guilt may be a precondition, which signals the need for an apology. In the absence of these feelings, transgressors may engage in other conflict mitigation tactics, such as making excuses (Bobocel & Zdaniuk, 2005). Moreover, guilt reduction may be inextricably linked with the self-blame motive as our items were similar (see Table 1). Thus, reducing guilt may not be a distinct apology motive. Similarly, in hindsight we recognize that different organizations will have different norms for how professionalism is defined. For example, in organizations with a strong legalistic culture, it may be unprofessional to apologize (Bies et al., 2016; Sitkin & Bies, 1993). As such, unlike the other motives, professionalism may be context specific.

4 | STUDY 3: APOLOGY MOTIVES AND TRANSGRESSOR PERCEPTIONS

In Study 3, we examined whether transgressor post-apology perceptions are shaped by salient apology motives. As noted in the general introduction, the normative function of apology is to elicit victim forgiveness and promote reconciliation (Lazare, 2004; Palanski, 2012; Tavuchis, 1991; Worthington & Drinkard, 2000). Therefore, after apologizing, transgressors should be gauging victim forgiveness. Nevertheless, doing so is likely to be difficult. This is because forgiveness is a process occurring within the victim (McCullough et al., 1998), and thus impossible to directly observe. Instead, transgressors must infer victim forgiveness from the words and actions of victims. Moreover, communication is typically compromised in the context of interpersonal transgressions (e.g., De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). These factors increase uncertainty in victim-transgressor interactions

(Weick, 1995), which make perceptions susceptible to the influence of motivated cognition (see Sonenshein, 2007).

Motivated cognition refers to the general process by which people's preferences, expectations, and motives influence their

TABLE 4 Study 2: Exploratory factor analysis of apology motive items using maximum likelihood extraction and oblimin rotation

Item	F1: Self-blame	F2: Fear of sanctions	F3: Relational value	F4: Personal expedience
1. I was at fault	.88	.02	-.02	-.10
2. I was responsible for the situation	.80	.16	-.06	-.23
3. I realized the error I made	.78	-.02	-.04	.05
4. What I did was unprofessional ^a	.67	.00	.06	.12
5. I felt guilty ^a	.65	-.08	-.10	.03
6. I disapproved of the way I acted ^a	.61	-.09	.00	.16
7. I might be punished if I didn't	-.03	.86	.04	.00
8. I was afraid of he/she might do if I didn't	-.04	.80	-.08	.04
9. I felt like I was forced to	-.20	.76	.01	.06
10. Others told me to ^a	.09	.67	-.09	-.14
11. There might be negative consequences if I didn't ^a	.07	.65	.05	.03
12. Others might hold it against me ^a	.05	.60	.07	.12
13. I liked him/her as a person	-.03	.00	-.91	-.04
14. I viewed him/her as a friend	-.03	.02	-.87	-.08
15. The relationship is important to me	.09	.01	-.77	.11
16. I wanted to continue the relationship ^a	.05	-.05	-.74	.17
17. I didn't want the conflict to affect my work	-.06	.06	-.01	.76
18. I wanted to end the conflict quickly	.10	.01	-.11	.67
19. I didn't want to drag out the conflict	.05	.04	-.01	.65
Initial eigenvalue	5.41	3.74	1.95	1.77
Rotated percentage of variance explained	26.19	17.46	8.18	7.48
Rotated cumulative % of variance explained		43.65	51.83	59.31

Note. Factor loadings $>.60$ are in boldface. All items were prefaced with the stem "I apologized because ...".

^aDenotes items dropped in subsequent CFA analyses.

TABLE 5 Studies 2 and 3: Comparative confirmatory factor analyses on final measurement model

Study 2 ^a	χ^2	df	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA	AIC	BIC
One-factor model	1,711.95	54	-	-	.44	.24	1,759.95	1,863.60
Two-factor model ^c	1,245.87	53	-466.08 [*]	-1	.59	.20	1,295.87	1,403.84
Three-factor model ^d	766.24	51	-479.63 [*]	-2	.76	.16	820.24	936.85
Four-factor model ^e	133.17	48	-633.07 [*]	-3	.97	.06	193.17	322.74
Study 3^b								
One-factor model	1,768.72	54	-	-	.38	.28	19,366.63	19,512.08
Two-factor model ^c	1,468.97	53	-299.75 [*]	-1	.48	.25	19,068.87	19,218.36
Three-factor model ^d	969.20	51	-499.77 [*]	-2	.67	.21	18,573.10	18,730.67
Four-factor model ^e	133.82	48	-835.38 [*]	-3	.97	.07	17,743.73	17,913.42

Abbreviations: AIC, Akaike Information Criterion; BIC, Bayesian Information Criterion; CFI, confirmatory fit index; RMSEA, root-mean-square error of approximation.

^aSample A+B N = 557; CFAs conducted using SPSS AMOS 23.

^bStudy 3 N = 420; CFAs conducted using *lavaan*-0.6-3 package in R Statistics version 3.5.3 "Great Truth".

^cTwo-factor model: factor 1 = self-blame and relational value, factor 2 = personal expedience and fear of sanctions; all latent factors allowed to covary; χ^2 compares model to 1-factor model.

^dThree-factor model: factor 1 = self-blame and relational value motives, factor 2 = personal expedience, factor 3 = fear of sanctions; all latent factors allowed to covary; χ^2 compares model to two-factor model.

^eFour-factor model: all motives on own factor; all latent factors allowed to covary; χ^2 compares model to three-factor model.

* $p < .05$.

interpretation of events (Barclay et al., 2017; Kunda, 1990; Sonenshein, 2007). According to the reconfiguration principle of motivated cognition, motives direct people's attention toward information that confirms their desired outcomes and away from disconfirming information (Huang & Bargh, 2014). Much research supports the reconfiguration principle of motivated cognition. For example, when people are motivated to be sociable, they perceive others to be more vocal and emotionally expressive (Pickett, Gardner, & Knowles, 2004). When motivated to be cooperative, people perceive members of stigmatized groups more positively (Klein & Kunda, 1992). And, when people are motivated to protect themselves from ego-threatening outcomes, they perceive others as less trustworthy and more hostile (Crocker & Park, 2004; Sinclair & Kunda, 2000).

Within the context of the apology–forgiveness–reconciliation process, some research from the victim perspective indicates that when victims are motivated to maintain their relationship, they perceive transgressors to be less hostile and less harmful (Donovan & Priester, 2017; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; Hook et al., 2015). Building on these lines of research, we examined whether transgressor perceptions of victim responses to their apology depend, in part, on salient apology motives. Next, we derive the specific predictions examined in Study 3.

4.1 | Integration and Hypotheses

Drawing on the reconfiguration principle of motivated cognition, we predicted that apology motives will direct transgressor attention to information that confirms their desired end-states. Importantly,

transgressors' end-states differ as a function of the motive for apologizing, which has implications for perceptions of victim forgiveness.

When transgressors apologize due to self-blame, their desired end-state is to correct a previous wrongdoing. Perceiving victim forgiveness would permit transgressors to conclude that their prior misdeeds are corrected because forgiveness reduces the moral implications of the wrongdoing (Bobocel & Zdaniuk, 2005). Thus, when apologizing due to self-blame, transgressors are motivated to perceive victim forgiveness because being forgiven enables them to conclude that their misdeed is corrected.

When transgressors apologize due to relational value, they desire to preserve a valued relationship. Perceiving victim forgiveness would similarly permit transgressors to conclude their relationship is preserved because forgiveness suggests that the victim is willing to reconcile (McCullough et al., 1998). Thus, when apologizing due to relational value, transgressors are again motivated to perceive forgiveness, because being forgiven enables them to conclude that their relationship is intact.

Finally, when transgressors apologize due to personal expedience, they wish simply to put the conflict aside and move on with their work. Given that forgiveness typically signals the end of a conflict episode (Fehr et al., 2010), perceiving victim forgiveness would allow transgressors to conclude that they can resume focus on task performance. As such, transgressors would also be motivated to perceive forgiveness when apologizing due to personal expedience.

In summary, although the end-states of the self-blame, relational value, and personal expedience motives differ, each of them should orient transgressors toward perceiving victim forgiveness. In each case, transgressors want to perceive that they are forgiven because

victim forgiveness aligns with the desired end-states of the motive. Therefore, drawing on the reconfiguration principle of motivated cognition, apologizing for self-blame, relational value, or personal expedience motives should lead transgressors to selectively attend to cues or feedback from the victim that signal forgiveness, such as a reduction in negativity or an increase in positivity toward them (e.g., Bies et al., 2016; McCullough et al., 1998). Concretely, this means that transgressors would be attending to any actions or words that suggest victims have forgiven.

Hypothesis 1. *The (a) self-blame, (b) relational value, and (c) personal expedience motives will be positively associated with transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness.*

In contrast to the above motives, we predict that the fear of sanctions motive will be negatively associated with transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness. When transgressors apologize due to fear of sanctions, they seek to protect themselves from ego-threatening outcomes. Thus, the reconfiguration principle suggests that transgressors will be vigilant for cues or feedback from the victim or other sources that signal the presence of such threats. As noted earlier, research has demonstrated that people perceive others as more negative and hostile when motivated to protect themselves from ego-threatening outcomes (e.g., Crocker & Park, 2004; Sinclair & Kunda, 2000). Therefore, apologizing for fear of sanctions should motivate transgressors to attend to cues signaling anger or hostility from the victim, which suggest that the victim is unforgiving.

Hypothesis 2. *The fear of sanctions motive will be negatively associated with transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness.*

To the extent that apology motives influence transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness, motives should also influence transgressor perceptions of relationship reconciliation. As reviewed earlier, past research from the victim perspective reveals that forgiveness and reconciliation are closely related phenomena (Aquino et al., 2006; Palanski, 2012; Worthington & Drinkard, 2000). When victims grant forgiveness by letting go of their negativity toward the transgressor, they are more likely to behave in ways that show benevolence and goodwill toward the transgressor, behaviors which define the concept of reconciliation (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006). Likewise, the apology–forgiveness–reconciliation process suggests that transgressors should also view victim forgiveness as indication that their apology was effective, and as a precursor to reconciliation (Palanski, 2012). Thus, when transgressors perceive that victims have forgiven them, they should be more likely to perceive interpersonal benevolence and goodwill within the relationship.

Hypothesis 3. *Transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness will be positively associated with their perceptions of relationship reconciliation.*

Given that apology motives influence transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness and that victim forgiveness is an important

antecedent to relationship reconciliation, we predicted that apology motives will indirectly influence transgressor perceptions of reconciliation through perceived victim forgiveness. This prediction is also consistent with prior research on the victim perspective, which is predicated on the idea that apology can promote reconciliation via victim forgiveness (e.g., Bies et al., 2016; McCullough et al., 1998; Palanski, 2012). Therefore, combining Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, we tested the following mediation hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. *Transgressor perceptions of forgiveness will mediate the relations between apology motives and perceptions of reconciliation, such that the (a) self-blame, (b) relational value, and (c) personal expedience motives will be positively associated with perceived reconciliation through perceived forgiveness, whereas the (d) fear of sanctions motive will be negatively associated with perceived reconciliation through perceived forgiveness.*

4.2 | Method

4.2.1 | Participants and procedure

Participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk via the Turk Prime data acquisition platform (Litman, Robinson, & Abbeerbock, 2017). Eligibility criteria and procedures were consistent with Sample B in Study 2, with the following changes: (a) the apology motive scales only included the final 12 items from Study 2 and (b) participants were paid \$1.50 USD for completing the survey. After participants completed the apology motive section of the survey, they were asked to complete measures assessing their perceptions of victim forgiveness and relational reconciliation. Finally, participants were asked to complete measures commonly used to control for common method variance (CMV), including social desirability, positive affectivity (PA), and negative affectivity (NA; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Attention check items were also embedded throughout the survey (Cheung, Burns, Sinclair, & Sliter, 2017).

A total of 526 recruits attempted the survey. Among these respondents, 92 were excluded because they did not meet eligibility criteria ($n = 71$ failed to describe a conflict or an apology; $n = 21$ submitted incoherent conflict or apology descriptions such as random strings of characters or grammatically unintelligible text). Among the remaining respondents, 14 were excluded from analyses for failing attention checks. The final dataset comprised $N = 420$ (79.8%) valid participants, with 49.8% identifying as female, average age of 36.6 years (median = 34; $SD = 10.7$), average organizational tenure of 6.5 years (median = 5.2; $SD = 5.4$), and average position tenure of 4.7 years (median = 3.5; $SD = 4.1$). For race, 79.3% identified as White/Caucasian, 8.1% as Black/African American, 4.5% as Hispanic/Latino, 2.9% as Native American, 2.6% as East Asian, and the rest as "other." For educational attainment, 42.4% had a university degree, 41.0% had a college/trade school degree, and 16.7% had a high school degree.

4.2.2 | Measures

All variables were measured using 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). We changed the scaling from 5-point scales in Study 2 to 7-point scales in Study 3 to ensure consistent scaling for all variables in Study 3 and to demonstrate that our apology motive scales are invariant to scaling.

4.2.3 | Apology motives

Transgressor apology motives were measured with the apology motive scales developed in Study 2 (see Table 1). All scales included three items and showed acceptable reliability: self-blame $\alpha = .91$, relational value $\alpha = .90$, personal expedience $\alpha = .78$, and fear of sanctions $\alpha = .83$.

4.2.4 | Perceived victim forgiveness

A 3-item scale from Exline et al. (2007) was used to measure transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which victims had forgiven them after their apology (e.g., “to what extent did the other person acknowledge that he/she forgave you through their actions?”, “to what extent did the other person verbally acknowledge that he/she forgave you?”, and “to what extent do you believe the other person has forgiven you?”; $\alpha = .89$).

4.2.5 | Relational reconciliation

As noted at the outset of the paper, reconciliation is defined as the interpersonal process of restoring the relationship to a functional state (Bies et al., 2016; Palanski, 2012). In this vein, conflicting parties should extend goodwill to each other to achieve reconciliation (Aquino, Grover, Goldman, & Folger, 2003). As such, reconciliation can be assessed using the benevolence subscale of the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations scale (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough, Pedersen, Tabak, & Carter, 2014). However, most often the items are asked with the victim (“I”) as the referent (e.g., “I have moved past the hurt and the resentment”). To capture the concept of *relationship reconciliation*, we specified the victim-transgressor relationship (“we”) as the referent. Participants indicated the extent to which, after they apologized, their relationship with the victim experienced benevolence (6 items; e.g., “even though the conflict was hurtful, we still have goodwill for each other”; $\alpha = .94$).

4.2.6 | Control variables

Given the cross-sectional nature of our data, we controlled for three common sources of method bias in our analyses: social desirability, PA, and NA (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Social desirability was measured via the 6-item short form of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (revised MC-SDS Form X2; Fischer & Fick, 1993) on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .79$). PA and NA

were measured using the Positive and Negative Affective Schedule Short-Form (PANAS-SF; Thompson, 2007) on 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*; PA $\alpha = .83$, NA $\alpha = .89$). Moreover, following our post hoc analyses from Study 1, we also controlled for participant's gender and organizational tenure.

4.3 | Results

4.3.1 | Confirmatory factor analysis

Before conducting hypothesis tests, we sought to validate the factor structure of the apology motive scales again using CFA. We tested the final four-factor measurement model from Study 2 (see Table 1) using the *lavaan*-0.6-3 package (Rosseel, 2012) in R Statistics version 3.5.3 “Great Truth” (R Core Team, 2019). Fit indices from the model met acceptable recommendations for goodness-of-fit criteria (Hair et al., 2006): $\chi^2 = 133.82$, $df = 48$, $p < .01$, $CFI = .97$, $RMSEA = .07$. Furthermore, as suggested in Table 5, comparative CFA results suggest that the four-factor model had better fit to the data than a one-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1,634.90$, $\Delta df = 6$, $p < .01$), a two-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1335.15$, $\Delta df = 5$, $p < .01$), and a three-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 835.38$, $\Delta df = 3$, $p < .01$). Replicating Study 2 CFA results, these CFA results suggest that apology motive items should be aggregated into four distinct scales.

4.3.2 | Discriminant validity analysis

To provide additional evidence for the psychometric properties of our scales, we also conducted average variance extracted (AVE) analysis using the Fornell-Larcker criteria to assess the discriminant validity of our apology motive scales (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Specifically, we conducted another CFA to assess a six-factor measurement model with the apology motive scales, the perceived victim forgiveness scale, and the relational reconciliation scale. Fit indices from the model met acceptable recommendations for goodness-of-fit criteria (Hair et al., 2006): $\chi^2 = 403.97$, $df = 174$, $p < .01$, $CFI = .96$, $RMSEA = .06^2$. For each latent variable, we computed its AVE and compared the AVE against its squared correlations with all other variables. As shown in Table 6, the AVE for each latent variable is higher than its square correlations with any other latent variables, providing evidence for discriminant validity for all of our constructs of interest.

4.3.3 | Hypotheses tests

Table 7 presents descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among all study variables. To test our hypotheses, we use the *lavaan*-0.6-3 package in R again to conduct path analyses and mediation analyses in structural equation modeling. We modeled apology motives, perceived forgiveness, and perceived reconciliation as latent variables and

²We also conducted a CFA to assess a five-factor model in which perceived forgiveness and relational reconciliation items were constrained to load onto a single factor. Fit indices from this model were worse than the six-factor model and failed to reach acceptable thresholds: $\chi^2 = 1806.27$, $df = 180$, $p < .01$, $CFI = .74$, $RMSEA = .15$.

TABLE 6 Study 3: Average variance extracted and squared correlations among latent variables

	AVE	Self-blame	Relational value	Personal expedience	Fear of sanctions	Perceived forgiveness
Self-blame	.79 ^a	-				
Relational value	.76 ^a	.12	-			
Personal expedience	.54 ^a	.03	.01	-		
Fear of sanctions	.63 ^a	.00	.04	.002	-	
Perceived forgiveness	.73 ^a	.13	.25	.03	.08	-
Relational reconciliation	.71 ^a	.14	.31	.03	.10	.65

Note. $N = 420$. Estimates computed from six-factor measurement model with apology motives, perceived forgiveness, and relational reconciliation modeled as latent factors. Fit indices from the model met acceptable recommendations for goodness-of-fit criteria (Hair et al., 2006): $\chi^2 = 403.97$, $df = 174$, $p < .01$, $CFI = .96$, $RMSEA = .06$.

Abbreviations: CFI, confirmatory fit index; RMSEA, root-mean-square error of approximation; AVE, average variance extracted for latent variable.

^aAVE higher than any square correlations with other latent variables, providing evidence for discriminant validity.

TABLE 7 Study 3: Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among variables

Variable	\bar{M}	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender ^a	0.50	0.51	-											
2. Age	36.62	10.73	-.13 [*]	-										
3. Tenure ^b	6.54	5.41	-.02	.52 [*]	-									
4. SD ^c	3.89	1.32	.05	.02	-.06	(.79)								
5. Positive affect	5.33	1.14	-.02	.17 [*]	.14 [*]	-.20 [*]	(.83)							
6. Negative affect	1.93	1.14	-.02	-.17 [*]	-.14 [*]	.27 [*]	-.22 [*]	(.89)						
7. Self-blame	5.17	1.87	-.00	.03	-.02	-.00	.07	.01	(.91)					
8. Relational value	4.68	1.84	-.04	.03	.08	-.05	.19 [*]	-.00	.35 [*]	(.90)				
9. Personal expedience	5.86	1.22	-.09	.03	-.03	-.01	.19 [*]	-.13 [*]	.16 [*]	.10 [*]	(.78)			
10. Fear of sanctions	2.43	1.60	-.03	-.12 [*]	-.09	.12 [*]	-.22 [*]	.42 [*]	-.01	-.17 [*]	.03	(.83)		
11. Perceived forgiveness ^d	5.66	1.35	.01	-.04	.05	-.12 [*]	.23 [*]	-.17 [*]	.33 [*]	.46 [*]	.15 [*]	-.27 [*]	(.89)	
12. Reconciliation ^e	5.56	1.38	-.00	.06	.10 [*]	-.09	.23 [*]	-.19 [*]	.37 [*]	.52 [*]	.14 [*]	-.28 [*]	.73 [*]	(.94)

Note. $N = 420$. Alphas are reported in brackets on the diagonals. Higher scores on the variables reflect more of the construct. Except for gender, age, and tenure, all other variables were measured with 7-point Likert-type scales.

^aFor gender, 0 = female and 1 = male.

^bTenure = number of years at current organization.

^cSD = social desirability.

^dPerceived forgiveness = transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness.

^eReconciliation = transgressor perceptions of relational reconciliation.

* $p < .05$.

modeled the control variables as observed variables using scale means (see Figure 1). Path parameters were estimated using maximum likelihood estimation with standard errors and confidence intervals generated by bootstrapping estimates 5,000 times. The overall model provided acceptable goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2 = 631.91$, $df = 273$, $p < .01$, $CFI = .95$, $RMSEA = .06$.

As shown in Figure 1, Hypothesis 1 was supported as path analysis results demonstrate (1a) a positive path between self-blame and perceived victim forgiveness, $b = 0.14$, $SE = .04$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = [0.07, 0.23]; (1b) a positive path between relational values and

perceived victim forgiveness, $b = 0.26$, $SE = .04$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = [0.18, 0.34]; and (1c) a positive path between personal expedience and perceived victim forgiveness, $b = 0.13$, $SE = .07$, $p = .07$, 95% CI = [0.002, 0.27]³. Hypothesis 2 was supported by the negative path between fear of sanctions and perceived victim forgiveness, $b = -0.19$, $SE = .05$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = [-0.29, -0.09]. Hypothesis 3a was supported by the positive path between perceived victim

³Although the p value for this analysis exceeds the convention of $p < .05$, our interpretation is based on the 95% CI generated from bootstrapping.

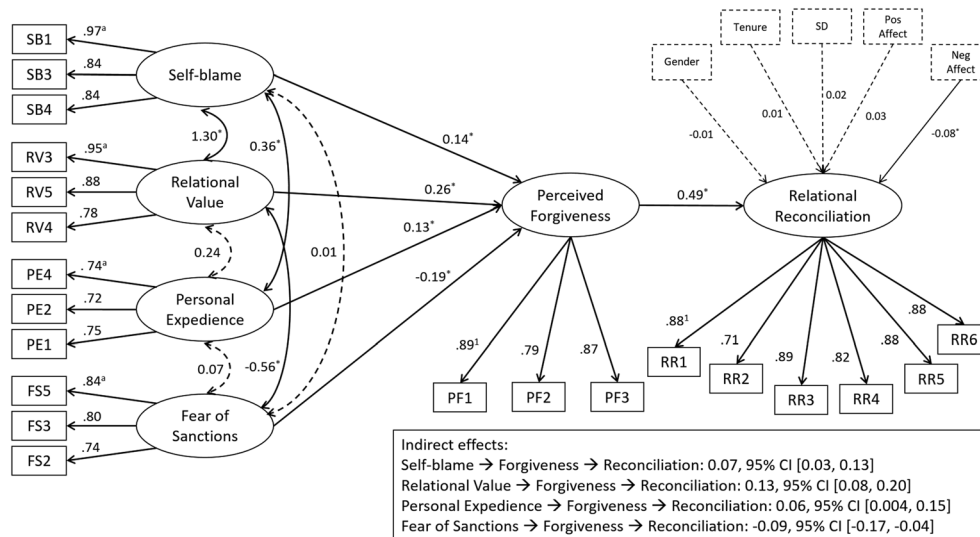


FIGURE 1 Study 3 Structural equation model with apology motives predicting transgressor perceptions of forgiveness and reconciliation. Note. $N = 420$. Boxes represent observed variables; ovals represent latent variables. Boxes with dashed borders represent control variables modeled using scale means. Except for gender, age, and tenure, all other variables measured using 7-point Likert-type scales. Path parameters (including indirect effects) estimated using maximum likelihood estimation with standard errors generated by bootstrapping estimates 5,000 times. The solid lines denote significant relations; the dashed lines denote relations that were not significant. The straight lines between latent variables (with names) and observed variables (with initials) denote factor loadings. All other straight lines denote regression paths. The curved lines denote covariances. Coefficients on regression paths and covariances are unstandardized. Covariances between control variables not shown. For gender, 0 = female and 1 = male. Tenure = number of years at current organization. SD = social desirability.

Observed variable used to fix scale of latent variable.
 $p < .05$. All indirect effects were significant as 95% CIs did not include 0.

forgiveness and relational reconciliation, $b = 0.49$, $SE = .08$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = [0.33, 0.66].

To test for mediation paths outlined in Hypothesis 4, we generated indirect effects using a product-of-coefficients approach and tested for statistical significance using confidence intervals constructed by bootstrapping estimates 5,000 times (MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007). Results fully supported Hypothesis 4 as all of the confidence intervals excluded 0. Specifically, (1) the positive indirect effect of self-blame on relational reconciliation through perceived victim forgiveness was significant, $IDE = 0.07$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI = [0.03, 0.13]; (2) the positive indirect effect of relational value was significant, $IDE = 0.13$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI = [0.08, 0.20]; (3) the positive indirect effect of personal expedience was significant, $IDE = 0.06$, $SE = .04$, 95% CI = [0.004, 0.15]; and (4) the negative indirect effect of fear of sanction was significant, $IDE = -0.09$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI = [-0.17, -0.04].

Results from these analyses suggest that participant characteristics do not influence endorsement of apology motives. For the self-blame motive, endorsement did not significantly differ by gender ($b = 0.04$, $SE = .18$, $p = .82$, 95% CI = [-0.32, 0.40]) nor tenure ($b = -0.01$, $SE = .02$, $p = .62$, 95% CI = [-0.04, 0.03]). Similarly, for the relational value motive, endorsement did not significantly differ by gender ($b = -0.08$, $SE = .18$, $p = .67$, 95% CI = [-0.08, 0.28]) nor tenure ($b = 0.03$, $SE = .02$, $p = .12$, 95% CI = [-0.01, 0.06]). For the personal expedience motive, endorsement did not significantly differ by gender ($b = -0.20$, $SE = .12$, $p = .09$, 95% CI = [-0.43, 0.03]) nor tenure ($b = -0.01$, $SE = .01$, $p = .49$, 95% CI = [-0.01, 0.01]). Finally, for the fear of sanctions motive, endorsement did not significantly differ by gender ($b = -0.11$, $SE = .16$, $p = .46$, 95% CI = [-0.42, 0.19]) nor tenure ($b = -0.03$, $SE = .01$, $p = .06$, 95% CI = [-0.06, 0.001]).

4.3.4 | Post hoc supplementary analyses

Following up on Study 1 analyses, we again examined whether participant gender and organizational tenure predict endorsement of each motive. Consistent with Study 1, gender and organizational tenure were not significantly correlated with the apology motives (see Table 7). Nonetheless, following Study 1, we conducted a series of regression analyses, separately regressing endorsement of each motive on participant gender (0 = female, 1 = male) and on organizational tenure (in years).

4.4 | Discussion

Results from Study 3 provided support for our predictions regarding the relations between apology motives and transgressor perceptions. Despite all transgressors having apologized, they varied in their perceptions of victim forgiveness, as well as relationship reconciliation, depending on why they apologized. Moreover, all apology motives appeared to exert independent effects on transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness, with some being positive (self-blame, personal expedience, and relational value) and others being negative (fear of sanctions). Transgressors, who apologized due to self-blame, relational

value, or personal expedience, were also likely to perceive more forgiveness from victims. This, in turn, was positively associated with their perceptions of relationship reconciliation. In contrast, transgressors who apologized because they fear repercussions were also likely to perceive less forgiveness and reconciliation.

5 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present research was an initial attempt at examining the transgressor perspective in the apology–forgiveness–reconciliation process. We first uncovered distinct motives that underlie transgressors decision to apologize. Next, adopting a motivated cognition approach, we drew on the reconfiguration principle (Huang & Bargh, 2014) to demonstrate the effect of transgressor apology motives on their perceptions of victim forgiveness and reconciliation.

5.1 | Theoretical implications

Our research directly addresses calls for more research on the transgressor perspective during the apology–forgiveness–reconciliation process (e.g., Bies et al., 2016 ; Palanski, 2012). More specifically, the research makes three important contributions. First, whereas there has been speculation about the reasons why transgressors may decide to apologize, our research is among one of the first to examine this issue systematically. We used both qualitative and quantitative methods (involving four employee samples) to uncover four distinct motives for apologizing: self-blame, relational value, personal expedience, and fear of sanctions. Clearly, then, from the perspective of transgressors, apologizing in the workplace is a multifaceted behavior that can fulfill multiple goals. Although seemingly intuitive, this multidimensional perspective on apology has not yet been incorporated into existing apology research. By uncovering and identifying distinct motives for apologizing, our research can therefore inform future theory and empirical work on apology-giving, an area in need of research attention.

Second, our research highlights the role of transgressor motives in shaping their perceptions of the reconciliation process. Our findings are consistent with the body of research on motivated cognition, which demonstrates that people's perceptions of others can be filtered through their motives, leading them to interpret targets in ways that support desired conclusions (Barclay et al., 2017; Huang & Bargh, 2014; Kunda, 1990). Interpersonal transgressions are inherently ambiguous events in which the parties may have differing views, and forgiveness must be inferred by transgressors because it is a process occurring within the victim. Such ambiguity and uncertainty leave room for transgressor apology motives to shape their perceptions of the reconciliation process.

Knowing that apology motives can shape transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness and relationship reconciliation has important theoretical implications. In particular, our research may help scholars to better understand when and why apologies will be more or less effective in promoting dyadic reconciliation from the transgressor

perspective. For example, victims might be forgiving after receiving an apology, but transgressors who apologized out of fear of sanctions may be overly vigilant to unforgiveness cues (e.g., expressions of anger) and perceive the relationship as unreconciled. Conversely, transgressors who apologized due to relational value may be overly attentive to cues of forgiveness (e.g., expressions of empathy) and overestimate the degree of forgiveness granted by victims. This, in turn, could lead transgressors to believe that the relationship has been reconciled and victims believe the opposite. Such misalignments between victim and transgressor perceptions can fuel further conflict (Palanski, 2012).

More generally, our research reinforces the call for a paradigmatic shift in how scholars conceptualize and study reconciliation. Whereas past research has adopted a victim-centric view of reconciliation, our research aligns with calls for the dyadic conceptualization of reconciliation. Under the dyadic conceptualization, true reconciliation occurs when both victims and transgressors believe that the relationship is restored to a functional state (Bies et al., 2016; Palanski, 2012). Our research suggests that motivational and cognitive processes occurring within transgressors have important implications for their perceptions of reconciliation. Future research and theoretical models of reconciliation are needed to incorporate other transgressor-specific antecedents. For example, it may be fruitful to consider the role of transgressor dispositional factors (Howell, Dopko, Turowski, & Buro, 2011), transgressor power (Zheng, van Dijke, Leunissen, Giurge, & De Cremer, 2016), or transgressor regret (Exline et al., 2007) when theorizing about the role of apology in the reconciliation process. Ultimately, to understand dyadic reconciliation, more research and theorizing about the transgressor perspective is needed.

5.2 | Practical implications

Our results also have practical implications for how managers should attempt to promote reconciliation in the workplace in the aftermath of transgressions among coworkers. Given that apology motives influence transgressor perceptions of victim forgiveness and reconciliation, it is important that transgressors apologize for the reasons that facilitate these perceptions. Otherwise, transgressors may fail to perceive actual forgiveness from victims, which would lead them to perceive the relationship as unreconciled.

Therefore, if managers intervene in interpersonal conflict between coworkers, our model suggests that dyadic reconciliation may be promoted by activating certain apology motives. For example, through dialogue with the transgressor, managers may try to facilitate transgressors' understanding of why their prior actions constituted wrongdoing toward the victim—potentially activating the self-blame motive for apology. Managers may also attempt to highlight to transgressors the value of their relationship with the victim—thereby activating the relational value motive. When apology is offered for these reasons, transgressors are open to perceiving victim forgiveness and reconciliation. Importantly, our research also demonstrates that unilaterally

demanding transgressors to apologize in the aftermath of an offense may be ineffective in reconciling transgressions. Although unilaterally demanding an apology may be well-intentioned out of concern for the victim, it may activate the fear of sanctions motive, which could hinder reconciliation and heighten conflict.

5.3 | Limitations

Despite contributing to a novel area of study, our conclusions are limited by some methodological choices. First, we employed cross-sectional designs with self-report data from one source. Both of these choices can inflate CMV, potentially confounding our empirical results (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Moreover, as with any cross-sectional correlational design, we cannot draw inferences regarding causality. Still, we did attempt to offset CMV by controlling for common sources of method variance such as social desirability and affectivity (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We also used a conservative analytic methodology (PA) and decision criteria (in factor and item retention) when developing the apology motives scales. Nevertheless, to fully address concerns regarding CMV and the issue of causality, future research should use longitudinal cross-panel designs and multisource data.

Second, we utilized a critical incident methodology in which participants recalled times that they apologized and their reasons for doing so. Although the recall methodology is common in research on forgiveness, reconciliation, and mistreatment more generally (e.g., Aquino et al., 2006; Barclay & Saldanha, 2016; Okimoto et al., 2013), memory distortion effects may affect the quality of the data. Nonetheless, similar to recent research on forgiveness motives (Cox et al., 2012), collecting personal apology experiences allowed us to capture realistic and significant variance in apology motives, which enhances the ecological validity of the research. This may not have been possible if, for example, we attempted to induce interpersonal conflict in a laboratory setting and instructed participants to apologize.

5.4 | Future directions

Our results offer several novel avenues for future research, two of which we highlight briefly below. First, research on motivation suggests that in addition to attention and perception, salient motives also affect effort during goal pursuit (Schmidt, Beck, & Gillespie, 2013). Accordingly, apology motives may not only shape transgressor perceptions but also the effort that they expend in apologizing. For example, when apologizing due to relational value to a well-liked victim, the transgressor may exert higher effort by offering a multi-faceted apology with various apology components (see Fehr & Gelfand, 2010; Kirchhoff, Wagner, & Strack, 2012; Lewicki, Polin, & Lount, 2016). In contrast, when apologizing due to the fear of sanctions motive, transgressors may provide a simplistic or perfunctory apology. Given that multifaceted apologies are seen as more acceptable by victims (Fehr & Gelfand, 2010), apology motives may therefore indirectly influence actual victim forgiveness via the content of the transgressor's apology.

If so, then apology motives may also indirectly shape victim perceptions of reconciliation (Aquino et al., 2006; McCullough et al., 1998). Overall, the relations between apology motives, apology effort, and reconciliation warrant further research.

Second, it would be very interesting to move up in the causal chain to examine the determinants of apology motives. To do so, one might draw on prior research that has examined factors influencing people's willingness to apologize. For example, prior research has demonstrated that dispositional traits, such as agreeableness and narcissism, may differentially affect people's willingness to apologize (Howell et al., 2011). We suspect such traits might also influence likelihood of endorsing particular apology motives. Similarly, some research has demonstrated that women are more likely to apologize than men (Schumann & Ross, 2010), suggesting that gender may affect apology motives. For example, given that women generally prescribed to be communal (Heilman, 2001), they may be more likely to apologize due to relational value than men. Conversely, given that men are generally prescribed to be task-oriented (Heilman, 2001), they may be more likely to apologize due to personal expedience than women. We did not find support for these ideas in the current research, but future research should systematically examine the role of gender and other transgressor factors that could influence the activation of different apology motives.

6 | CONCLUSION

Why do transgressors apologize after an interpersonal offense at work and how do apology motives shape transgressor perceptions of reconciliation? The current research begins to address these questions using qualitative and quantitative survey methods to develop a typology of transgressor motives for apologizing. Results revealed four distinct motives for apologizing, highlighting the multidimensional nature of apology-giving. Furthermore, apology motives were associated with transgressor perceptions of the extent to which victims forgive them, and, in turn, the degree to which their relationship is reconciled. Altogether, our research highlights apology motives as a determinant of transgressor perceptions of reconciliation, underscoring calls to better understand the transgressor perspective in the reconciliation process.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors do not have any conflicts of interest to declare.

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