

# Promoting Forgiveness toward Christians by LGBTQ Respondents Using Apology and Perspective-taking

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Recently, conflict has escalated between some Christians and groups such as the LGBTQ community. Two variables have been identified consistently as promoting forgiveness in people experiencing hurt or offense: receiving an apology and taking the perspective of the offender. In Study 1, we put this to a stringent test by examining effects of those variables during a time of high public conflict between people identifying as LGBTQ and Christians. Participants (N = 96) self-identified as either LGBTQ or non-Christian. They either watched an apology video by a Christian or a control video. They described a past offense from a Christian, either from their own or the offender's perspective and rated their forgiveness of it. Religious identification (as well as sex and education) affected the amount of forgiveness experienced. Apology and perspective-taking had no effects on forgiveness or positive attitudes toward Christians. We suggested that the heightened public conflict overshadowed effects found in more neutral measurement situations in the past. In Study 2, we retained the same methodology but gathered data at a less tense time. We compared the data from Study 1 with the data from Study 2. We found that the timing of the study did significantly impact forgiveness, however apology and perspective remained ineffective. Results are discussed in light of previous research.

Sometimes antagonisms develop between Christians and members of other groups who might feel slighted, judged, or criticized by Christians. For Christians who emphasize compassion and grace, it is important to determine ways through which these groups might possibly be reconciled. Specifically, what could be done by Christians to foster forgiveness in members of those groups who feel they have been hurt by Christians? In the past several years, Christian groups have often been in the news for their protest against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community, same-sex marriage, or even prejudice against individuals who identify openly as LGBTQ. Hence, negative attitudes toward Christians have arisen among those who have been the target of hate, prejudice, discrimination, or perceived judgment due to their identity. Conflict can arise between members of any non-Christian group and Christians or even any group that believes its existence is threatened by Christian judgments.

There are prominent examples of extreme antipathy by some Christians toward LGBTQ-identified people. For example, the Westboro Baptist Church demonstrated their vehement

opposition to homosexuality when they picketed military funerals because they believe that military deaths are God's judgment for homosexuality. Of course, various Christian political groups oppose same-sex marriage and homosexuals serving openly in the military (Reilly, 2012). It is easy to see how members of the LGBTQ community might feel betrayed by Christians. They might feel that they are the object of prejudice or discrimination by Christians. Although Christian extremists can be dismissed as an inconvenient and out of touch minority of USA citizens, there is also opposition among many who are not Christians. In fact, 48% of Americans oppose same-sex marriage, and 30% oppose homosexuals serving openly in the military (Pew Forum, 2010). Thus, members of the LGBTQ community still face opposition from people in the general population. Opposition to complete acceptance of an LGBTQ political agenda has been common and particularly vocal from many religious groups. The Pew Forum reported that 59% of Protestants and 42% of Catholics opposed same-sex marriage and 37% of Protestants and 23% of Catholics opposed homosexuals openly serving in the military (Pew Forum, 2010). We do observe in passing that these opinions are far from universal among Christians. Rather, substantial fractions of Christians also are supportive of those who identify as LGBTQ and of the political agendas advanced by LGBTQ organizations. Holding Christian beliefs

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does not preclude holding positive attitudes toward the LGBTQ community and individuals who identify as LGBTQ people.

Several factors predict who might and might not support people who identify as LGBTQ. Ford, Brignall, VanValey, and Macaluso (2009) found that right-wing authoritarianism and political conservatism predicted prejudice toward homosexuals. They also found that internalized Christian beliefs were correlated with less prejudicial behavior and more positive attitudes toward homosexuals as individuals and as a group. These findings likely obscure theological differences among Christians. More theologically liberal Christians are likely to be more supportive, and more theologically conservative Christians are likely to be more critical, of the LGBTQ political agenda (Haidt, 2012). Our hope is that Christians of whatever theological ilk would be supportive of people who identify as LGBTQ.

Haidt (2012) reasoned, from an evolutionary perspective, that political liberals tend to judge events by giving heavy weighting to fairness and justice issues. When injustices are perceived, people can deal with them in a variety of ways, including turning the matter over to God, forbearing, seeking just political solutions, accepting the injustice and moving on with life, or forgiving (Worthington, 2006). Exline, Worthington, Hill, and McCullough (2003) posited an *injustice gap*—the perceived difference between the ways a person would like to have an issue resolved and the way the person perceives things to stand at present. They theorized that the size of the *injustice gap* would be proportional to the difficulty of forgiving. This *injustice gap* is a perception, and as such can be affected by events that draw attention to heightened injustice or aspects of the situation that suggest justice is occurring. For example, consider a person (call him Jim) who has in the past felt that a Christian (call him Pastor Frank) has judged and rejected him on the basis of LGBTQ identity. Jim feels that the transgression inflicted 10 (hypothetical) units of hurt (an arbitrarily selected abstract number for the purpose of illustration). Current situations could affect his perception of the injustice. For example, suppose Pastor Frank approached Jim with deep remorse, contrition, tears, and humble apology. The perceived *injustice gap* might be reduced (at least temporarily and one would hope permanently) to, say, 5 units. Suppose Jim also thought about pressures that had impinged upon Pastor Frank from other congregants, the denominational leadership, etc. Jim might feel that the *injustice gap* were even lower,

say 3. Relevant events that mitigate the hurt can affect Jim's *injustice gap* and likely affect the ease and degree of forgiveness he experienced.

In fact, apologies by the offender and perspective-taking by the victim have been found to consistently be related to increased forgiveness (for a meta-analysis, see Fehr & Gelfand, 2010). For example, to promote forgiveness (and one would hope to make reconciliation more likely) Christians who wanted to promote forgiveness by LGBTQ-identified people might act to reduce the perceived *injustice gap* by offering public apologies for the wrongdoing or prejudice of Christians. People who were identified as LGBTQ might also promote their own forgiveness through empathically taking the perspective of Christians who might have been judgmental. Ahmed, Azar, and Mullet (2007) found that an apology from the perpetrators of violence following intergroup conflict predicted higher willingness to forgive from victims. This is a common finding (for a meta-analysis, see Van Tongeren, Burnette, O'Boyle, Worthington, & Forsyth, 2012). Similarly, Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger, and Niens (2006) found that outgroup perspective-taking predicted intergroup forgiveness in a sample from Northern Ireland (see also the review and meta-analysis by Van Tongeren et al., 2012). Let us give a more thorough review of this research to establish the efficacy of apology and perspective-taking at promoting forgiveness.

### **Apologies Promote Forgiveness**

Apologies are important in many religious and cultural aspects. A true apology is more than a simple, quick statement. A true apology consists of a person recognizing that they have hurt someone else, feeling remorseful about that action, taking responsibility for the harm, and actively making amends (Oliner, 2008). Slocum, Allan, and Allan (2011), using interviews from 23 people hurt in an interpersonal relationship, found three key components to an apology. Effective apologies should have (a) an affective component that should include conveying feelings of remorse and other-focused emotions, (b) an affirmation component that should include identifying the wrong done, taking responsibility for the wrong, and explaining why the wrong was done, and (c) an action component that should include some attempt at reparation. Kirchhoff, Wagner, and Strack (2012) found that the four most important elements of an apology to be the apology statement, admission of fault,

emotion, and explanation. Apologies that included less than these four elements were less effective prompting forgiveness, and having more than these four elements did not significantly increase forgiveness.

Intergroup apology for wrongs committed in religious, ethnic, and political conflicts have become increasingly important in recent years. Well-known apologies include those made by Pope John Paul II to Jews, Muslims, Africans, and others hurt by the actions or inactions of the Catholic Church; President Bill Clinton to native Hawaiians, Guatemalans, Haitians, Japanese Americans, and Rwandans; German leaders to the Jews about Germany's actions during the Holocaust; both sides of the Protestant-Catholic conflict in Northern Ireland; and American leaders to the Japanese-Americans for their internment during WWII. While many intergroup apologies have varied in their effectiveness, they have played an important role in many conflicts in facilitating forgiveness and reconciliation in many conflicts (Oliner, 2008).

Montiel (2002) defined apology as an acknowledgement of the wrong done, a demonstration of remorse, and an act toward restoration. Ahmed and colleagues (2007) found that an apology from the perpetrators of violence following intergroup conflict predicted higher willingness to forgive from victims. Meta-analyses conducted by Fehr, Gelfand, and Nag (2010) and by Fehr and Gelfand (2010) found apologies to be positively correlated with forgiveness.

Apology is not always effective in promoting forgiveness, however. Ferguson et al. (2007) conducted a natural experiment of the effect of an apology by the IRA in Northern Ireland for the harm they had caused noncombatants. Using articles and editorials found in local newspapers, they discovered that many people found the apology to be inadequate, others reacted with anger against the IRA, and many also recalled the numerous harmful acts committed by the IRA. Struthers, Eaton, Santelli, Uchiyama, and Shirvani (2008) found that apology can have negative effects on forgiveness depending on the impression the victim has of the perpetrator and their intent to harm.

### **Perspective-Taking Promotes Forgiveness**

Empathy has been found to promote forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1998). One way to promote empathy is to invite people to take the perspective of the offender. Takaku (2001) studied a hypothetical transgression by a fictitious classmate that participants who took the perspective of the

transgressor along with reading an apology. He found that perspective-takers were more likely to forgive than those participants who did not engage in perspective-taking. Hewstone and colleagues (2006) found that outgroup perspective-taking predicted intergroup forgiveness in a study of the conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland.

However, perspective-taking does not always promote empathy nor forgiveness. For example, Exline and Zell (2009) found that, for women, perspective-taking can lead to feelings of anger, which in turn can lead to less forgiving attitudes. Toussaint and Webb (2005) found that empathy was not correlated with forgiveness cognition or affects. They also found that empathy was more important to forgiveness in men than in women. While women were more empathic than men, empathy did not induce women to forgive as much. If one believes that the offender has hostile attitudes toward one, then taking the offender's perspective is likely to provoke less forgiveness and more hostile attitudes as reciprocation.

Empathy can be affected by stereotypes. When one does not personally know another person, one relies on stereotypes to determine what they are thinking or feeling (Lewis & Hodges, 2012). Galinsky, Wang, and Ku (2008) found that perspective-taking can lead a person to act more stereotypically, adopting both the positive and negative attributes of the target. Vorauer, Martens, and Sasaki (2009) found that perspective-taking within intergroup interactions can lead to inconsistent attitudes and behaviors as people who score low in prejudice behave less positively toward the other group. In the present two studies, we seek to use empathy-promoting perspective taking to increase forgiveness and positive attitudes toward Christians.

### **Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is distinctly different from accepting or justifying an offender's behavior. Forgiveness is also different from reconciliation (Worthington, 2006). According to Worthington (2006), forgiveness can involve either the release of negative emotions toward the offender without replacing those negative emotions with positive emotions toward the offender or a release of negative emotions accompanied with replacing those emotions with positive ones. Worthington (2006) argued that the type of relationship in which the offense occurred affects forgiveness. If the offense occurred in a close, meaningful relationship, then

replacing negative emotions toward the offender with positive emotions and behaviors becomes more important. Rye et al. (2001) also defined forgiveness as both letting go of negative emotions, attitudes, and behavior toward the offender and the presence of positive reactions toward the offender. Forgiveness is important and has been shown to have positive effects on health and well-being (for a review see Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, & Miller, 2007).

Studies of interpersonal forgiveness have also led to an understanding of the many correlates of forgiveness. These have included (among others) sex (for a review and meta-analysis, see Miller, Worthington, & McDaniel, 2008), higher education (Idemudia & Mahri, 2011), and degree of perceived hurt (McLernon, Cairns, Hewstone, & Smith, 2004).

Intergroup forgiveness is a slow and difficult undertaking due to the sheer numbers and variety of people involved (Oliner, 2008). Intergroup forgiveness has not yet been widely studied, and what studies have been done have focused on Northern Ireland, South Africa, Rwanda and other nations that recently had intrastate conflicts.

### **Outgroup Attitudes**

We often define ourselves by the groups we belong to, and while this helps us to organize our world, it can also lead to prejudice, bias, and discrimination against those not in our group. As related to our sample populations in the current study, Jackson and Hunsberger (1999) found members of the ingroup tend to have more negative attitudes, or exhibit greater prejudice, toward members of their outgroup than members of their ingroup. Their research focused on Christians and non-Christians. They found that prejudice works both ways though the prejudice non-Christians displayed for Christians was not as strong. In the context of intergroup conflict, Hewstone et al. (2006) found that having more positive attitudes toward an outgroup predicted greater levels of forgiveness.

In sum, apologies tend to promote forgiveness in many circumstances, but not in others. One socially relevant and yet uninvestigated area is whether viewing an apology by an explicit Christian, on behalf of Christians, for mistreatment and prejudice against LGBTQ-identified people will promote forgiveness by someone who is self-identified as LGBTQ. The issue is highly socially relevant, and it is not a foregone conclusion that viewing such an apology would promote forgiveness. Much might depend on who offers the apology and what his or her motivation is discerned to

be, the degree of authority the apologizer is perceived to have as a spokesperson for Christians, many personal characteristics of those viewing the apology (such as their empathy for the apologizer), and situational factors that might make the issue more or less salient at the time of the apology. In both studies, we selected a publicly available video (YouTube) by a man who has no particular authority to speak for Christians and in all likelihood is unknown to participants and thus has no special call upon their perspective-taking and empathy. This relatively weak situation provided a stringent test of our hypothesis that viewing the apology will instigate forgiveness.

### **Purpose and Hypotheses**

The primary purpose of these studies was to determine the effectiveness of an apology and perspective taking on the attitudes of LGBTQ individuals toward Christians. Specifically, we examined the effects that viewing an apology (or not) and perspective taking would have on the willingness to forgive and express a positive attitude toward Christians who had offended either a self-identified LGBTQ person or a non-Christian. Our general hypothesis was that there would be a significant interaction of apology and perspective taking on the willingness to forgive and hold a positive attitude toward Christians. Given the historical events of protests about gay marriage occurring during Study 1, we also expected time of study to interact with apology and perspective taking.

### **Study 1**

In this first study, we offer the following three hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: Apology and empathy-promoting or non-empathy-promoting perspectives will interact. For the non-empathy promoting perspective, the apology and no-apology conditions will not differ. But for the empathy-promoting perspective, the apology will be more effective (i.e., increase of positive emotion, promote more reduction of negative emotion, and increase of positive attitudes toward Christians) than no apology.

H<sub>2</sub>: Apology will lead to greater forgiveness (i.e., increase in positive emotions and reduction of negative emotions both indicating that forgiving has occurred) and more positive

attitudes toward Christians (also indicating that forgiveness has occurred).

H<sub>3</sub>: Empathy-promoting perspective will lead to greater forgiveness (i.e., increase in positive emotions and reduction of negative emotions both indicating that forgiving has occurred) and more positive attitudes toward Christians (also indicating that forgiveness has occurred).

## Method

### Participants

**Full sample.** Participants were recruited through an online survey company, Qualtrics.com®. In order to be eligible, participants had to identify either as LGBTQ or non-Christians as well as identify past or present conflict with Christians. In total, 114 participants took part in our study. Of those, 18 were excluded due to missing or incomplete data. Data analysis was conducted on the results from the remaining 96 participants. Participants included 48 women and 48 men with a median age of 38.5 and a range of ages from 19 to 72. Most of the sample was White (i.e., 74%); 17% Latino/Latina American; 5% Asian American; 3% African American; and 1% other. Education of the participants varied (37% obtained a Bachelor's degree, 22% obtained a high school diploma, 23% a vocational degree, 10% a graduate degree, 3% professional degrees, and 5% other). A majority of the participants self-identified as a member of the LGBTQ community ( $n = 62$ ; with 34 as also self-classifying as nonreligious and 27 as religious/spiritual). Overall, 58 participants identified as not religious (atheist, agnostic, or no religious affiliation) and 38 participants as religious (belonging to a religious denomination) or spiritual. Because we removed participants with missing data, cell sizes were unequal: 20 participants were in the apology- and non-empathy-promoting-perspective condition; 31 participants were in the apology and empathy-promoting perspective condition; 33 participants were in the no apology and non-empathy-promoting perspective; and 12 participants were in the no apology and empathy-promoting perspective condition.

**Manipulation check.** Preliminary review of the data revealed that some people provided good evidence that they had thought about the issues; they wrote thorough accounts of the offenses they were rating. (It might be true that others actually

thought carefully about the stimulus materials, but they did not provide evidence of doing so. Thus, each person's responses were coded as providing evidence of serious consideration or no evidence.) Those who were coded as giving serious evidence of considering the issues were  $n = 72$  participants. This subsample consisted of those participants who thoroughly described a conflict they had with Christians either from their own perspective or the offender's perspective indicating that they thought more seriously about the conflict from either their own perspective or the offender's perspective. Analyses demonstrated that results were essentially the same for the subsample as for the entire sample; thus, we used the full sample for all analyses.

### Design

We used a 2 (apology versus no apology) x 2 (empathy-promoting versus non-empathy-promoting perspective) factorial design. An experimental design was used in which people either did or did not view a video of a public apology of a Christian for the treatment of LGBTQ individuals by Christians. In addition, people were instructed to view an offense they identified from the viewpoint of the offender (which was intended to promote empathy for Christians) or from their own point of view (which was intended to not promote empathy for Christians) in their written summary of the nature and extent of the conflict.

### Independent Variables

**Apology videos.** The apology video used in this study was found on YouTube. We used this video because it contained an apology that everyone could view. Permission to use part of the video was obtained by the creator of the video. The video was one-minute long and was uploaded to a web page created specifically for this study. The link to the video was embedded in the survey. The video contained a young, European American, Christian man who offered a statement of apology on behalf of Christians to those who have been hurt by Christians in the past. He admitted that Christians have transgressed against many groups though he specifically addresses atheists and LGBTQ individuals both of which he admitted that the Church has often condemned. He offered an explanation as to why Christians have acted in these ways while maintaining that it is not the correct way to engage others. The video contained three elements used by Kirchhoff and colleagues (2012): apology statement, admission of fault, and explanation. Furthermore, the fourth element found to be an important aspect of apology

**Table 1**

*Means and Standard Deviations for Positive Emotion in Forgiveness, Absence of Negative Emotion in Forgiveness, and Positive Outgroup Attitudes (N=96)*

		Non-Empathy-Promoting Perspective		Empathy-Promoting Perspective	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Forgiveness Positive	Apology	11.25	4.25	12.48	2.84
	Forgiveness Negative	33.35	7.31	35.23	5.92
	Positive Attitude to Outgroup	34.70	31.90	38.35	22.06
Forgiveness Positive	No Apology	13.33	2.85	12.08	3.53
	Forgiveness Negative	36.27	8.06	36.83	8.44
	Positive Attitude to Outgroup	32.79	27.76	42.00	24.71

*Note.* Higher scores on both positive emotion in forgiveness and forgiveness absence of negative emotion in forgiveness correspond to greater forgiveness (as does a more positive attitude toward the outgroup (i.e., Christians).

according to Kirchoff and colleagues (2012), emotion, was also present to some degree. The apology took 60 seconds. A control video (73 seconds) was used for the no apology condition and it discussed optical illusions.

**Perspective-taking.** To determine whether taking the perspective of the offending Christian during a remembered transgression affected participants' forgiveness of or attitude toward Christians, we asked each participant to write a short paragraph about a time of conflict they had with Christians either from the perspective of the offender (called the empathy-promoting perspective) or from their own perspective as having been offended (called the non-empathy-promoting perspective).

## Measures

**Demographic questionnaire.** Participants completed information about their religious identification, sex, educational background, ethnicity, and age.

**Forgiveness.** The Rye Forgiveness Scale (Rye et al., 2001) was used to measure forgiveness of the outgroup, which in this study was the Christian church. The scale consists of 15 items measured on a Likert-type rating scale of 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The scale was modified (minimally) for measuring intergroup forgiveness rather than interpersonal forgiveness. Each item referred to the person who committed the transgression; for

the present study, we changed all references to "the person" to "the group." Furthermore, one item referred to praying for the person who committed the wrong. This item was deleted in our study because many of our participants were nonreligious. Factor analysis completed by Rye et al. (2001) found two distinct factors in the scale: the presence of positive emotion (e.g., "I wish for good things to happen to the person [group] that wronged me") and the absence of negative emotion ("I can't stop thinking about how I was wronged by this person [group]"). Therefore, in our study forgiveness was divided into those two factors instead of one single forgiveness variable. Thus, on presence of positive emotion, higher scores indicate more forgiveness, and on absence of negative emotion, higher scores indicate more forgiveness. Rye et al. (2001) found Cronbach's alpha for the presence of positive emotion to be  $\alpha = .78$  and for the absence of negative emotion subscale to be  $\alpha = .83$ . In the present study, we found Cronbach's alpha to be  $\alpha = .78$  for scores on the positive emotion subscale and  $\alpha = .86$  for scores on the negative emotion subscale.

**Attitudes toward Christians.** To assess the attitude our participants had toward Christians who discriminate against LGBTQ people, after the introduction of the independent variables, we asked participants to rate (i.e., 0 = *extremely negative feelings* to 100 = *extremely positive feelings*)

**Table 2**  
*Summary of Univariate Intercorrelations between Variables for Study 1*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Perceived Hurt	1	-.015	-.289**	.022	.007	-.418**	.005
2. Sex		1	.001	-.213*	.111	.252*	-.038
3. Education level			1	.043	.029	.207*	-.031
4. Religiousness				1	.196	.103	.277**
5. Positive Forgiveness					1	.192	.363**
6. Negative Forgiveness						1	.065
7. Positive Attitudes to Outgroup							1

*Note.* Perceived hurt was measured on a scale from 1 (not hurt at all by the conflict) to 10 (extremely hurt by the conflict). Sex was coded as 1 for men and 2 for women. Education was coded as 1 for high school or vocational education and 2 for bachelor's degree or higher. Religiousness was coded as 0 for not religious/spiritual and 1 for religious/spiritual.

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

how they felt toward the outgroup (which is Christians who express either prejudice or discrimination against LGBTQ people or non-Christians). Tausch et al. (2010) used a similar single-item measure to assess attitudes toward an outgroup following intergroup conflict.

**Procedure**

Participants were first given the consent form. Then, participants were asked to identify as either a member of the LGBTQ community or as from a non-Christian religious affiliation or as both or as neither. If participants did not identify as neither, then they were directed to the end of the survey. Participants were also asked to whether they had felt hurt or offended by the Christian church as a result of their identification with the aforementioned groups. If they responded yes, then participants were asked to briefly explain the incident and they rated the degree of hurt they felt as a result of the offense. If they responded no, then they were redirected to the end of the survey. Participants then completed a demographics questionnaire. Participants watched one of two approximately one-minute videos (randomly determined). One video was a control video from YouTube which discussed optical illusions. The other video was the experimental video which was an apology from a Christian man to members of the LGBTQ community and non-Christians.

Then, participants described their experience of having been hurt by a Christian either from their own perspective (i.e., as an out-group member, either LGBTQ or non-Christian) or from the Christian offender's perspective (randomly determined). Finally, participants completed an intergroup forgiveness scale and rated their attitude toward Christians. Participants were directed to a debriefing statement which thanked them for their participation.

**Results**

Means and standard deviations for all variables are tabulated in Table 1 by condition (i.e., in an apology versus control x empathy-promoting versus non-empathy-promoting perspective). In Table 2, we also reported univariate correlations between the measures of forgiveness and the initial variables (e.g., hurtfulness of the offense) and dichotomous variables (i.e., sex, religious identification, education, and self-identification as LGBTQ or not). Analysis of the correlations between the dependent variables suggested weak overlap and thus led us to use univariate tests instead of one multivariate test. According to preliminary data screening, no assumptions for analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were violated. Skew and kurtosis were within acceptable ranges for all variables. Levene's test was not significant

(using  $\alpha = .05$ ) for any dependent variable which indicated the assumption of equality of variances was not violated. We computed three separate 2 (apology, no apology)  $\times$  2 (empathy-promoting versus non-empathy-promoting perspective) factorial analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) using the presence of positive emotion in forgiveness, the absence of negative emotion in forgiveness, and positive attitude toward the outgroup as dependent variables and using religious identification as the covariate.

To determine which participant characteristics most affected levels of forgiveness and positive attitudes toward the outgroup, we ran a series of independent samples t-tests testing differences in religious identification, sex, education, and LGBTQ identification. Significant results are summarized here, and full results are found in Table 3. A t-test comparing those who identified religious/spiritual ( $M = 13.26$ ,  $SD = 2.63$ ) versus those who identified as not religious ( $M = 11.95$ ,  $SD = 3.61$ ) showed non-significant differences in the presence of positive emotion in forgiveness,  $t(94) = -1.933$ ,  $p = .056$ . Those who are religious ( $M = 45.13$ ,  $SD = 28.21$ ) had more positive attitudes toward the outgroup than did those who were not religious ( $M = 30.24$ ,  $SD = 23.60$ ),  $t(94) = -2.796$ ,  $p = .006$ . Women ( $M = 37.23$ ,  $SD = 7.11$ ) scored higher than men ( $M = 33.56$ ,  $SD = 7.09$ ) on the absence of negative emotion in forgiveness,  $t(94) = -2.530$ ,  $p = .013$ . Those with at least a bachelor's degree ( $M = 36.90$ ,  $SD = 7.17$ ) scored higher than those who had only a high school diploma or vocational degree ( $M = 33.90$ ,  $SD = 7.18$ ) on the absence of negative emotion in forgiveness,  $t(94) = -2.047$ ,  $p = .043$ . Given the results of the t-tests, we decided to use self-identification of participants as religious/spiritual as a covariate (0 = *not R/S*; 1 = *R/S*) because it had the most impact of the dependent measures and was of most theoretical interest in the present study.

The first ANCOVA used the presence of positive emotion in forgiveness as the dependent variable while covarying out the effect of religious identification. Religious identification of participants was a marginally significant predictor of positive emotion forgiveness,  $F(1, 91) = 3.831$ ,  $p = .053$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .040$ ,  $OP = .491$ . There was no significant interaction effect between apology and perspective-taking on the covariate-adjusted scores,  $F(1, 91) = 2.886$ ,  $p = .093$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .031$ , observed power ( $OP$ ) = .390. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

There were no significant main effects for apology,  $F(1, 91) = 1.443$ ,  $p = .233$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .016$ ,  $OP = .221$ , nor for perspective-taking,  $F(1, 91) = .024$ ,  $p = .878$ , partial  $\eta^2 < .001$ ,  $OP = .053$ . Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

The second ANCOVA used the absence of negative emotion in forgiveness as the dependent variable while covarying out the effect of religious identification. Religious identification of participants was not a significant predictor of negative emotion forgiveness,  $F(1, 91) = .944$ ,  $p = .334$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .010$ ,  $OP = .161$ . There were no significant interaction effects between apology and perspective-taking,  $F(1, 91) = .147$ ,  $p = .702$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ ,  $OP = .067$ . Again, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. There were also no significant main effects for apology,  $F(1, 91) = 1.983$ ,  $p = .163$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .021$ ,  $OP = .286$ , nor for perspective-taking,  $F(1, 91) = .461$ ,  $p = .499$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .005$ ,  $OP = .103$ . Again, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

The third ANCOVA used single-item positive attitude toward the outgroup as the dependent variable while covarying out the effect of religious identification. Religious identification was a significant predictor of positive outgroup attitudes,  $F(1, 91) = 7.267$ ,  $p = .008$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .074$ ,  $OP = .760$ . There were no significant interaction effect between apology and perspective-taking,  $F(1, 91) = .301$ ,  $p = .584$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ ,  $OP = .084$ . Again, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. No significant main effects for apology,  $F(1, 91) = .032$ ,  $p = .858$ , partial  $\eta^2 < .001$ ,  $OP = .054$ , nor for perspective-taking,  $F(96, 1) = .861$ ,  $p = .356$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .009$ ,  $OP = .151$ , were found. Again, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

## Discussion

Despite the wide range of research supporting the positive effects of apology and perspective-taking on forgiveness (for a meta-analysis, see Fehr & Gelfand, 2010), none of our hypotheses were supported. There was not an interaction detected and also neither apology nor perspective-taking had effects on forgiveness as defined as the presence of positive emotion or forgiveness as defined as the absence of negative emotion or on positive attitudes toward the outgroup. This was disappointing in light of the strong body of research indicating that apologies consistently elicit forgiveness (for a meta-analysis, see Fehr & Gelfand, 2010). But, a potential reason for the null results was not hard to imag-

**Table 3**

*Comparisons by Different Classifications Using Demographic Variables on Positive Emotion in Forgiveness (i.e., Positive), Absence of Negative Emotion in Forgiveness (i.e., Negative), and Positive Outgroup Attitudes (i.e., Attitudes) for Study 1 (N=96)*

Demographic Variable	Outcome Variable	Mean (Standard Deviation)	<i>t</i> (df), <i>p</i> -value
<b>Religious/Spiritual (R/S) Identification</b>			
Yes	Positive	13.26 (2.63)	
No	Positive	11.94 (3.61)	<i>t</i> (94) = -1.933, <i>p</i> = .056
Yes	Negative	36.32 (7.53)	
No	Negative	34.79 (7.14)	<i>t</i> (94) = -1.000, <i>p</i> = .320
Yes	Attitudes	45.13 (28.21)	
No	Attitudes	30.24 (23.60)	<i>t</i> (94) = 2.796, <i>p</i> = .006
<b>Sex</b>			
Males	Positive	12.10 (3.87)	
Females	Positive	12.83 (2.62)	<i>t</i> (94) = -1.802, <i>p</i> = .282
Males	Negative	33.56 (7.09)	
Females	Negative	37.23 (7.11)	<i>t</i> (94) = -2.530, <i>p</i> = .013
Males	Attitudes	37.15 (28.96)	
Females	Attitudes	35.13 (23.87)	<i>t</i> (94) = .373, <i>p</i> = .710
<b>LGBTQ Identification</b>			
Yes	Positive	12.63 (3.43)	
No	Positive	12.18 (3.09)	<i>t</i> (94) = .640, <i>p</i> = .524
Yes	Negative	35.77 (7.20)	
No	Negative	34.71 (7.53)	<i>t</i> (94) = .684, <i>p</i> = .496
Yes	Attitudes	37.81 (26.60)	
No	Attitudes	33.09 (26.18)	<i>t</i> (94) = .836, <i>p</i> = .405
<b>Education</b>			
High School/ Vocational	Positive	12.38 (3.28)	
College	Positive	12.56 (3.36)	<i>t</i> (94) = -.277, <i>p</i> = .783
High School/ Vocational	Negative	33.90 (7.19)	
College	Negative	36.90 (7.17)	<i>t</i> (94) = -2.047, <i>p</i> = .043
High School/ Vocational	Attitudes	36.96 (38.37)	
College	Attitudes	35.31 (24.57)	<i>t</i> (94) = .304, <i>p</i> = .762

ine. We had the misfortune to initiate data collection just as a major public controversy went viral. The very week we collected data (near the end of July 2012), a large public controversy erupted and surrounded the issue of perceived judging of LGBTQ-identified people or non-Christians. This surrounded public statements by President of Chick-Fil-A, Dan Cathy, opposing gay marriage. This created heightened attention to the Christian-LGBTQ tensions and inflicted many new perceived offenses by an outspoken Christian on people who identified as LGBTQ. We hypothesized that this public controversy created what social psychology calls a strong situation. This might have over-shadowed any effect of seeing a brief apology by a Christian.

### **Strong Situations**

Strong situations can powerfully order experiences. Recall our earlier example of Jim, who felt judged and Pastor Frank, who did the judging. We showed how the size of the injustice gap could be decreased by either a sincere apology from Pastor Frank or empathic perspective-taking by Jim. However, situations could also work in reverse. Milgram (1974) showed that a strong situation—which he set up as an experimenter who stood near a participant and ordered the participant to deliver shocks to a victim—could overpower personality and other personal demographics to result in a strong increase in the willingness of participants to deliver what they believed to be harmful electric shocks to a helpless victim. Zimbardo (2011) showed that a strong situation could induce Stanford college students to behave like sadistic prison guards.

Thus, it is not unreasonable to expect that within the realm of highly emotionally charged social conflicts, a perceived public transgression could neutralize even a good apology or a sincere effort to take the perspective of the offender. Imagine the furor that attends each new public abuse in any conflicted society. Whenever a terrorist group strikes, existing positive attitudes toward the group quickly fade and are replaced by hostility. Suppose, for example, there were citizens of the United States who had been previously exposed to negative experiences in fundamentalist Islamic countries. Many had forgiven much of the offense. But, on September 11, 2001, when terrorists' attacks flooded the news, all of the old offenses rushed back and were reinforced by new offenses. Individual differences between those who might

have forgiven earlier events and those who might not have forgiven were obliterated by the strong situation.

Discouraged by the public controversy at just the "wrong" time, we realized quickly, though, that we actually had a fortuitous occurrence with the present research. Our original Study 1 was planned to replicate the often-supported finding that apologies and perspective-taking would promote forgiveness (see Fehr & Gelfand, 2010), but to do so in a novel and socially important area. That is, we investigated this apology and perspective-taking intervention to a new and highly relevant area—forgiveness of Christians by people who were members of strong and emotionally committed outgroups (i.e., those who felt wronged or offended due to their LGBTQ identity or those who felt wronged and offended by their non-Christian stance).

But by the end of Study 1, we felt that we had not given a fair test to the hypothesized application of the importance of apology to this new area due to the strong situation of the public uproar about Cathy's comments—pro and con. Basically, our independent variables (viewing an apology and recalling a past offense from one of two directed perspectives was thought to prime more empathic responses, leading to forgiveness. But the public controversy created a priming event that far over-shadowed our primes.

We realized that we should replicate the findings under a less emotionally charged public atmosphere. We literally did not know whether a replication would make any difference because the nature of this volatile issue might always arouse emotion. Thus, our null results of Study 1 might actually turn out to be veridical. Because of its hot-button nature, one might expect that forgiveness might rarely be forthcoming because some event will virtually always become a strong situation that heightens public emotion. We offer this as a possibility, but we believe that the possibility that this alternative explanation is correct is miniscule. Over the years, numerous other hot-button topics have been investigated—the 1994 Rwanda massacre (Staub, Pearlman, & Miller, 2003), the South African abuses of leaders like Eugene deKock (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003), and many others. Apologies and perspective-taking has been shown to promote forgiveness in those cases (see Burnette et al., 2012), so it is unlikely that the LGBTQ-Christian tensions are qualitatively different from those.

There also were scientific reasons to suspect that our null results were veridical. Another reason for this could be that much of the research on the effects of apology and perspective-taking has focused on either interpersonal forgiveness or major intergroup political conflicts in other countries, not the United States. Furthermore, some research suggests that perspective-taking may not always lead to positive results (Exline & Zell, 2009; Galinsky et al., 2008; Toussaint & Webb, 2005; Vorauer et al., 2009). Research on the efficacy of apology does underscore the importance of the content of the apology (Kirchhoff et al., 2012; Slocum et al., 2011) and timing of the apology (Oliner, 2008). Hence our apology condition could have been viewed as insufficient by participants to instigate forgiveness. Furthermore, Montiel (2002) argued that an act of restoration or restitution was an important part of an intergroup apology which was missing in the apology we used in this study. Also, given previous research on correlates of forgiveness, there are a number of factors which affect forgiveness. It is possible that the present research did not adequately control for all of these factors. It is possible that, in our Study 1, the apology's length (one minute) was simply too short to make an impact on attitudes and unforgiveness that has been experienced for years.

This presented a dilemma for us. We knew we needed to replicate to provide a fair test of our hypotheses, but if we changed our methodology substantially, we would have introduced many changes that could be responsible for different results in Study 2. There were a few aspects of Study 1 that made clear interpretation murky. For example, we allowed participants to consider conflicts they had with Christians because they were non-Christian (as well as LGBTQ) and we admitted both people who were self-identified as Christians and non-Christians. In spite of introducing additional explanatory variables for differences between the results of Studies 1 and 2, we felt we needed to make the modifications for experimental clarity and we judged that the magnitude of effects from the methodological changes would be much less than due to the salience of the public controversy. We opted for replicating (with changes) and conducting a post hoc comparison across Study 1 and Study 2, even though strictly speaking this is not good research design. But it might be socially instructive and the social conditions presented an opportunity that we did not wish to allow to pass. We thus replicated and

offer interpretations of the meaning of different results (if they occurred) in Studies 1 and 2 very tentatively. We also urge extreme circumspection in generalizing any of the results across studies.

## Study 2

Due to the unforeseen circumstances surrounding data collection in Study 1, we decided to rerun the study three months later after tensions had died down. In this study, we proposed the same hypotheses as in the first study. However, as a post hoc (highly speculative) analysis—but one that takes advantage of the naturally occurring and non-repeatable social conditions—we hypothesized that the results from Study 1 would differ from those of Study 2. In Study 2, we conducted a strict replication. Thus, the justifications and the first two hypotheses are the same. We added this fourth post hoc hypothesis:

H<sub>4</sub>: There will be a significant difference in forgiveness and attitudes toward Christians depending on the study (Study 1 v. Study 2), with differences being more pronounced in Study 2 (which was not in the throes of a heated public controversy).

## Method

### Participants

In the second study, participants were recruited online through Amazon Mechanical Turk® instead of Qualtrics®. In order to be eligible, participants had to identify as LGBTQ and identify a past or present conflict with Christians. To reduce confounds from the previous study, non-Christians were excluded from this study. In total, 138 participants took part in our study and were paid one dollar for their participation. Of those, 37 were excluded due to missing or incomplete data. Data analysis was conducted on the results from the remaining  $N = 101$  participants. Participants included 46 women and 55 men with a mean age of 27 and a range of ages between 18 to 52. Most of the sample was White (i.e., 59%); 13% Asian American; 10% African American; 3% Latino/Latina American; and 15% other. The education of the participants varied (43% obtained a Bachelor's degree, 28% obtained a high school diploma, 8% a vocational degree, 21% a graduate degree, 5% professional degrees, and 1% other). Overall, 54 participants identified as not religious (atheist, agnostic, or no religious affiliation) and

**Table 4***Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent Measures in Study 2 (N = 101)*

		Non-Empathy-Promoting Perspective			Empathy-Promoting Perspective		
		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Apology	Forgiveness Positive	25	12.24	3.54	26	11.54	3.36
	Forgiveness Negative	25	29.88	6.09	26	32.46	6.65
	Positive Attitude to Outgroup	25	52.31	27.61	26	43.26	28.79
	TRIM-Avoidance	25	24.05	7.14	26	24.23	6.68
	TRIM-Revenge	25	13.47	6.01	26	9.96	4.99
No Apology	Forgiveness Positive	26	12.35	3.07	24	12.29	3.33
	Forgiveness Negative	26	33.50	7.70	24	33.75	6.56
	Positive Attitude to Outgroup	26	41.54	24.55	24	38.16	28.85
	TRIM-Avoidance	26	24.07	7.65	24	23.40	6.79
	TRIM-Revenge	26	10.35	4.71	24	8.88	3.37

*Note.* The empathy-promoting perspective scored significantly greater than the non-empathy-promoting perspective on this variable.

47 participants as religious (belonging to a religious denomination) or spiritual. Thus, the demographics of the samples in Studies 1 and 2 were similar, but not identical. In this study, cell sizes were roughly equal. Participants ( $n = 25$ ) were in the apology and non-empathy-producing condition; 26, in the apology and empathy-producing condition; 26, in the no apology and non-empathy-producing condition; and 24, in the no apology and empathy-producing condition.

### Design

The design for this study was the same as Study 1 with a 2 (apology versus no apology)  $\times$  2 (empathy-producing versus non-empathy-producing perspective) factorial design.

### Independent Variables

We used the same independent variables in this study. The apology and control videos were the same as well as the directions for the perspective-taking condition.

### Measures

The demographic questionnaire, perceived hurt question, forgiveness scale, and outgroup attitudes

scale were used in this study. Following those, we added three other measures. Thus, the participants completed the same questionnaires in the same order as in Study 1, but they completed three additional questionnaires (which presumably would not change the response pattern on the measures used in Study 1). The additional measures are described below.

**TRIM.** The Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivation Inventory (TRIM; McCullough et al., 1998) is a 12-item measure that assesses unforgiving motivations. The inventory contains two subscales, Avoidance and Revenge. High scores correspond with greater avoidance motivation and greater revenge motivation. McCullough et al. (1998) found both subscales to be sufficiently reliable (Avoidance subscale,  $\alpha = .86$ , and Revenge subscale,  $\alpha = .90$ ). In the present study, we found coefficient of  $\alpha = .91$  for the Avoidance subscale scores and  $\alpha = .90$  for the Revenge subscale scores.

**Religiosity.** The Self-Report Measure of Religiosity (Cohen, Sharif, & Hill, 2008) is a 9-item measure rated on a scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* examining religiosity.

**Table 5**  
*Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent Measures*

		Study 1				Study 2			
		Non-Empathy-Promoting Perspective		Empathy-Promoting Perspective		Non-Empathy-Promoting Perspective		Empathy-Promoting Perspective	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Apology	Forgiveness Positive	11.25	4.25	12.50	2.83	12.24	3.54	11.50	3.36
	Forgiveness Negative	33.35	7.31	35.23	5.92	29.88	6.09	32.46	6.65
	Positive Attitude to Outgroup	34.70	31.90	38.40	22.06	52.31	27.61	43.30	28.79
No Apology	Forgiveness Positive	13.33	2.85	12.10	3.53	12.35	3.07	12.30	3.33
	Forgiveness Negative	36.27	8.06	36.80	8.44	33.50	7.70	33.80	6.56
	Positive Attitude to Outgroup	32.79	27.76	42.00	24.71	41.54	24.55	38.16	28.85

Example items include, “My religion or faith is an important part of my identity” and “I consider myself a spiritual person.” We found scores on this measure to have  $\alpha = .93$ .

**Attitude toward Christianity.** The Francis Attitude toward Christianity Scale (Lewis, Shevlin, Lloyd, & Adamson, 1998) is a 7-item scale rated on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores correspond to a more positive attitude toward Christianity. Example items include, “God helps me lead a better life” and “I think the Bible is out of date.” Lewis et al. (1998) found the scale scores to have  $\alpha = .89$ . In the present study, we found  $\alpha = .93$ .

**Procedure**

The procedure for this study was same as the procedure in the first study except for the additional three scales. After completing the scales, participants were debriefed and thanked.

**Results**

Means and standards deviations are given in Table 4. According to preliminary data screening, no assumptions for MANCOVA were violated. Skew and kurtosis were within acceptable ranges for all variables. To determine the effect that time had on our results, we combined the data from the two studies. We placed the means and standard deviations in Table 5. As in Study 1, we conducted three 2 (apology, no apology) x 2

(empathy-promoting perspective versus non-empathy-promoting perspective) x 2 (Study 1, Study 2) univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) using as the presence of positive emotion and the absence of negative in the Rye Forgiveness Scale and positive attitude toward the outgroup as the dependent variables and dichotomous religious identification (religious/spiritual, not religious/spiritual) as the covariate. In these analyses, we were specifically focusing on how the timing of the study interacted with apology and perspective taking.

In the first ANCOVA, the dependent measure was forgiveness as defined by the presence of positive emotion. Religious identification was a significant covariate,  $F(1, 170) = 9.375, p = .003$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .052, OP = .86$ . We found no interaction effects between apology, perspective taking, and time of study,  $F(1, 170) = .085, p = .771$ , apology and perspective taking,  $F(1, 170) = 1.37, p = .243$ , apology and time of study,  $F(1, 170) = .735, p = .784$ , or perspective taking and time of study,  $F(1, 170) = .003, p = .958$ . There was also no significant main effect for the time of study,  $F(1, 170) = .401, p = .527$ .

In the second ANCOVA, the dependent measure was forgiveness as defined by the absence of negative emotion. Religious identification was not a significant covariate,  $F(1, 170) = 1.047, p = .308$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .006, OP = .174$ . We found no interaction effects between apology, perspective

taking, and time of study,  $F(1, 170) = .085, p = .771$ , apology and perspective taking,  $F(1, 170) = .727, p = .395$ , apology and time of study,  $F(1, 170) = .063, p = .803$ , or perspective-taking and time of study,  $F(1, 170) = .073, p = .787$ . There was, however, a significant main effect for the time of study,  $F(1, 170) = 5.068, p = .026$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .029, OP = .610$ . The mean difference indicates that there was less forgiveness in Study 2 ( $M = 32.89, SD = .791$ ) than in Study 1 ( $M = 35.41, SD = .79$ ).

In the third ANCOVA, the dependent measure was positive attitudes toward the outgroup. Religious identification was a significant covariate,  $F(1, 170) = 26.26, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .134, OP = 1.00$ . We found no interaction effects between apology, perspective taking, and time of study,  $F(1, 170) = .255, p = .614$ , apology and perspective taking,  $F(1, 170) = .110, p = .740$ , apology and time of study,  $F(1, 170) = .141, p = .708$ , or perspective-taking and time of study,  $F(1, 170) = 2.387, p = .124$ . There was also no significant main effect for the time of study,  $F(1, 170) = .669, p = .415$ .

### Follow-up Analysis

Using measures added in the second study, a follow-up analysis consisted of a 2 (apology, no apology)  $\times$  2 (empathy-producing versus non-empathy-producing perspective) MANCOVA with forgiveness defined as the presence of positive emotion and the absence of negative in the Rye Forgiveness Scale, positive attitude toward the outgroup, and unforgiveness defined as revenge and avoidance in the TRIM as the dependent variables and using religiousness as defined by the Self-Reported Measure of Religiousness as a covariate.

The results of the MANCOVA indicated that although religiousness was significant as a covariate,  $F(5, 92) = 8.59, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .318, OP = 1.00$ , there was no significant multivariate interaction effect. There were significant univariate ANCOVAs however, which indicate there were significant main effects for apology,  $F(1, 96) = 6.16, p = .015$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .06, OP = .69$  and perspective-taking,  $F(1, 96) = 6.39, p = .013$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .062, OP = .706$ , for revenge as defined by the TRIM. Hence, although an apology did not foster forgiveness (using Rye's measures), an apology lessened feelings of revenge. The main effect for perspective revealed a counter-intuitive finding. Taking the other's perspective, which was intended to be an empathy-producing perspective, increased feelings of revenge.

### Discussion

In Study 2, none of our initial hypotheses were supported. The fourth hypothesis was partially supported with there being a significant difference in forgiveness, as defined by the absence of negative emotion, between the studies; participants were less willing to forgive in the second study than in the first study. In the first study, we thought that the attention associated with the Chick-Fil-A controversy would lead people to be less forgiving. The data from the second study suggest the opposite is possibly true. Also, the consistent failure of the apology to promote forgiveness suggests that a weak apology could be worse than no apology at all.

**Limitations.** Even with the changes in the second study, there are still several limitations. The same apology video was used which was likely insufficient. While we tried to use an apology that could be found in the public sphere, a more controlled, specific apology would likely be better. Conveying the apology through video may have diminished its effectiveness. In the future, the race, age, and sex of the person apologizing should be taken into account.

**Future research.** Future research should take into account how anger affects willingness to forgive (Manzi & González, 2007). Intergroup contact has also been shown to improve intergroup relations therefore it should also be considered in future research (Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger, & Niens, 2006; Tausch et al., 2010). Swart, Hewstone, Christ, and Voci (2011) found that intergroup contact was important for positive attitudes toward the outgroup and perceived outgroup variability. Furthermore, their research suggests that before perspective-taking and empathy can occur in intergroup relations, intergroup anxiety must first be reduced. Also, in our study the apology was given by an average Christian. Future research should consider apologies from well-known religious leaders. Time could be another factor to consider; forgiveness is a process that is unlikely to occur in a 15-minute survey (Worthington, 2006)

### Conclusion

It is disappointing that we were not able to replicate the findings of previous research in this area. However, our lack of results could indicate the enormous complexity of intergroup relations when it comes to conflict and forgiveness and also the investigation within the context of a highly

emotionally charged issue—relationships between people who identify as LGBTQ and the church. Although there are people on both sides of that issue who are accommodating to the other side, the issue is part of the culture war, and as such might simply be intractable to forgiveness by most people. Obviously, a quick apology and a few seconds of empathy are not enough to erase the negative effects of long-term intergroup conflict and could possibly even make the situation worse. In the process of intergroup forgiveness, the group seeking forgiveness should be aware that there is no quick fix. Apology and perspective-taking are important elements in forgiveness, but they are not the only elements.

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