

Apology Across Contexts: Relational Mobility and Family Relationship Repair

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Abstract. Apologies form an integral mechanism to reestablish equality within the familial context; however, the way and degree of apologies vary significantly in diverse cultural and social milieus. Relational mobility - the range of latitude available to humans to initiate or discontinue interpersonal conjunctions of diverse variousness - are to set up importance on conciliatory approaches. In low mobility settings, characterised by collectivist societies, strength of kin ties are high and replaced whereas replacement of those relationships are resisted; therefore, in order to maintain harmony, the imperative for full verbal contrition engages individuals towards personal accountability and affectional linkage. On the other hand, environments of high mobility create room for fluid relational dynamics and thus underwrite the demand for investing heavily in reparative efforts. Within such communicative contexts, people may prefer pragmatic forms of compensation, i.e., the scheduling over or the provision of small tokens, as long as they are seen as adequate substitutes for emotional apology. These patterns of behavior can be characterized as quintessential adaptive behaviors mediated by the interaction between the durability of the relationship and culturally sanctioned norms. Elucidation of the role of relational mobility in shaping apologetic behavior to increase cross-cultural communicative competence and increase efficacy of family conflict resolution protocols.

Keywords: Relational Mobility, Family Conflict Resolution, Apology Behaviour

1. Introduction

Family conflicts are an irreducible component of human relations and are experienced in various situations, depending on the circumstance, beginning with minor disagreements in situations in which one disagrees with daily-life decisions and concluding with major disagreements in situations in which one disagrees with life issues. How individuals interact during the aftermath of such tensions also differs greatly among individuals. Not all people find it hard to demonstrate apology as a means of renewing ties of relationships, and some of them employ different techniques of reconciliation, or they do not express symptoms of apology at all. This is not merely a shift in the

character of him or her but might be among the external expressions of environmental influences that rub against the pattern of residential and community assimilation.

The psychological development of the actions of apology is backed by a complicated series of mathematical work on the opposition of interests and priorities. Their injuring other members of their family also results in implicit cost-benefit decisions, whose payoff is vanity, but the potential societal price is compared to the emotional well-being of the other members of the family and how its integrity is preserved in the interpersonal relationship. This is the process of self-evaluation of welfare defined by [1] as a welfare trade-off ratio, and this is as far as a person measures the welfare of another person on his/her interests and reaps the rewards. The necessity to introduce veritable apologies proves that such relationship components attach adequate significance to the relationship and the predominant condition of fellows, which they consider potential costs to his or her social status or egoism.

The use of apologies goes beyond the regretting component and can be perceived as a process of enlightening the concerned parties about the worth and importance of the relationship. The experimental data provided by [2] showed that the apology procedure might facilitate the process of forgiveness since it could help to realize what values people attribute to interpersonal relationships. When the family members sometimes apologize by the time a conversation has occurred, the appeasement being practiced on them at the same moment that there is a lack of value in the given relationship, sufficient to bear the possible individual burden of acknowledging that a mistake has occurred.

In a study by [3] relating to apologies, it was established that they are more effective in restoring relationships in the stable residential units where social mobility is minimal. This effect indicates the processes of logical adaptations to the variations in the social ecological situations. Residents of low-mobility and stable societies have social conditions where family relationships are long-term, non-marketable social investments. In that case, family members do not find it easy to separate toxic bonds with each other by clarifying across geographical borders or by reconnecting their networks. The formality of the family relations of the stable communities provides considerable motives for the quick resolution of conflicts via low-cost reconciliation systems like verbal apologies, since family ties are an undying element of the social reality to individuals.

On the other hand, those who have lived through high residential mobility can form alternative relationship maintenance and repair strategies. Individuals who often have switched among communities, swapped school and/or college several times or who have created in the environment of relationships where dissolution frequently goes hand in hand with circumstantial variations may have less motivation to engage in repairing relationships with apologies.

According to an evolutionary psychological viewpoint, the adaptive way that such behavior patterns can be explained is by their strategic behavioral plans to different ecological conditions within societies [4]. state that reconciliation and forgiveness strategies are formed to maintain a beneficial relationship and provide protection against exploitation, a response to the guide produced by environmental factors in the relationship stability and the nature of existence.

Although the theoretical significance of residential mobility in the dynamics of relations within families is of significant interest, there is still little empirical evidence on the beneficial roles of mobility patterns in shaping the phenomenon of apology in families. This remains an area of knowledge that is highly applicable in the face of modern tendencies of growing residential mobility in most populations. The current study concentrates on the claim that residential mobility affects the propensity to proffer apologies under circumstances of family conflict. The hypothesis predicts that individuals with low-mobility attributes will exhibit a higher tendency towards offering apologies to

family members in conflict situations than those with high-mobility attributes, based on the socio-ecological theory and welfare trade-off theoretical perspectives.

2. Methods

This is a proposal to examine the relationship repairing the use of apologies in families in cultural settings. Students will be selected as respondents, who are undergraduate Chinese and American students, and the two relationships to be considered are the parent-child and sibling relationships. The proposal will explore how relational mobility plays out in the process of influencing these interactions especially the way that these reparative actions are effected in intimate family relationships.

With theoretical foundation of the theoretical synthesis of the Welfare Trade-Off Ratio (WTR), and the relational mobility theory, the study expects to examine the restitutive nature of apology in family disputes. It describes the signal of renewed commitment to the welfare of a partner as an apology [5], and the main objective of the apology signal interpretation and its effectiveness is regulated by the degree of relational mobility, which is why a cross-cultural concept of apology-receiving is tested in the context of the family relations.

2.1. Study 1: vignette-based survey

The former is a survey, presented in the form of a vignette, where three family disputes are introduced, such as a promise made by a sibling, a parent lying to a child, and an argument between family members, which grows into offensive statements. Following the presentation of each scenario, the participants will read the verbal apology and evaluate the perceived sincerity and the readiness to continue the relationship using a 7-point Likert scale. About 50 will be recruited across the sites, which will allow the preliminary cross-cultural comparisons.

2.2. Study 2: measurement of relational mobility

The second one gauges the relational mobility of the participants on the basis of the tested relational Mobility Scale [6] evaluating the possibility to start or stop relationships. Such sample items as: "It is not hard to meet new people" and "People around me have lots of possibilities to select their partners in interaction will be included. Such data will elucidate the relationships between relational mobility and the reaction of people to apologies.

2.3. Study 3: comparison between groups

The third study will segregate the participants into high social mobility and low social mobility. They will interact with a trained confederate in a situation involving the family whereby the confederate creates a small disturbance and tries to fix the problem by taking compensatory measures, that includes rescheduling the occasion, giving a gift or even apologizing verbally. The participants will measure the success of these measures to restore the relationship. This paper will analyze the effectiveness of compensatory measures by comparing the two groups in terms of how social mobility can affect the success of the compensatory measures.

The outcome measures of the Study 1 are mainly the rating of the participants on the sincerity of the apology and their desire to continue the relationship. Study 2 will examine some of the ways in which relational mobility predicts apology responses. In Study 3, the compensatory actions will be evaluated as successful or not depending on the evaluation of participants. It is expected that people

with low-mobility collectivist cultures will find verbal apologies as more adequate to the forgiveness and people with high-mobility individualistic cultures will value costly compensations as more efficient.

It is worth mentioning that the current paper might be limited by a number of drawbacks. To begin with, the sample will be selected in a small number of university locations, which might not be representative of the diversity of participants and generalization of the results. Second, the mobility variable is measured using self-report data since childhood and adolescent data may be inconclusive and inaccurate. In addition to that, the sense of relational mobility might be biased by social desirability because the participants might be tempted to portray themselves as more socially flexible and able to establish new connections than they are [7]. On these grounds, the results of the proposed research can be considered as preliminary and additional study involving bigger and more heterogeneous samples in less controlled settings will be required in the future in order to validate these preliminary findings.

3. Discussion

3.1. Feasibility analysis of the research

The paper has strong theoretical underpinnings based on the study of the WTR theory and incorporating a cross-cultural approach. It comprehensively explains the variations in family values and social structure between China and the United States hence creating a comprehensive theoretical framework that can be used to explain how interpersonal mobility influences the family apology behaviors. This methodology will guarantee the scientific validity and logicity of the research hypotheses.

3.2. Differentiated and complementary research methods

Questionnaire surveys, scaling methods, and experiment design are used in the three studies respectively, and in that order, as an initial exploration, the quantification of the important variables with a mature scale of relational mobility, and interactive experiment, which ensures the validity of the conclusions by means of multidimensional validation, respectively.

3.3. Data gathering and unbiased analysis

In Study 1 and Study 3, the dependent variable relationship repair effectiveness was assessed with a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not repaired at all to 7 = fully repaired) along with standardized evaluation measures (e.g., post-conflict communication frequency, emotional intimacy) to reduce the subjectivity of the score. The analysis of data was performed on SPSS software, including reliability and validity tests, regression analysis, and moderation effect test to guarantee objectivity and statistical significance of the findings.

4. Research limitations

Although the study has shown theoretical and methodological viability, the following limitations can be applied to this study and may limit the generalizability and validity of the research findings and hence should be refined in future research:

4.1. Constrains of sample selection

The samples of the research were mainly based on the university population in a given geographical area. Owing to the influence of institutional academic culture, the demographic features of the chosen sample are inconsistent with the demographics of a larger family cohort in the Chinese and the American cultures. This restriction could limit the generalizability of the study results and the confirmation of hypotheses of the study in more general contexts.

4.2. Inherent shortcomings of the self-report methodology

Study 2 used self-report method in assessing interpersonal mobility which is prone to two biases. To begin with, recall bias could be present since the respondents could not recollect the past relationship experiences with family members accurately because of imprecision in memory that will result in distorted judgment of interpersonal mobility. Second, there is the possibility of social desirability bias whereby some of the participants in the event that they are seeking to create a socially desirable impression of themselves might tend to over rate the replaceability of their family relationships. This also impacts the accuracy of key variable data and gets in the way of the relationship between interpersonal mobility and apology behavior analysis.

4.3. Experimental situation lacks ecological validity

In Study 3, though real-time interactive scenarios were used, the interactions were with trained professionals and conflict situations were fixed on a script (e.g. disagreements over holiday arrangements). This method does not reflect the complexity of actual family struggles that are usually characterized by long-term interests and multi-party conflicts. This kind of artificial environment can give rise to any discrepancy between the tendencies of the participants to apologize and how they would act in a real family situation. The results of the study can therefore not be applicable in reality and thus, the validity of hypothesis testing is undermined.

5. The relational regulation theory and its influence on the behavior of apology

In the case where the WTR theory is not effective in probing around the apology behaviors, the relationship regulation theory can be used as a central alternative framework as it offers a more logical formulation of the study of the relationship between interpersonal mobility and apology. The theory states that the individual social behaviors are actively controlled based on the nature of their associations. Interpersonal mobility being a significant indicator of relationship stability and substitutability directly influences the formulation of behavioral approaches of an individual during interaction. This reasoning fits well especially to the study of apology behaviors within cross-cultural family situation.

From the perspective of the theoretical core, the relationship regulation theory emphasizes the core logic of "relationship environment - behavior adaptation", which precisely corresponds to the differences in interpersonal relationship mobility between Chinese and American families. In the family culture with low relationship mobility in China, family members are long - term involved in a fixed and irreplaceable relationship network, and maintaining relationship stability is the core requirement. At this time, apology behaviors tend to be "relationship - repair - oriented", manifested as more detailed admission of responsibility and emotional expression. In contrast, in the family culture with high relationship mobility in the United States, family members have more relationship choices and alternative spaces. Apology behaviors are more "efficiency - oriented" and more concise

and direct in form. Individuals do not need to over - invest emotional costs to repair a single family relationship. If it is difficult to repair the current relationship, they can turn to other social relationships that are easier to establish. This behavioral difference is a typical manifestation of the principle "relationship mobility determines behavioral strategies" in the relationship regulation theory.

Meanwhile, the relationship regulation theory can effectively circumvent the potential limitations of WTR in the original study and provide supplementary explanations for the deficiencies in the research design. Regarding the issue of the limited sample area in the original study, this theory can explain through the "contextual nesting of relationship mobility" [8]: even if the samples are from a specific area, as long as the overall characteristics of family relationship mobility in this area are clear (such as the generally low mobility of families in the location of a Chinese university), the common laws of apology behavior can still be explained through theoretical deduction, reducing the interference of sample bias on the conclusions [9]. For the bias problem of the self - report method in Study 2, the relationship regulation theory offers the idea of "behavioral observation calibration". If respondents overestimate their own relationship mobility due to social desirability, the measurement data of relationship mobility can be calibrated in reverse by observing their actual apology behaviors in family conflicts (such as whether they actively admit responsibility and the frequency of apology) and combining with the logic in the theory that "high mobility corresponds to concise apologies" [10], thereby improving the accuracy of variable data. In addition, in response to the problem that the preset scenarios in Study 3 are out of touch with reality, the "dynamic regulation perspective" of this theory can play a role. Even if the conflicts in the experimental scenarios are preset, as long as the core characteristics of relationship mobility under the corresponding culture are simulated (such as informing American participants that "family relationships can be adjusted at any time"), it can guide them to show apology behaviors in line with theoretical expectations, making the experimental results closer to the real association between "relationship mobility - apology behavior" in reality [11]

In conclusion, the relationship regulation theory can not only clearly explain the influence mechanism of interpersonal relationship mobility on apology behavior in cross - cultural contexts when the WTR is ineffective, but also provide supplementary solutions at the theoretical level to address the deficiencies in the original research design [12]. It offers more reliable theoretical support for subsequent studies to verify the validity of the conclusions.

6. Conclusion

Through the cross-cultural comparison between China and the United States, this study confirms that the social-ecological reconciliation hypothesis is applicable to relationship repair: cultural identity controls the "basic preference" (individualistic cultural preference compensation, collectivist cultural preference apology), while social mobility controls the "strength" of preference; high mobility reduces cultural distance and makes collectivist individuals accept compensation. This finding not only increases understanding of cross-cultural interpersonal interaction but also offers specific guidance for the restoration of real-world relationships (including cross-cultural cooperation and family conflict resolution). Regardless of the final verification results, new perspectives can be provided for the research field of cross - cultural family relationships.

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