

Psychosocial effects of forgiveness petition and “self-criticism” by the Basque Government and Parliament directed to the victims of collective violence

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Abstract

This experimental study analyses the psychosocial effects of apologies directed to the victims of collective violence by the Basque Government and Parliament on Basque participants. It was expected that institutional apology would lead to an increase in collective guilt, shame and sorrow, while at the same time it would induce a more positive perception of emotional climate, as well as increasing positive beliefs and support for reparative actions towards the victims. As expected, when reminded of apology and past collective violence, participants reported higher shame and sorrow and agreed more with new reparations in comparison with the control condition, in which people were only reminded of past collective violence. Low identifiers exhibited a more positive perception of the social climate in the apology condition than in the control group, whereas high identifiers displayed the opposite pattern. In addition, high identifiers agreed more with defensive opinions related to past collective violence and reported lower agreement with reparations, although they did not express less collective guilt, or shame and sorrow.

Keywords: Ritual, apology, forgiveness petition, collective violence, emotional climate, collective shame and guilt, world assumptions.

Los efectos psicosociales de la petición de perdón y la “autocrítica” realizada por el Parlamento y Gobierno Vasco ante las víctimas de la violencia colectiva

Resumen

Este estudio experimental analiza el efecto de la petición de perdón presentado por el Gobierno y Parlamento Vasco a las víctimas de violencia colectiva relacionada con terrorismo en los participantes del País Vasco. Se planteaba que esta petición de perdón institucional aumentaría la culpa y la vergüenza colectiva, pero también reforzaría una percepción más positiva del clima emocional, las creencias positivas y el apoyo de las reparaciones para las víctimas. Como se esperaba, cuando se hacía saliente la violencia colectiva del pasado junto con la petición de perdón, los participantes experimentaban más pesar y vergüenza, como también estaban más de acuerdo con nuevas reparaciones en comparación con el grupo de control, en el cual se destacaba o hacía saliente únicamente la violencia colectiva del pasado. Los participantes con baja identificación con los vascos percibía el clima emocional como más positivo en cuando se hacían salientes la violencia colectiva del pasado y la petición de perdón, mientras los altamente identificados demostraban el patrón de respuesta opuesto. Además, las personas con alta identificación “vasquista” estaban más de acuerdo con las opiniones defensivas relacionadas con la violencia colectiva del pasado y menos de acuerdo con las reparaciones, aunque no presentaban niveles más bajos de culpa colectiva ni del pesar y vergüenza.

Palabras clave: Ritual, perdón, petición de perdón, violencia colectiva, clima emocional, vergüenza y culpa colectiva, creencias básicas.

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The Basque Parliament manifests its solidarity, affection, respect and its complete consideration for all the victims of terrorism and wants to ask them publicly and solemnly to forgive the abandonment and oblivion they have suffered for too many years.
(The Basque Parliament, Resolution Nr 1, October 5th, 2007)

It might seem that, in the face of collective violence and injustice that took place in the past, there is not much to be done as no one can turn back the time and bring back to life those who died or suffered. However, both victim and perpetrator groups have to cope somehow with the past. This study focuses on the impact of a public apology ritual that took place in the Basque conflict context on social beliefs, perceived emotional climate, collective guilt, as well as shame and sorrow.

Collective Violence in the Basque Country

The Basque conflict is the longest enduring political conflict in Western Europe. Through centuries the Basque Country has maintained its self-governance under different Spanish political frameworks. After the Spanish Civil War, which was also a fuel for the conflict, came General Franco's dictatorship, during which Basque culture and self-governance was completely suppressed and prohibited. After the dictator's death and the establishment of the Spanish Constitution, the Basque Country regained its autonomy, although never to an extent that would satisfy the Basque nationalists. Since then, the conflict has persisted and caused the death of hundreds of people and suffering of many more (Espiau, US Institute of Peace, 2006).

On October 5th 2007, the Basque Parliament officially asked victims of the conflict in the Basque Country for forgiveness for "the abandonment and oblivion they have suffered for too many years." (The Basque Parliament, Resolution Nr 1, October 5th, 2007). Twenty resolutions concerning reparation for victims of terrorism were adopted. After so many years, authorities expressed their repentance for the suffering which victims of political violence in the Basque Country had to experience. Has the apology act of the Basque Parliament changed anything?

Apology as a ritual

Tavuchis (1991) argued that offenders, or representatives of the offenders' group, intend, by means of apology, to restore what has been lost: peace, democracy, trust. Although Tavuchis wrote "no matter how", apology actually needs to be perceived as sincere and as motivated by a will to reveal the truth. Amstutz (2005) argues that offenders should "disclose and acknowledge the truth about wrongdoing, admit their own culpability, express remorse and offer reparations." (p. 12). Collective healing can be achieved with the contribution of such concepts as confession and repentance, which – provided that culpability is admitted – can lead to forgiveness and reconciliation. When a group is dealing with a collective harm or political violence, the concept of negotiated forgiveness (Andrews, 2000) should encompass both the victims' and the offenders' involvement. This perspective is concordant with Amstutz's contention (2005) that forgiveness demands disclosure and acknowledgment of the truth and moral accountability for the wrongdoings.

Conversely, all the actions aiming at revealing and admitting the truth take the form of collective ritual, building a positive emotional atmosphere that can be a ground for social cohesion. "Genuine apologies (...) may be taken as the symbolic foci of secular remedial rituals that serve to recall and reaffirm allegiance to codes of behaviour and belief whose integrity has been tested and challenged by transgression (...). An apology, thus, refers to an act that cannot be undone but cannot go unnoticed (...)" (Tavuchis, 1991, p. 13). In line with this view, according to Durkheim (1912), collective rituals reinforce the emotional sharing and bring people together in their

feeling of solidarity, thus strengthening social cohesion. The ritual can heal the social pain (Cole, 2004). A study on psychosocial effects of participation in popular trials Gacaca in Rwanda, in which the perpetrators confronted the victims and were supposed to tell the truth and apologize, showed that both the victims and the perpetrators increased their perception of heterogeneity, as well as positive stereotypes of the outgroup (Kanyangara, Rimé, Philippot, & Yzerbit, 2007). In consequence, it can be assumed that an apology ritual is beneficial to social healing by reinforcing intergroup reconciliation, positive emotional climate, and social cohesion.

Apology as a collective ritual could also help to reinforce beliefs in the benevolence of the people and of the world. Apology rituals can be considered as a process that implies a conviction that a situation defined as unjust is not unchangeable and that action is being taken to compensate the wrongdoings. In the same vein, as an act of restorative justice, apology can produce a reinforcement of positive beliefs not only regarding the benevolence of the world, but also of humanity (as able to apologize and to compensate for the wrongdoings). In fact, Kanyangara et al.'s (2007) study on popular Gacaca trials found that participants of this restorative justice ritual increased their beliefs about benevolent world after their experience, even if the increase was higher in the case of perpetrators.

Apology and Collective Guilt and Shame

Nonetheless, apology and rituals including apologies have both benefits and emotional cost because the acceptance of past collective misdeeds usually increases negative emotions, such as collective guilt and sadness, shame and remorse. An increase in negative collective and personal emotions can be perceived as being at odds with simultaneously increasing social cohesion and positive emotional climate (i.e., hope and solidarity). However, Durkheim argues that an augment in negative emotions helps to reinforce social identification – “we feel guilt and sadness” (Durkheim, 1912). Positive and negative affect are relatively independent at an individual (Watson, 2000) as well as at a collective level (de Rivera & Páez, 2007), and can co-exist; for instance, when high levels of sadness and anger related to a terrorist attack co-exist with a high level of solidarity and hope (de Rivera & Páez, 2007). In fact, restorative justice rituals that involve apologies, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and the Gacaca tribunals in Rwanda, increase both personal and collective negative emotions - usually by reactivation of memories of past misdeeds (Gibson, 2004; Kanyangara et al., 2007). Victims are usually disappointed by apologies (i.e. they were perceived as insincere by survivors of the Rwandan genocide), and by the information that perpetrators provide (Kanyangara, 2008; Kanyangara et al., 2007). Moreover, rituals help to accept past misdeeds, and by this token legitimize the feeling of collective and personal emotions such as collective guilt (see Lastrego et al. in this monograph). Related to past misdeeds assumed in the apology, guilt can be experienced collectively, by whole groups, or by single persons who were not involved in the harm-doing personally. It does not have to imply feelings of personal guilt (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998), as collective guilt could be felt not as a consequence of personal actions but as a consequence of one's membership in social groups involved in collective violence. Collective guilt appears when people: a) categorize themselves as members of a group; b) accept that their ingroup is responsible for past or current misdeeds, c) recognize that their ingroup's behaviour is unjustified and / or harmful, d) appraise that it is possible to correct the wrongdoing and that the cost of reparations is moderate (Wohl, Branscombe & Klar, 2006). Of course, when confronted with atrocities committed by one's own group, people intend to deny collective responsibility, particularly these with strong social identification (Branscombe & Miron, 2004). High identifiers usually glorify their group and are inclined to compare the ingroup favourably with actions of others, to reduce the group's

responsibility and to legitimize the harm (Marques, Páez, Valencia, & Vincze, 2006). On the other hand, low-identified group members are more willing to accept the negative past and, hence, feel more collective guilt in comparison with high identifiers, as group-image-threatening emotion of guilt can only be experienced when the accountability for past wrongdoings is given (Doosje et al., 1998).

In any case, the strategies people apply sometimes fail and collective guilt is inevitable. In a study on collective violence in Australia (McGarty et al., 2005), group-based guilt was found to predict support for a government apology for the sufferings experienced by Indigenous Australians. Collective guilt was also found to predict reparation attitudes (Brown, González, Zagefka, Manzi, & Cehajic, 2008; Zebel, Zimmermann, Tendayi, & Doosje, 2008). The element that binds both concepts: collective guilt and reparation, is apology and repentance. "In forgiveness, offenders express contrition for the suffering they have inflicted, authenticating their repentance through acts of reparation and the promise not to repeat unjust and harmful behaviors" (Amstutz, 2005, p. 11).

Finally, although Doosje et al. (1998) argued that collective guilt should not necessarily imply negative personal feelings, we believe that in case of the Basque conflict and apology for wrongdoings related to it, Basques would also experience a feeling of shame and sorrow for what was done. Two arguments support the importance of shame. First, psychological difference between guilt and shame is vague. Following the theory of emotions, in guilt the attention is focused on the collective behaviour: "We (German people) did *this awful thing* (Holocaust)". Guilt's main adaptive social function is to prevent interpersonal and inter-group exploitation. In shame, attention is focused on the collective identity: *We* (German people) did this awful thing (Holocaust). The main social function of shame is to restore collective positive identity (Branscombe, Slugosky & Kappen, 2004). However, at the group level little difference is perceived between characterological ("*We* German people...") and behavioural ("...German people *did*...") attribution of negative collective events. Moreover, Wallbott & Scherer (1995) found that in Western individualistic nations shame more typically resembles guilt. Second, in face of negative in-group past collective events, people perceive lower level of control, which is subsequently associated with shame, while high control is related to guilt (Branscombe et al., 2004). This is why a negative past experience usually elicits more shame than guilt: for instance, university students belonging to the third German generation after World War II, report, first, feelings of shame (65%) and, second, feelings of guilt (41%) when thinking about the Holocaust (Marques et al., 2006). In sum, it is probable that Basques, when reminded of apology for the collective violence in the Basque Country, would feel not only collective guilt, but also shame for the atrocities which were being committed by ingroup members.

In brief, we expect that reminding people of a public apology together with facts about past collective violence committed by radical nationalists will reinforce a positive perception of emotional climate and positive social beliefs, although it would also augment negative emotional climate, given the fact that rituals permit assuming past misdeeds, increasing negative emotions related to past traumatic events. This increase in collective guilt and shame should reinforce agreement with reparative actions. Nonetheless, high identifiers will probably display more defensive reactions and will show less sensitivity to apologies.

Hypotheses

Considering the positive psychosocial role of such rituals, it is hypothesized that the rituals of forgiveness and reparation (the apologies of the Basque Government and Parliament to the victims of terrorism of the late XX century) should: 1) induce a more positive social climate and reinforce positive beliefs about people and the world, 2) but,

at the same time, augment negative emotional climate related to past negative behaviors, 3) and increase collective guilt, shame, and agreement with material and symbolic reparation actions. Finally, 4) identification with Basques should act as a buffer in relation to the effects of apology. Given the fact that high identifiers usually discount past misdeeds or justify them, we expect that they will report lower levels of collective guilt and shame, and display higher levels of mechanism of identity defence, such as explanation by the context, minimization of the severity of harm or blaming the victims. On the other hand, low identifiers would be more prone to admit past collective atrocities committed by their own ingroup.

Method

Participants

A total of 108 students and students' acquaintances from the Basque Country (60% female) participated in the experiment, voluntarily and anonymously. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the two versions of the questionnaire: 1) only information on collective violence and 2) information on collective violence and regarding the official apology, with 48 and 60 persons in each condition, respectively. All participants signed the informed consent agreement prior to participation in the study. The mean age was 31.44 ($SD = 13.24$). Results of this random form survey were compared also with a similar sample of Basque students and their relatives ($N = 164$, 72% female, mean age: $M = 29.8$), who responded to the same measures in a study carried out two years ago, which neither included information about nor made salient past collective violence (Jiménez, Pérez, & Javaloy, 2005).

Design, Procedure and Measures

The study took the form of a two-group post-manipulation only randomized experiment, using two versions of questionnaire as described above. The first part of the questionnaire included a measure of social identification as Basque:

Identification with Basques Scale. Ten post-manipulation items were used to measure the level of identification with Basques (for example: *I am sure about my Basque identity, To be Basque is a part of my self-image, To what extent is it important for you to be Basque?*), on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *totally yes*. Items reproduce partially Crocker et al.'s collective self-esteem scale (see Branscombe et al., 2004). The scale reached good reliability ($\alpha = .93$).

In the second part, participants had to read an informative text which came from a TV documentary about the consequences of collective violence in the Basque Country, that is, about the political conflict that emerged following the Spanish Civil War (Martín Beristain, & Pérez, 2000). The text was as follows:

"One of the effects of political conflict in the recent history of the Basque Country has been the political violence and its consequences. In particular, the political conflict in the Basque Country after the Civil War is linked to the following characteristics: duration of about 40 years (1968-2007), 1.100 people killed, 6.000 people injured, and 6.000 subjected to abuse or torture by the police. A recent research has found that 1.5% of the Basque population is affected by the deaths or injuries caused by political violence. Seven percent claimed to be a victim of blackmail, attacks, social isolation and ostracism for political reasons –it is estimated that 25.000 people (1% of the population) are involved in arrests and trials related to the radical left.

The numbers of political violence could be summarized as follows: 836 deaths caused by ETA and similar groups mainly in the 80's; 76 militants of ETA killed in action; 34 protesters killed by police; 42 people killed during police controls mainly before 1982; 42 people killed by vigilante groups and counterterrorism apparatus of the State between 1975-1982 and 28 killed between 1983-1987"

In the case of the experimental group, the information on collective violence-related statistics was followed by additional information on the forgiveness petition by the

Basque Parliament and Government directed to the victims of collective violence in the Basque Country (EITB, 2007), which was applied as an experimental manipulation. The information was as follows:

"Moreover, recently the Basque Parliament, in a monographic plenary session, has achieved a broad consensus and made an act of asking the victims of the conflict for forgiveness. It urges the Basque Government to fulfill the agreements on victims. Basque parliamentary parties agreed on twenty resolutions concerning reparations for victims of terrorism, in which, first, the parliamentarians "solemnly and publicly asked the victims to forgive the neglect and abandonment they have felt and suffered for too many years". The following recommendation is of special importance: "It is recommended that the Basque institutions, in an appropriate extent corresponding to each of them, and the society in general promote and actively participate in the initiatives of the tribute and moral, social and political appreciation directed to the victims of terrorism."

In addition, the editorial of a Basque representative newspaper commented this law as follows: "Basque society will have the opportunity to show their solidarity and closeness to the victims of terrorism through an act of justice that seeks to repair the moral debt that the Basque society and institutions have with the victims."

We are witnessing an act of homage and recognition, but it is much more than that. It is a demonstration of forgiveness. Forgiveness for not being close to the victims of ETA, for not supporting them, for forgetting or avoiding, for not giving them the recognition they deserve, or at least, for not knowing how to express it.

The confrontation and the conflict continue to prevent unanimity in a case in which what should take precedence over all is recognition of the pain of someone else."

The third and final part of the questionnaire comprised the following scales to measure the dependent variables included in the study:

Emotional Climate Scale (Páez, Ruiz, Gailly, Kornblit, & Wiesenfeld, 1997). This scale uses 10 items to assess the perception of positive (e.g., The social environment or climate is one of hope) and negative (e.g. The social environment or climate is one of fear and anxiety) emotional climate, consisting of 7 and 3 items, respectively¹. Participants were asked to assess the current state of their country, indicating their degree of agreement with a series of statements by means of a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very strongly*. Positive and negative climate subscales achieved satisfactory reliability indices ($\alpha = .88$ and $\alpha = .85$, respectively).

Benevolence of the People and Benevolence of the World subscales of the World Assumptions Scale (WAS) (Janoff-Bulman, 1989). Both subscales were adapted by the authors for the purposes of the study, following Kanyangara's (2008) methodology for the study of Gacaca trials, that is, 2 items of the first subscale and 4 of the second one were selected to measure benevolence of the people (e.g., Human nature is basically good) and the world (e.g., There is more good than evil in the world). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the statements on a scale ranging from 1 = *totally agree* to 7 = *totally disagree*. Both subscales demonstrated high Cronbach's alpha: .85 (people) and .82 (world).

Beliefs about collective violence. An ad-hoc prepared scale was applied in which people were asked to evaluate five common statements about authors and victims of the collective violence, dominant in the defensive discourse of perpetrators, such as: *Perpetrators act under constraint or by compliance*, *The authors of crimes did not behave worse than perpetrators in other countries and during wars*, *People who suffered or victims should forgive people who belong to the group which harmed them*, *I believe others would have behaved the same in similar situations*, *Victims and their relatives should forgive the perpetrators* or *It is normal that victims and their relatives still feel resentment by crimes suffered by them*. These statements were analysed as separate items.

Collective Guilt Acceptance and Whole Group Accountability Scale (Branscombe et al., 2004). This scale consists of 10 items which form two dimensions of collective guilt acceptance (e.g., *I feel guilty for negative actions done by ancestors to other groups*) and collective responsibility (e.g., *A group should feel responsible for the actions of its members*), each subscale including 5 items. Respondents are asked to express their degree of

agreement on a 7-points scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 7 = *strongly disagree*). Both subscales showed high reliability ($\alpha = .80$ each).

Shame and Sorrow. Two ad-hoc created items were applied to measure the experience of shame (*When I think how we treated the victims of collective violence for years, I feel ashamed*) and sorrow (*I feel sorrow for and regret the damage that has been done to the victims of collective violence for years*). A varimax factor analysis including collective guilt, shame and sorrow items found three dimensions, the two Branscombe's collective guilt dimensions of acceptance and responsibility, and another dimension composed by shame and sorrow items, confirming that this is a different dimension.

Reparation. This two-item measure addressed the willingness to endorse material (*The Basque Government should provide more money to the victims of collective violence for what they suffered during the past years*) and symbolic (*The Basque Government should perform more declarations of repentance and moral reparation to the victims of collective violence for what they suffered during the past years*) compensations. Respondents are asked to express their degree of agreement on a 7-points scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 7 = *strongly disagree*).

Additionally, a series of control variables was measured, including: sex, age, social identity (Basque, Spanish, European, 1 = *not at all*, 10 = *totally yes*), political orientation (1 = *extreme left*, 10 = *extreme right*), emotional arousal (Izard's Differential Emotions Scale - DES, adapted by Echebarría & Páez (1989), measuring negative emotions: e.g. sadness and anger; and positive emotions: e.g. joy and pride, evaluated on a scale from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *a lot*), source evaluation (reliability, neutrality, credibility, authenticity, importance, worrying vs. not worrying, positive vs. negative), and evaluation of the Basque Parliament's resolutions (resolutions as: sincere, opportunist, causing people to agree, reinforcing the feeling of belonging to humanity, and reinforcing respect for human rights). Source and Parliament's resolutions evaluation items were answered on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *totally yes*).

Results

Preliminary analyses

Prior to hypotheses verification, a set of control variables was analysed, in order to confirm that randomization created comparable groups. To control for identification with Basques and compare high and low identifiers, the post-manipulation social identification scale was dichotomized by the median and introduced as an additional factor in the model. When the analyses were replicated using Basque identification as a continuous variable the results were similar to those obtained using high and low identifiers groups as a dichotomic variable (not included in this paper).

The one-way ANOVA results (Table I) showed that there were almost no significant differences between the experimental versus control group regarding control variables such as age, social identities (moderately intensive), ideology (moderate), positive (interest, joy, surprise) and negative (anger, disgust, fear, sadness etc.) emotions elicited by the information (low intensity), the story evaluation (rather positive), or parliamentary resolutions evaluation (in general slightly negative). Story evaluations by the experimental group were in general slightly less positive, although on the whole means were above the theoretical mean, indicating that participants evaluated the information provided as reliable, neutral, credible, authentic, important, not worrying and positive. However, the only significant difference in story evaluation was regarding its neutrality: the experimental group viewed the story as less neutral. Similarly, for the parliamentary resolutions evaluation, this group considered them more opportunist (not natural) in comparison with control group. Finally, when low and high identifiers were compared, the results showed no significant differences. Parliamentary resolutions were slightly more positively evaluated among low identifiers.

TABLE I
Descriptive variables. Means and Standard Deviations in experimental versus control group and low and high identifiers

	Experimental Group M (SD)	Control Group M (SD)	F	df	Error MS	Low Identifiers M (SD)	High Identifiers M (SD)	F	df	Error MS
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>										
Age	32.21 (13.57)	30.81 (13.06)	0.29	105	18544.87	32.55 (12.62)	30.27 (13.90)	0.79	105	18457.87
Basque Identity	6.69 (2.84)	5.92 (3.32)	1.64	106	1026.90	—	—	—	106	575.83
Spanish Identity	5.44 (3.21)	5.33 (2.78)	0.03	106	941.146	—	—	—	106	816.28
European Identity	5.96 (2.52)	6.65 (2.54)	2.99	106	677.57	—	—	—	106	689.06
Ideology	6.25 (1.97)	6.17 (1.78)	0.05	106	369.33	—	—	—	106	331.09
<i>Emotions Elicited by the Story</i>										
Positive Emotions	3.29 (1.16)	3.35 (1.08)	0.07	105	131.57	3.18 (1.06)	3.47 (1.16)	1.86	105	129.37
Negative Emotions	3.65 (1.38)	3.65 (1.31)	0.00	106	190.92	3.73 (1.27)	3.57 (1.41)	0.37	106	190.26
<i>Story Evaluation</i>										
Of Reliable Source	4.58 (1.58)	4.63 (1.71)	0.02	106	291.60	4.35 (1.58)	4.89 (1.69)	2.95*	106	283.76
Neutral	3.63 (1.63)	4.58 (2.28)	6.01*	106	431.83	4.00 (1.91)	4.32 (2.22)	0.65	106	453.55
Credible	4.65 (1.62)	5.18 (1.94)	2.36	106	345.96	4.84 (1.71)	5.06 (1.94)	0.39	106	352.36
Describing Facts	4.92 (1.60)	5.03 (2.09)	0.10	106	377.60	4.89 (1.92)	5.08 (1.85)	0.26	106	377.04
Important	5.40 (1.50)	5.57 (1.67)	0.30	106	270.21	5.38 (1.54)	5.60 (1.64)	0.52	106	269.66
Not Worrying	5.21 (1.27)	5.70 (1.59)	3.04*	106	224.52	5.45 (1.38)	5.51 (1.56)	0.04	106	230.88
Unusual	4.17 (1.31)	4.58 (2.00)	1.54	106	317.25	4.16 (1.66)	4.64 (1.79)	2.07	106	315.72
Positive	4.13 (1.59)	3.67 (2.24)	1.42	106	416.58	3.75 (1.92)	4.00 (2.05)	0.44	106	420.44
<i>Basque Parliament Resolutions Evaluation</i>										
Sincere, real	3.15 (1.37)	3.38 (1.55)	0.69	106	230.91	3.36 (1.42)	3.19 (1.53)	0.38	106	230.84
Opportunist, not natural	4.42 (1.43)	3.74 (1.86)	4.28*	106	300.91	4.22 (1.67)	3.86 (1.74)	1.20	106	309.57
People agree with them	3.77 (1.24)	3.82 (1.66)	0.02	106	235.46	3.82 (1.47)	3.77 (1.51)	0.02	106	235.46
Reinforcing the Feeling of Belonging to Humanity	3.63 (1.47)	3.35 (1.85)	0.70	106	302.90	3.65 (1.77)	3.28 (1.59)	1.31	106	301.19
Reinforcing Respect for Human Rights	3.77 (1.59)	3.45 (1.66)	1.03	106	281.33	3.71 (1.65)	3.47 (1.61)	0.57	106	282.55
Total Evaluation	3.58 (1.01)	3.65 (1.06)	0.13	106	115.31	3.66 (1.03)	3.57 (1.05)	0.22	106	115.21

* $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .10$.

We also verified if sex distribution was adequate for an experimental design with chi-square test. There were no significant differences among groups either in the case of manipulation-related factor or regarding identification with Basques factor.

Primary analyses

Further data analyses, aiming at verifying the hypotheses, were based on 2x2 ANOVAs (control versus experimental by low versus high Basque identification) with the above listed dependent variables.

Emotional climate. As shown in table II, results did not support the first hypothesis on the positive role of forgiveness petition ritual, because no significant differences were found either in positive or in negative emotional climate perception (means are presented in Table III).

TABLE II
Emotional Climate. Basic World Assumptions and Beliefs on Collective Violence, Reparation, Collective Guilt and Personal Shame and Sorrow

	Manipulation effect (F)	Identification effect (F)	Interaction effect (F)	df	Error MS
<i>Emotional Climate</i>					
Positive Emotional Climate	0.65	2.58	3.11*	104	1.11
Negative Emotional Climate	0.02	1.99	1.99	104	1.37
Emotional Climate Balance	0.66	7.36**	0.03	104	1.52
<i>Basic World Assumptions</i>					
Basic Assumptions (Overall)	3.28*	0.01	0.60	104	6.61
Assumptions about the World	4.22*	0.03	0.55	104	24.44
Assumptions about People	0.73	0.02	0.39	104	1.29
<i>Reparation, Collective Guilt, Personal Shame and Sorrow</i>					
Reparation	4.11*	4.20*	1.26	104	11.00
Whole Group Accountability	0.46	0.01	0.30	104	2.38
Collective Guilt Acceptance	2.27	0.36	0.10	104	2.52
Personal Shame and Sorrow	4.51*	0.56	1.57	104	2.18
<i>Beliefs on Collective Violence</i>					
The authors did not behave worse than in other countries	0.48	7.40**	0.24	104	2.73
Victims should forgive	0.01	9.32***	0.01	104	3.36

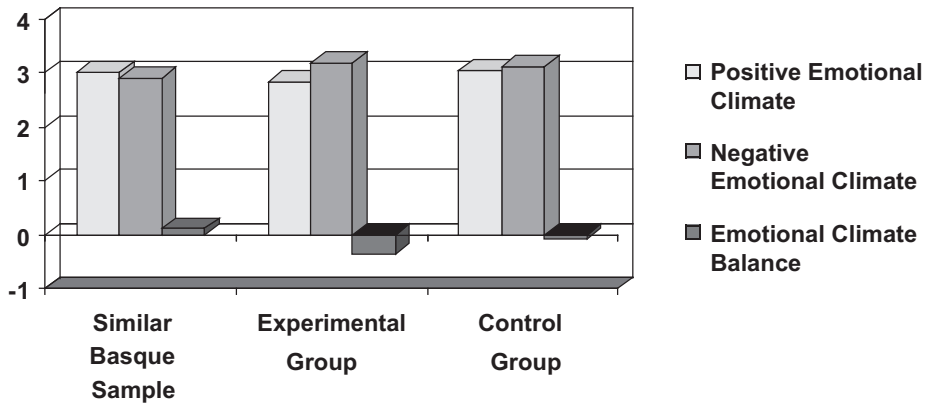
*** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .10$.

We contrasted the emotional climate means in both the experimental and the control group with means in a similar sample from the Basque Country using the Student's t -test. The results proved that there was a statistically significant difference regarding the emotional climate balance ($t_{(47)} = 2.67$, $p < .01$), being lower in the experimental group than in the similar Basque sample ($M = 0.11$ vs. $M = -0.35$). Such results indicate that the mere act of recall of past collective violence has a negative impact on perceived emotional climate. What is more, when positive and negative climate components were analyzed, it was found that mostly the negative was marginally higher ($t_{(47)} = -1.73$, $p < .10$) in the experimental group than in a similar Basque sample (see Figure 1).

Finally, a significant effect was found for a low versus high Basque identification factor regarding the emotional climate balance: the balance is better among high identifiers than among low identifiers (Table II).

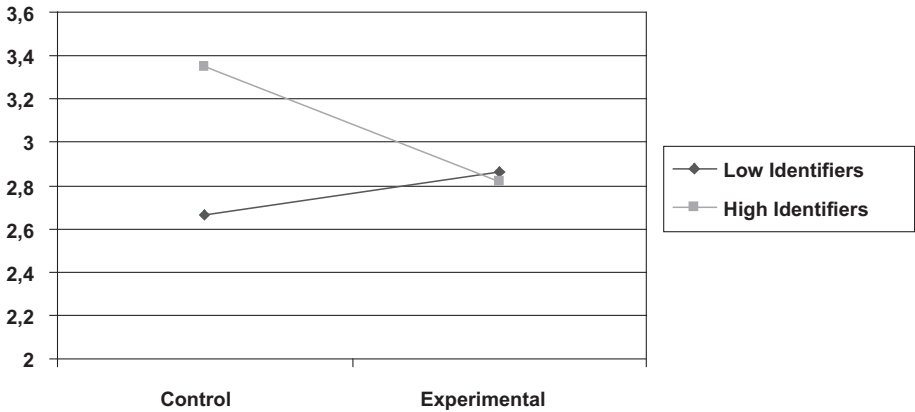
Moreover, for positive climate there was a marginal significant interaction effect between the manipulation and the identification factor. The mean of positive climate was higher for high identifiers ($M = 3.35$) and lower among low identifiers ($M = 2.66$)

FIGURE 1
Emotional Climate Mean in Experimental Group, Control Group, and a Similar Basque Sample



in the control condition, while the mean increased in the apology condition for low identifiers ($M = 2.86$) and simultaneously decreased for high identifiers ($M = 2.82$) (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2
Positive Emotional Climate Means in Experimental and Control Group



Basic assumptions about people and the world. With regard to basic assumptions, no manipulation, identification, or interaction effects were found: beliefs were not more positive in the experimental group. In the case of assumptions about the world, results demonstrated they were significantly less positive in the experimental group, although those about the humanity did not differ between the two groups.

Collective guilt and reparation actions. The second hypothesis was partially confirmed as, on the one hand, agreement with reparation actions was significantly higher in the experimental group and among low identifiers, while there were no significant differences as regards the collective guilt level, considering both acceptance and responsibility dimensions (Table II). What is more, there were no significant interaction effects regarding both reparation and collective guilt.

TABLE III
Emotional Climate. Basic World Assumptions and Beliefs on Collective Violence, Reparation, Collective Guilt, Shame and Sorrow - Means and Standard Deviations

	Experimental Group M (SD)	Control Group M (SD)	Low Identifiers M (SD)	High Identifiers M (SD)
Positive Emotional Climate	2.84 (.15)	3.01 (.14)	2.76 (.14)	3.09 (.15)
Negative Emotional Climate	3.14 (.17)	3.11 (.15)	3.29 (.16)	2.96 (.16)
Emotional Climate Balance	-.30 (.18)	-.10 (.16)	-.53 (.17)	-.12 (.17)
Basic Assumptions (Overall)	3.83 (.16)	4.24 (.15)	4.03 (.15)	4.04 (.16)
Assumptions about the World	3.75 (.18)	4.25 (.16)	3.98 (.17)	4.03 (.17)
Assumptions about People	3.99 (.19)	4.21 (.17)	4.12 (.17)	4.09 (.18)
Reparation	3.91 (.24)	3.25 (.21)	3.92 (.22)	3.25 (.23)
Whole Group Accountability	3.64 (.23)	3.44 (.20)	3.53 (.21)	3.55 (.22)
Collective Guilt Acceptance	4.56 (.23)	4.09 (.21)	4.23 (.21)	4.42 (.22)
Personal Shame and Sorrow	3.89 (.22)	3.28 (.19)	3.69 (.20)	3.47 (.21)
The authors did not behave worse	4.04 (.24)	3.81 (.21)	3.49 (.22)	4.37 (.23)
Victims should forgive	3.27 (.27)	3.31 (.24)	2.74 (.25)	3.84 (.26)

Shame and sorrow. Finally, the data sustained the hypothesis concerning shame and sorrow. In the experimental condition, participants expressed significantly more personal shame and sorrow (Table III for means). Moreover, there was a statistically significant and strong correlation between the personal shame and sorrow indicator and reparation ($r_{(108)} = .58, p < .001$). However, there was neither significant Basque identification nor interaction effect. The effect size was rather small (Table II).

Beliefs about collective violence. Moreover, as expected in relation to our fourth hypothesis, a main effect was found for high Basque identifiers on two items regarding beliefs about collective violence. High identifiers agreed more with the statement justifying perpetrators on the ground that they did not behave worse than those in other nations and wars ($M = 4.37$ versus low $M = 3.49$) and with the idea that victims and their relatives should forgive perpetrators ($M = 3.84$ versus low $M = 2.74$). There was neither significant MANOVA main effect of the manipulation nor interaction effect, meaning that high identifiers in apology condition agreed strongly with justification and forgiveness.

Discussion

This study attempted to understand in which way apology rituals carried out at the collective level can impact the members of the group involved in the political conflict. We have focused our attention on one of the most enduring conflict in Western Europe, which brought about many deaths, harm, and painful memories. The study, through its experimental design, analyzed how an apology for such wrongdoings could elicit specific emotive and cognitive responses (changes in beliefs), while taking into account the level of identification with Basques.

In general, the emotions elicited by the story about the collective violence outcomes in the Basque Country (and by the parliamentary apologies) were characterized by low intensity. Furthermore, while the information itself was generally evaluated as reliable, neutral (although it was seen as more neutral by those who were not reminded of apologies), credible, authentic, important, not worrying and positive, the parliamentary resolutions were evaluated rather negatively (although seen as more opportunist when the apology was reminded). These results shed specific light on the results and conclusions further presented, as they suggest that participants of the study assumed the information on collective violence to be relevant and true, while they were

neither necessarily impacted positively nor convinced with the information on the actions of the Basque Parliament and Government.

Regarding the mere experimental manipulation impact, results obtained confirm that public apologies and recalling past misdeeds reinforce agreement with reparation and increase personal social emotions related to social control, such as shame and sorrow. From this point of view, the study confirms the moderate positive impact of apologies as an instance of restorative justice (estimation of effect size by mean of correlation was of $r(108) = .22$, explaining 4% of variance). However, we did not find an increase in positive or negative emotional climate, or in positive social representations about the world. Such findings are at odds with Kanyangara et al.'s (2007) results. Nevertheless, we should take into consideration an important difference between these two studies: in this study, an experimental design by means of two types of questionnaires with limited personal implication and actual experience was used, while the Kanyangara et al.'s study analyzed the impact of long-term rituals of restorative justice on actual victims and perpetrators. Another explanation is that the emotional climate scale and the collective guilt scale are general and not sensitive to such light experimental manipulations. It cannot be denied, however, that in other studies similar to the present one these scales demonstrated their sensitivity to experimental manipulations (see Lastrego et al. in this monograph). Finally, as we will describe below, the apology reinforces positive emotional climate for low identifiers and decreases it for high identifiers, showing that apologies have a positive effect for people who do not feel symbolically related to or identified with perpetrators. On the other hand, the apology has an emotional cost for Basque nationalists, congruently with the emotional cost that apologies had for people belonging to the perpetrator ingroup in Kanyangara et al.'s study (2007).

What is more, when the results of this experiment are compared with the means in a similar sample of the Basque Country, some interesting conclusions might be drawn. It seems not only that being reminded of apologies expressed by the Basque Government and Parliament had its impact on the study participants, but also that the mere fact of being reminded of past misdeeds related to one's own in-group can change people's perception of emotional climate. In our study, in both groups, the emotional climate balance was negative, which is a very infrequent finding. What is more, it resulted that when people are reminded of the past negative events and apologies made by the authorities, they indeed perceive the emotional climate as worse in comparison to a similar Basque sample. This comparable sample answered the Emotional Climate Scale some years ago and it is possible that differences in the social and political evolution can explain why our sample showed a worse climate. This study was performed beyond the current recession and with no important political changes during the application, while the previous sample answered the scale two months after the March Eleven terrorist attack (Jiménez et al., 2005). These findings suggest that apology ritual combined with recall of past collective violence reinforces the perception of negative emotional climate in the society.

With regard to the identification with Basques, we found a slight expected positive effect in the case of emotional climate. First, among low identifiers perceived emotional climate balance was worse than among high identifiers. What is more, when they were not reminded of apology but of past collective violence, low identifiers perceived the emotional climate as less positive than when the apology was included. This interaction effect suggests that apologies had partial positive effects, but only among participants weakly involved with the ingroup's legacy. On the other hand, high identifiers demonstrated a defensive response when facing rather unpleasant information on the collective violence linked to their in-group. People who identify themselves strongly as Basques prefer to see the emotional climate within their in-group as positive. They indeed perceive it as more positive when only facing the drastic data related to

collective violence than when also reminded of apology for the atrocities committed. In sum, these findings bring support to the idea that high identification with one's in-group plays a defensive role in perception and evaluation of one's group actions.

However, Basque identification was not associated with lower guilt nor interacted with the manipulation in general – with the exception of the effect on positive emotional climate described above. Moreover, correlations between Basque identification as a continuous variable and collective guilt, shame and sorrow were not significant (data not shown in this paper). Nevertheless, as expected, people with high identification displayed in general more defensive responses, not only in relation to perception of the emotional climate but also as regards their beliefs about collective violence in the Basque Country and their agreement with reparations. They agreed more with the statement that justifies collective violence of their in-group, expected more spontaneous forgiveness, and agreed less with reparations. Finally, agreement with reparations was strongly correlated with personal shame and sorrow, confirming that these social emotions reinforce reparative behavioural tendencies.

We can conclude that the apology-oriented initiative of the Basque Parliament and Government was able to produce an impact of shame and sorrow reinforcement, and also respect of the agreement with reparative actions, while, on the other hand, no effects were found as regards emotional climate and social representations about the world and humanity. This can be due to a limitation of the experimental design, which elicited low involvement – although other similar studies presented in this monograph prove that apology ritual can have an impact on these psychosocial variables. Most arguably, the apologies of the Basque Parliament do not have actual psychosocial impact because of their weakness, being too general, with a lot of limitations, and a lack of concrete effects or implications for the daily life of the common people. In spite of these limitations, a positive effect was found for participants with relative low identification with the Basque Country, showing that this apology has had some positive psychosocial consequences mainly for low identifiers. On the other hand, identification with Basques appears as a partial obstacle for the acceptance of past collective misdeeds, because it was associated with partial justifications of collective violence, claims for forgiveness and low agreement with reparations, while it was not related to collective guilt, although it did not impede feelings of shame and sorrow. Thus, as stated by Hamber (2007), it is important to continue addressing relationships between individuals and groups in and after conflict, although it might be difficult to find the best ways to deal with the collective violence issues and, subsequently, with apologies and forgiveness related to them. Studies such as the above described can provide useful indications on how to make the apology and forgiveness true and functioning as a “healing balm” for the societies involved in political conflicts such as the one in the Basque Country.

Notes

¹ For the purpose of this study an item regarding the economic situation was excluded from the positive climate dimension.

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