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**DOES AN OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT APOLOGY
REALLY MAKE AMENDS?**

Research published by SAGE in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*

Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore (March 26, 2008) – The Australian government recently made an official apology to the Aboriginal population for the country's past assimilation policies and some American states have officially apologized for slavery. When governments issue an official apology for past misdeeds, does that apology really make amends? Research published by SAGE in the April 2008 issue of *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* looks at whether those group apologies make any genuine difference in the perceptions of the wronged parties.

In a series of studies, social psychology researchers Catherine Philpot and Matthew Hornsey, of Australia's University of Queensland, provided participants with information about transgressions and then reported to the non-control groups that the transgressions had been officially apologized for. The official apologies were perceived as effective in some ways but not in others. When an apology was made, the perception was that there was real remorse but also likely an ulterior motive for the apology. Even using more emotional language, usually associated with individual apologies, was no more effective at promoting forgiveness than the more formally issued apology.

"Intergroup apologies are frequently given and requested for all manner of intergroup offenses. However, the time is ripe for a systematic exploration of what effects intergroup apologies actually have," write the authors in the article. "An apology is not a magic wand that can be waved to heal wounds from the past but should be considered instead as one step in a long process of reconciliation."

The article, "What Happens When Groups Say Sorry: The Effect of Intergroup Apologies on Their Recipients," written by Catherine R. Philpot and Matthew J. Hornsey of the *University of Queensland, Australia* is available at no charge for a limited time at <http://psp.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/34/4/474>.

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