

To Apologize or Not to Apologize... What Else Is in Between?
A Case Study Analysis with Implications for Leaders & Organizational Context

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

November 2022

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Abstract

The purpose of this content analysis case study was to determine if there was a correlation between the leadership apology behaviors utilized after a scandal, the organizational context, and the leadership style responsible for building the context by utilizing a case study content analysis. The six cases examined were the Nixon Watergate scandal, the NFL Colin Kaepernick controversy, the Wells Fargo fraudulent account scandal of 2016, the JetBlue crisis of 2007, the Emma Watson reparations statement made in response to performative allyship claims in 2020, and the Toto Wolff apology to Sir Lewis Hamilton after the 2022 Imola Grand Prix loss. The researcher provided a history of the existing literature on the field of apologies and analyzed the cases before examining the organizational context, the visible leadership style, the apology delivered by leadership, and the responses from the constituents. The researcher utilized publicly available information, archival data, and articles to analyze the cases as well as Diction software to measure for emotional tonality of the apology. The data suggest that there is a tri-directional relationship between the organizational context, the leadership style utilized, and the leadership apology behaviors. These data are presented and discussed in addition to limitations, suggestions for future research, and broader implications.

Keywords: apologies, leadership, behavior, culture, Black Lives Matter, Richard Nixon, Colin Kaepernick, Wells Fargo, JetBlue, Emma Watson, Toto Wolff

Dedication

For every Samoan or multi-ethnic person who does not feel like they have a space at the table in higher education.

Acknowledgments

As I complete this final chapter in my educational journey, I am overwhelmed with gratitude toward my family, friends, and everyone who has created a community of support for me through this entire 22-year process. I would specifically like to thank Dr. Mary Ann Pearson, Dr. A. Greg Bowden, Dr. Keanon Alderson, Dr. John Shoup, Dr. Victoria Brodie, Dr. Jill Robinson, and Dr. Jean Lipman-Blumen for their guidance and knowledge. You have contributed so much to me, and I am incredibly grateful for the gift of each of you. I would also like to thank my friends, family, and those I love most for their encouragement and extreme patience as my academics have occupied most of my leisure time. I appreciate the space that was given to me to do what I needed to do, the existence checks to ensure that I was alive and well, and the stream of encouragement along the way. I would like to thank Chauncey, who has been here for me every step of the way. I would like to thank Trevon McFadden. His humor, support, kindness, and endless F1 expertise have deeply enriched my life. I would like to thank my Nana for always believing in me and allowing me to explain whatever new thing I was infinitely fascinated by but am certain was likely very boring. Lastly, I would like to thank my Mom. Her intelligence, strength, courage, and heart have been a constant source of inspiration and have helped me find my way here on this journey. I am deeply indebted to these individuals without whom I never would have been able to reach this milestone, and I am humbled to have them in my life. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

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Part 1

The Nature of the
Research Problem

Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Part 2

Research Methodology and
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Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Part 3

Findings

Chapter 4

Research Results and Analysis

Part 4

Conclusion

Chapter 5

Discussion

Chapter 6

Study Examination and Conclusions

Chapter 1: Introduction

Every action has its equal opposite reaction.

—Sir Isaac Newton

Those researching apologies are often interested in finding a utilitarian and standardized model that does the most good for the most people (Taft, 2000). As Taft (2000) explains, “Many commentators focus on apology in utilitarian terms and promote it as a litigation resource,” and this approach is utilized to obtain forgiveness (p. 1143). The hidden assumption is that there is a right way to apologize and a wrong way. If an apology is delivered using a specific formula, then there is a linear pathway to its equal opposite reaction that will create the best outcome in all situations. To illustrate this point, all one needs to do is search for “apology formula” in a search engine, to which thousands of results will appear. Schweitzer et al. (2015) provide one such formula in an HBR article, stating,

Once a company decides that an apology is necessary, it needs to carefully consider the who, what, where, when, and how of executing it. For core violations, the “who” has to be senior leaders, the “what” has to show a tremendous commitment to change, the “where” has to be high profile, the “when” has to be fast, and the “how” must be deeply sincere and demonstrate empathy. (para. 1)

This perspective is reductionistic, following the Newtonian principle that any outcome can be predicted if enough is known about a system. Reductionism, however, has been shown to disintegrate in real-world scenarios, as there are not enough facets involved in the reduced state to explain complex functions piece by piece. It does not permit the influence of chance, behavioral deviations, and external influences. There are too many infinite syllogisms that exceed the capacities of human and mechanical capabilities. The current literature does not provide a specific or accessible instrument to

measure apology behaviors on a spectrum in organizational leadership. Leaders are either open or closed to apologies. This presents a gap in the landscape of research that this case study analysis will attempt to fill by examining the cases of Nixon's Watergate apology, the NFL's Colin Kaepernick apology, Wells Fargo's apology for their 2016 fraudulent accounts scandal, JetBlue's apology issued to passengers and customers for their 2007 crisis, Emma Watson's address to the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, and Toto Wolff's apology to Lewis Hamilton at the Imola Grand Prix. The researcher selected these cases because the delivery of the apology, leadership style, and organizational context was varied and well-documented. This would allow the researcher to thoroughly examine the possible interconnectedness of the three variables highlighted in this research.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the existing literature on apologies across a variety of contexts to synthesize the relevant works in a meaningful way. This includes the purpose, origins, communication effects, cultural effects, effects of humility, effects of authenticity, effects of politeness, effects of ethicality, the role of trust, the role of power, and the role of intelligence in apologies, specifically through an organizational lens. Additionally, the history and the context of the Watergate scandal, the Colin Kaepernick controversy, the Wells Fargo account fraud scandal of 2016, the JetBlue crisis of 2007, the Emma Watson address of the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, and the Toto Wolff apology to Lewis Hamilton at the Imola Grand Prix were provided and discussed in depth. Leadership literature that applies to the cases will be included to demonstrate the impact and connection to the organizational context and the delivered apology. Chapter 3 explores the research design of this study in detail. This qualitative research study utilized

a content analysis case study design examining six distinct cases of public leadership apology. This section discusses the methodology used to categorize and interpret the literature. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the findings specifically focusing on the organizational context, the leadership style, the apology, and the constituent response. Chapter 5 integrates these findings to examine any connections between organizational context, leadership style, and leadership apology behaviors. It will also provide introductory apology-style language that could potentially be applied to a spectrum model, a discussion of the limitations of this study, and potential areas for future research.

Defining Apologies and the Current Apology Literature Landscape

Myers (2016) defines an apology as accepting responsibility for wrongdoing through admitting fault in a matter. Apologies are almost always born from conflict or transgression. According to Wilmot and Hocker (2017), a conflict that causes harm to another party requires some form of action to initiate the healing and forgiveness process. An apology catalyzes moving past hurts, transgressions, or conflicts and into the forgiveness stage (Wilmot & Hocker, 2017). The existing literature on apologies in leadership is narrow (Cels, 2017; Diers-Lawson & Pang, 2016; Johnson & Shelton, 2014; Lazare, 2004). It mostly focuses on how an apology is delivered, including fluency and clarity, or forgiveness resulting from an apology.

Most of the research and literature on apologies emphasizes a marriage or friendship relationship, rather than an organizational one (Chapman & Thomas, 2006). Chapman and Thomas (2006) introduce five types of preferences and patterned behaviors that they classify as apology language. Chapman and Thomas (2006) created an

assessment that allows the user to self-report and discover their apology language. The identified five languages include expressing regret, accepting responsibility, making restitution, genuinely repenting, and requesting forgiveness. The approach does not examine apologies through the lens of efficacy or ethicality. It, instead, examines the behavioral preference of those delivering and receiving the apology. This assessment was created by the same individuals who created the Five Love Languages assessment (Chapman & Thomas, 2006). The research conducted by Chapman and Thomas (2006) to create apology styles for those looking to self-define in interpersonal relationships is the closest to meeting the aim of this dissertation. The questions reflect a marriage or family relationship lens. This, unfortunately, makes the scale untranslatable to the organizational sector. Not only are the questions irrelevant to the workplace, but the styles are not likely to transcend the home. The relationships, levels of trust, and projected image of the individual often illustrate a difference between the workplace and the home.

Problem Statement

The research in the field of apologies is robust when discussing ethical implications and potential frameworks for effective one-size-fits-all apologies (Cels, 2017; Diers-Lawson & Pang, 2016; Johnson & Shelton, 2014; Lazare, 2004). Lazare (2004) for example, explains that a complete apology must contain four components: acknowledgment, remorse, explanations, and reparations. An apology framework, however, is not as rich when identifying the impact of the way a leader apologizes. The lack of attention paid to leadership apology styles in looking at apologies as a gradient of behaviors, rather than an open or closed orientation poses a problem; not only are apologies intertwined with the relationship that a leader establishes with their followers,

but they can also have an impact on the culture that is shaped. Syllogistically, that which is unknown can create a threat to the survival and success of the organization. The result is that the type of apology a leader uses has a longer-lasting impact than what is immediately visible (Hunter, 2012). The apology begins long before the transgression actually occurs. Hunter (2012) and Lazare's (2004) research implies that how the apology is delivered and received will likely be consistent with previously established patterns of behavior that employees and followers exist within.

The researcher attempted to find a study of this nature and found only two that overlapped with this intention. The first was the Chapman and Thomas (2006) model. As mentioned, this model specifically pertains to intimate relationships, making the questions not transferable to a workplace or leadership setting. The second was a case study meta-analysis dissertation on apology literature and public apology cases conducted by Brubaker (2015). This study, however, attempted to synthesize the literature towards a specific framework, departing from the intentions of this study.

Apologies are often seen as important simply for restoring relationships and trust; however, apologies can also foster creativity, productivity, and well-being (Toussaint et al., 2018). They can create a sense of psychological safety that reduces stress and health problems and increase the employee's ability to focus and work productively (Hunter, 2012; Toussaint et al., 2018). If an employer understands what type of apology style is appropriate to the corresponding work culture, they will have a better understanding of what behaviors they need to modify and potentially understand their fit, or lack thereof, within an organization.

Research Questions

The research for this content analysis case study specifically examines the relationship between the organizational context, leadership style within the organizational context, and the public apology delivered after a transgression or conflict. To examine the potential interplay of these variables, the researcher asked three questions:

Q1: How do the leadership apology behaviors utilized after a conflict or transgression interact or relate with the organizational context?

Q2: How does the leadership style utilized within the organization impact the organizational context and subsequent apology?

Q3: How can leader apology behaviors potentially be classified into a style on an apology spectrum?

The researcher first analyzed the relationship between leadership apology behaviors and organizational context. Secondly, the researcher examined the impact of leadership style on how it creates the organizational context and what connection that might have with the delivered apology. Lastly, the researcher sought to analyze what implications the data collected had on how the behaviors utilized within the delivered apology could be conceptualized into an apology spectrum for future applied research using categorized themes. These questions drove the study in its attempt to determine what, if any, relationship the apology delivered had with the leadership style and organizational context. This study also examined if the apology behaviors could be differentiated between, meaning could the research identify nuances that would differentiate the apologies from each other as not to classify them in a reduced category of open or closed.

Purpose and Nature of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the leadership style and organizational context on the apology behaviors utilized after a transgression, specifically found in six cases: Nixon's Watergate apology, the NFL's Colin Kaepernick apology, the Wells Fargo's apology from their 2016 fraudulent accounts scandal, JetBlue's apology to passengers and customers for their 2007 crisis, the Emma Watson reparations statement made in response to performative allyship claims in 2020, and the Toto Wolff apology to Sir Lewis Hamilton after the 2022 Imola Grand Prix loss. This paper does not examine the efficacy of an apology; rather, it makes the case that the type of apology a leader delivers is correlated to the leadership style and the organizational context. The focus is on the potential spectrum of apology styles or behaviors, rather than an exclusively opened or closed orientation. This study aims to understand how leader apology behaviors manifest based on their organizational context and leadership style.

When selecting an appropriate approach for researching a specific phenomenon, the researcher must ask themselves what is going to best facilitate and support the nature of their questions. Qualitative research can use a social constructivist worldview (Creswell, 2004). This relies on participant responses to accurately convey the meaning that the studied individuals construct in a specific area of interest (Merriam, 1998). The subjectivity of the participant's interpretation is embraced and negotiated by the researcher with social, cultural, and historical considerations (Tracy, 2013). Thus, when using the social constructivist lens, the answers can be varied and create a highly complex collection of views (Creswell, 2004). Research conducted from this perspective is an amalgamation of human interaction (Creswell, 2004; Jafari Amineh & Davatgari

Asl, 2015). The subjectivity of the researcher is also acknowledged and accepted in the process as a way of sharing their knowledge (Tracy, 2013). A qualitative researcher places value on the lived experiences and stories of individuals, having the potential to provide more context than quantitative research (Tracy, 2013). It is also significant because it can create foundational theory work which can be useful to quantitative research conducted later. Qualitative research is ideal for this study, given the interpretive and socially active nature of the research questions.

The case study approach is ideal for situations where theory is insufficient or non-existent (Merriam, 1998). In Merriam's (1998) work on case study research, she states,

The researcher brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people's constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. The final product of this type of study is yet another interpretation by the researcher of others' views filtered through his or her own (p. 22)

This design utilizes in-depth research questions to cover contextual conditions in a case or bounded setting, allowing the researcher to understand the knowledge constructed by others and make meaning of it (Creswell, 2004; Merriam, 1998).

In the third edition of Yin's (2003) seminal work that much of the standard of good case study research is built upon, he outlines five components for a successful case study research design: study questions, study propositions, unit of analysis, linking the data to the propositions, and developing criteria for interpreting the findings. Study questions are the basis for the research study and can indicate what type of study should be conducted (Yin, 2003). Case study questions should seek to answer "how" and "why" questions, which is consistent with the research questions from this study (Yin, 2003). Study propositions are meant to direct "attention to something that should be examined

within the scope of a study” (Yin, 2003, p. 22). In this study, the researcher relied on the theoretical proposition that there may be a connection between apology behaviors utilized by a leader, their leadership style, and the organizational context they exist in. This proposition guided the cases and highlighted relevant conditions, which is consistent with Yin’s (2003) recommendation.

Identifying the unit of analysis for a study is described as determining the boundaries of the case or where it should begin and end (Yin, 2003). Defining a unit of analysis can be difficult due to the potential for infinite resources and potential research directions, which is why Yin (2003) advises the researcher to set specific propositions to ensure that the research “will stay within feasible limits” (p. 23). One way the researcher addressed this was by deciding against examining apologies in terms of positive or negative outcomes. The result of the apology is inconsequential to this study, creating a firm boundary around the core proposition of this case. The researcher also attempted to be explicit about which leader was being studied, as some leaders represent a larger organization of independent actors.

To link the data to the propositions, the researcher is encouraged to utilize pattern matching to illustrate the support of the study findings for the hypothesis and logic models to assist in reconstructing the complexity of the cases in a meaningful way (Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) explains that this is also done through connecting the case study to relevant conditions, working from the ground up with data, developing a description of the case that can assist in identifying explanations for analysis, and providing rival explanations or potential theoretical research for further study based on limitations. The researcher followed this methodology to improve chances for construct validity, internal

validity, external validity, and reliability, using the four conditions as “yardsticks” as recommended by Yin (2003, p. 19).

Lastly, through finding interpretations of the criteria, Yin (2003) explains that “there is no precise way of setting the criteria for interpreting these types of findings. One hopes that the different patterns are sufficiently contrasting” (p. 27). The researcher attempted to address this by providing six distinct cases. The six cases examined in this study had vastly different organizational contexts, utilized leadership styles, and delivered apologies to contrast, in accordance with Yin’s (2003) suggestion. Additionally, the researcher utilized pattern matching by examining several pieces of information from the same case to establish a potential pattern of behavior that could be related to the theoretical proposition (Yin, 2003). This is consistent with Yin’s (2003) recommendations for case study research. Yin (2003) is the most cited author when discussing good case study research, making his research and suggested methodology a foundational part of the landscape (Massaro et al., 2019; Yazan, 2015). The pervasiveness and proven utility of Yin’s (2003) work is the primary reason the researcher selected and incorporated this methodology into the theoretical framework of this study.

The researcher conducted this study with the hope of ascertaining pertinent information for a phenomenon of interest. The researcher focused on a specific issue and utilized cases to better understand the issue in action and provide context. There are three types of case study designs; single instrumental (selects a single issue and a single case to illustrate the issue), the intrinsic (focus on the uniqueness of the case itself), and the

collective (selects one issue and uses multiple cases to illustrate the issue; Creswell, 2004; Tracy, 2013).

This study included archival data, news articles, public interviews, and general reactions to the apologies. The researcher primarily used EBSCOHost, JSTOR, Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar, and Google search engine to find articles, studies, and journalistic reporting that was relevant to each case. It explored specific cases regarding the selected issue and the examination of the interconnection between organizational context, the leadership style, and the delivered apology, making the collective case study design ideal.

Definition of Terms

The following terms defined in Table 1.1 are for clarification purposes as they will be frequently utilized during this research:

Table 1.1 – Defining research terms

Term	Definition
Apology	The term “apology” will be used broadly in this research but will not assume a right or wrong methodology for apologizing, but rather a general set of behaviors utilized. It is defined in this paper as an admission of fault or acceptance of wrongdoing that is expressed in some way to the harmed party (Wilmot & Hocker, 2016).

Table 1.1 *cont.*

Term	Definition
Authentic Leadership	Authentic leadership is defined by five characteristics: purpose, values, relationships, self-discipline, and heart (George, 2003). This model encourages resilience, adaptability, and clarity for leaders through transparency, honesty, and ethicality which engenders a sense of loyalty and trust with followers.
Avoidant Organizational Context	An avoidant organizational context is defined in this paper as a group that has a low concern for themselves and low concern for others. Change or action often moves slowly. This is illustrated by the NFL case study.
Capitulating Organizational Context	A capitulating organizational context is defined in this paper as a group that has a low concern for themselves and has a high concern for others or one specific person. This group often thinks uncritically and will be individually self-sacrificial. This is illustrated by the Nixon case study.
Case Study	A case study is defined by Merriam (1998) as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. xiii).

Table 1.1 *cont.*

Term	Definition
Collaborative Apology	A collaborative apology is defined as having an emotional tone that is meant to convey empathy and a desire to take accountability. This is usually motivated by a desire to re-establish trust and engage in the reparation process collaboratively.
Competitive Organizational Context	A competitive organizational context is defined in this paper as a group that has a high concern for the self and a low concern for others. This group is often in survival mode and will seek to win at all costs. This is illustrated by the Wells Fargo case study.
Conflict	Wilmot and Hocker's (2017) definition of conflict will be utilized in this paper and is defined as the "expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals" (p. 3).
Constituents	Constituents refer to anyone who is directly involved in or working with the examined party (Gardner, 1990). This can include industry peers, potential customers, stakeholders, or viewers.

Table 1.1 *cont.*

Term	Definition
Content Analysis	A content analysis within the confines of a qualitative case study is defined by Mayring (2000) as “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication.” (p. 52).
Dismissive Apology	A dismissive apology is defined as having an emotional tone that is meant to convey certainty or finality (signaling to everyone that the scandal is over). This is usually motivated by a desire to avoid appearing weak.
Familial Apology	A familial apology is defined as having an emotional tone that is meant to convey a sense of kinship or fond connection. This is usually motivated by a desire to connect and reaffirm a relationship.
Groupthink	Groupthink is defined by Janis (1982) as when the need for harmony induces conformity, silence, and irrational decision-making.

Table 1.1 *cont.*

Term	Definition
Inspirational Organizational Context	An inspirational organizational context is defined in this paper as a group that has a moderate concern for the self and a high concern for others. This group is often seen leading change and attempting to use their group's platform to enact systemic equilibration through leader inspiration. This is illustrated by the Emma Watson case study.
Interconnected Apology	An interconnected apology is defined as having an emotional tone that is meant to convey the interrelatedness between all things, emphasizing the equal opposite reactions of behaviors and systems. This is usually motivated by a desire to create change by bringing awareness to the impact one facet has on another.
Leader(ship)	A leader is defined as an individual who influences and assists in building the organizational context. For this study, the term "leader" will refer to those with legitimate and formally given power (Raven, 2008).

Table 1.1. *cont.*

Term	Definition
Machiavellian Leadership	Machiavellian leadership encourages leaders to eliminate those who threaten their power but to balance this with an appearance of likeability to avoid an uprising through deception, charisma, and eloquent communication (Belschak et al., 2016).
Non-Committal Apology	A non-committal apology is defined as having an emotional tone that is meant to convey ambivalence through language that is tepid and vague. This is usually motivated by a desire to avoid committing to a specific stance.
Organizational Context	Organizational Context refers to the created and lived culture found within the examined organization. It can include the structure, general environment, reward systems, and values (Schein, 2017).
Passive-Avoidant Leadership	Passive-avoidant leaders are often perceived as out of touch with the concerns of their followers and project this into their relationship with their followers (Molero et al., 2013).

Table 1.1 *cont.*

Term	Definition
Protective Apology	A protective apology is defined as having an emotional tone that is meant to convey an equal share of responsibility so as not to engage finger-pointing or individual burden of blame. This is usually motivated by a desire to foster a safe space to innovate and perform by separating the people from the problem.
Qualitative Research	Qualitative research is defined by Bryman (2004) as an approach “that emphasizes the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts. There is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which an item being analyzed (and the categories derived from it) appeared” (p. 542).
Servant Leadership	A servant leader is preoccupied with serving the needs of others, making that their primary objective. These tenants stem from personal values (Greenleaf, 1996).

Table 1.1 *cont.*

Term	Definition
Service Equitability	A service equitability organizational context is defined in this
Organizational Context	paper as a group that has a high concern for the self and a high concern for others. This group is often preoccupied with destroying traditional power structures and hierarchy with a strong dedication to service and respect for all people.
Transactional Leadership	A transactional leader views relationships as an exchange that is motivated by their desire to meet their ends. They will utilize primarily reward and punishment to ensure that the criteria for success set for employees are being met (Northouse, 2018).
Transformational Leadership	Transformational leadership is defined as a process where leaders induce “followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations - the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations - of both leaders and followers” (Burns, 1978, p. 19).
Transgression	A transgression can be defined as a wrong-doing or behavior that causes harm to another party. This is definitionally differentiated from conflict in that a transgression requires an offending behavior, whereas conflict does not (Zheng et al., 2016).

Table 1.1 *cont.*

Term	Definition
Ubuntu Organizational Context	An Ubuntu organizational context is defined in this paper as a group that has a high concern for those within the team and a moderate concern for others. This group is often preoccupied with the support and protection of their members believing that protection will allow them all to win together.

Theoretical Frameworks

This study will not attempt to build theory and instead will focus on laying a foundation for theory building in the future. As such, the theoretical framework utilized will be based on a content analysis case study approach. Morrow and Brown (1994) explain that a researcher might utilize an intensive case study to socially theorize for the sake of deeper comprehension and potentially “transform (through praxis) the underlying orders of social life – those social and systemic relations that constitute society” (p. 211). The researcher hopes to analyze the public apologies elicited from leaders and examine any existing correlations between the organizational context, leadership style, and the apologetic behaviors exhibited, aligning with the case study approach.

Creswell (2004) explains that the researcher should begin by identifying specific cases (creating a bounded system), collect as much information as possible, and work to compare cases to each other. This study will follow this approach in conjunction with Yin’s (2003) five components for a successful case study and Merriam’s (1998)

definition of case study research, selecting these frameworks because of their foundational guidance to other the field of case study research. The researcher also used the Creswell (2004) data analysis spiral model as a framework for collecting data. This model follows the subsequent steps: collecting data, managing and organizing the data, reading and memorizing the data, creating classifying codes, developing and assessing interpretation, and representing an account of the findings through understandable interpretations of the data.

Researcher's Perspective

The researcher had a genuine enthusiasm for advancing research in the areas of apologies and leadership. The perspective of the researcher was informed by their background in organizational psychology and organizational consulting. With the successful completion of a Master of Science thesis entitled “I’m Sorry, Does That Change Anything?” at Azusa Pacific University in 2019, the researcher discovered a passion for understanding organizational apology. The researcher used a post-positivist lens in this study by attempting to identify a cause-and-effect relationship between a leader’s openness to apologizing and their primary conflict style (Sega, 2019). It produced testable and generalizable results; however, it was reductionistic in its understanding of the phenomenon and failed to fully capture the essence of the human condition as it was bound within the confines of quantitative research. Although the researcher decided against using this lens to conduct research for this study, it should still be noted as this framework did have a foundational impact on the researcher. The researcher chose to build upon this perspective by adopting a social constructivism lens for this study. With organizational consulting, the researcher had robust experience with

conflict and mediation, as well as public relations, connecting to their vested interest in further studying and understanding organizational apologies, specifically by those in leadership.

In using a qualitative content analysis case study approach, the researcher was the instrument that interpreted the data found in the cases and made meaning of that information. There is an inescapable subjectivity in qualitative research as it relies on the interpretation of a human, rather than generalized data which can be collected in quantitative research. Tracy (2013) identifies three core concepts of qualitative research that can aid in the process of ensuring external and internal validity and reliability which the researcher utilized to mitigate errors found in subjectivity: self-reflexivity, context, and thick description. Self-reflexivity acknowledges that the researcher is essentially the instrument that is responsible for collecting, organizing, interpreting, and conveying the data. Context implies that the theories are a product of their societal context, making them biased and subject to change. Thick description utilizes dense research to support a broader assertion.

This method is versatile in that it requires the researcher to have a deep understanding of the self, relational dynamics, culture, groups, and context (Tracy, 2013). It allows the researcher to answer phrenetic questions about values and beliefs to make sense of a phenomenon that is highly contextual and frequently changing. Utilizing Tracy's (2013) model, Creswell's (2004) data analysis spiral, and by adhering strictly to the rules within the IRB handbook, the researcher set themselves up for success in maintaining internal and external validity and reliability.

The researcher also used the social constructivist theoretical lens. Following Jafari Amineh and Davatgari Asl's (2015) three assumptions of reality, knowledge, and learning, the researcher approached each case with a desire to extract a perspective that was representative of the reported lived experiences. This research sought to understand the socially constructed knowledge and reality of the outlined cases and avoid the Newtonian reductionism that similar studies have used by viewing apologies as a spectrum of behaviors that might exist within and be influenced by the organizational context and the leadership style utilized.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study is that it will address the lack of research found in the landscape and can act as a basis for future research of others. Most research on this topic has been framed around intimate or familial relationships, making it inadequate and inappropriate for organizational application. The literature that does examine apologies in an organizational context tends to examine the best way to apologize for a generalized framework that can be used across a variety of contexts. This study will address some of the reductionistic tendencies of apology literature and provide a more thorough discussion on the topic. With the memory bank of past mistakes being exponentially expanded by technology, it is more important than ever for leaders to have a thorough understanding of the cause-and-effect relationship between their leadership apology behaviors, their leadership style, and the context of their organization. Every action and behavior they engage in up to the point of the conflict will dictate how or whether the apology is received and can potentially perpetuate a cycle, both negative and positive.

Part 1 The Nature of the Research Problem	Chapter 1	Introduction
	Chapter 2	Literature Review
Part 2 Research Methodology and Procedures	Chapter 3	Research Methodology
Part 3 Findings	Chapter 4	Research Results and Analysis
Part 4 Conclusion	Chapter 5	Discussion
	Chapter 6	Study Examination and Conclusions

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study examined the relationship between organizational context, leadership styles, and the observed apology behaviors within the confined cases of Nixon's Watergate scandal, Roger Goodell's apology on behalf of the NFL to Colin Kaepernick, the Wells Fargo apology for the fraudulent account scandal of 2016, the JetBlue apology to passengers and customers for their 2007 crisis, Emma Watson's address to the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, and Toto Wolff's apology to Lewis Hamilton at the Imola Grand Prix. The researcher attempted to synthesize the relevant literature on apologies delivered by leaders within an organizational context. Apology literature, literature peripherally connected to apologies, the history of the studied cases, and the relevant leadership styles identified within the cases were discussed and analyzed to provide a rich description and context that the research built upon in data collection.

The researcher primarily sourced this information from EbscoHost, JSTOR, Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar, and the Google search engine to find magazines, newspaper articles, social media commentary, studies, and journalistic reporting that was relevant to each case.

Relevant Research Frameworks

Post-Positivism

When attempting to conduct research, the researcher must determine what worldview and lens they are interpreting in their study. A common approach is a post-positivist framework (Creswell, 2004). The researcher initially considered utilizing this approach, as it is focused on cause and effect. This approach is conservative in its attempts at proclaiming truths. Human behaviors can sometimes be unpredictable,

meaning that there is always a degree of uncertainty (Kuhn, 1970). This form of research considers that uncertainty and is concerned with identifying potential causes for specific outcomes through empirical observations or measurements that are used to verify or disprove a theory (Kuhn, 1970). The practical information that is collected or measured is used, tested, and refined to better understand the world and subsequently, informs the lens of the researcher (Creswell, 2004).

Objectivity is essential in the process of finding explanations for certain phenomena as an emotional investment in a specific outcome can compromise the discoverable truth in the study (Creswell, 2004; Kuhn, 1970). According to Creswell (2004), “post-positivism has the elements of being reductionistic, logical, empirical, cause-and-effect oriented, and deterministic based on a priori theories” (p. 28). The researcher must examine worldview and hidden biases, constantly ensuring that it is not coloring their interpretation or understanding. To do this, the researcher looks at specific cause and effect variables finding it imperative to numerically measure and quantify their results. The primary concern for the researcher is experimentation and testability for generalizability (Kuhn, 1970).

The reductionistic nature of this lens does not make it ideal for the intent of this study and was subsequently not utilized by the researcher. The researcher did initially make use of this approach in previous research by attempting to identify a cause-and-effect relationship between a leader’s openness to apologizing and their primary conflict style (Sega, 2019). This research, however, was unable to address some of the contextual organizational factors which could have provided a more thorough understanding of the identified phenomenon. Although it did produce testable and generalizable results, it was

reductionistic in its understanding of the phenomenon and failed to fully capture the essence of the human condition. Although the researcher decided against using this lens to conduct research for this study, it should still be noted as this framework did have a foundational impact on the researcher. The researcher chose to build upon this perspective by adopting a social constructivism lens for this study.

Social Constructivism

Departing from the post-positivist lens is social constructivism (Creswell, 2004). This relies on participant responses to accurately convey the meaning that the studied individuals construct in a specific area of interest (Merriam, 1998). The subjectivity of the participant's interpretation is embraced and negotiated by the researcher with social, cultural, and historical considerations (Tracy, 2013). According to Vygotsky (1978), individual cognitive growth and development occur by first understanding things on a social level. Examining the interactions and interplay of people in a social setting allows an individual to then relate themselves to those situations, expanding their knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978).

Jafari Amineh and Davatgari Asl (2015) outline three essential assumptions of social constructivism pertaining to reality, knowledge, and learning. The researcher must believe that reality is constructed socially and does not exist in advance of this construction, knowledge is a human product that is created through socialization, and that this knowledge of reality can only be deduced and learned through examining and engaging with these socializations within their context (Jafari Amineh & Davatgari Asl, 2015). This research is primarily concerned with understanding the socially constructed

knowledge and reality of the discussed cases and avoiding reductionism making this worldview the most appropriate for the study.

Benefits of the Case Study Approach

The researcher selected the case study approach as it will allow for the examination of the past with the benefit of hindsight to construct the reality of the situation utilizing in-depth research questions to cover contextual conditions in a case or bounded setting. This allows the researcher to understand the knowledge constructed by others and make meaning of it (Creswell, 2004; Merriam, 1998). As mentioned, recommendations for best practices when engaging in the case study approach vary across the landscape of scholars. The researcher has elected to utilize a combination of the recommendations from Yin (2003), Merriam (1998), and Creswell (2004) to conduct this study. The research specifically utilized Yin's (2003) five components for successful case study research, Merriam's (1998) definitional perspective of what constitutes a case, and the Creswell (2004) data spiral.

According to Feagin et al. (1991) who wrote a book making a case for the case study approach as a legitimate form of research, some of the benefits of the case study approach are that

it permits the grounding of observations and concepts about social action and social structures in natural settings studied at close hand [and] it provides information from a number of sources and over a period of time, thus permitting a more holistic study of complex social networks and of complexes of social action and social meanings. (p. 6)

Through the use of a case study, the researcher can examine complex factors that may have contributed to the decision made, and the effects of the decisions after they were made. This potential access to information is unparalleled in the other forms of research

and can fulfill an important role in providing adequate context before using other forms of research, such as grounded theory or phenomenological research (Feagin et al., 1991). These other forms of research would benefit from having the breadth of information on a phenomenon synthesized by case study research as it might provide a richer understanding of context and potential motivations which can be tainted by participant bias and a lack of hindsight (Feagin et al., 1991).

Limitations of the Case Study Approach

Although the researcher selected the case study approach because it was the best fit for the scope of this study, there are some limitations to this methodology. One such limitation is that the researcher is responsible for creating the binding around the case (Merriam, 1998). There is so much information available to the researcher that it might be difficult to place restrictions on the volume of data they collect (Crowe et al., 2011). To avoid this, the researcher must carefully define the constructs being examined within the cases and ensure that they are streamlining that information into relevant facets of the case that will adequately tell the story (Merriam, 1998). This can also lead to the impact of researcher bias, which is a limitation of this approach. To limit biases, the researcher utilized Tracy's (2013) recommendations for partitioning the researcher from the content as discussed in the introduction.

The biggest limitation of the case study approach is that it does not provide generalizability and can pose an issue with repeatability (Crowe et al., 2011). The intention of case study research is to examine a specific phenomenon that is bound within a case. Therefore, the research can make statements about broader assertions, but cannot definitively state that it can be applicable (Crowe et al., 2011). This type of research can

be seen as equivalent to the lessons that are learned from history books. The reader can still learn something by drawing conclusions from the outlined past phenomenon but cannot conclusively state what direction any correlation may move in, limiting the information's usefulness (Crowe et al., 2011; Feagin et al., 1991). This limitation is best addressed by conducting further research built upon this information in which case respondent validation could occur (Crowe, et al., 2011).

Apology Literature

Purpose of an Apology

As previously stated, apologies are typically a response to some form of conflict that caused harm to the involved parties and can be defined as an admission of fault or acceptance of wrongdoing that is expressed in some way to the harmed party (Myers, 2016). The motivation for apologizing differs according to the situation. Apologies are frequently used for relationship maintenance as a means of attaining forgiveness or for repairing damaged trust (Dutton & Ragins, 2017). Apologies can also be forced by some outside force such as a court order or peer pressure and are often meant to satisfy the harmed party's violated sense of justice (Tomlinson, 2012).

Apologies are also often seen as a linear process between two individuals; however, the parties involved in the apology process can occur on a micro or macro level. Brubaker's (2015) dissertation attempted to synthesize the existing literature on apologies in an organizational context to create a framework for an effective apology and acted as a resource to inform this research and provide a streamlined definition of apology processes. Apologies can be delivered from one single individual to another (Brubaker, 2015). This would pertain to an interpersonal transgression, where the transgressor

apologizes to the victim, seeking forgiveness. Apologies can be delivered from one to many (Brubaker, 2015). This is commonly seen in formalized structures such as organizations or groups, but can also be found in informal structures, such as the internet or with celebrity-to-follower apologies.

Apologies can be delivered from many to many, which is perhaps, the type of apology met with the most discussion, scandal, and outrage (Brubaker, 2015). A prime example of this is found in government apologies. A significant portion of the apology literature found by the researcher was conducted in or based on apologies delivered in Australia. Apologies were made particularly relevant in Australia because, in 2008, a government official apologized to the indigenous people of Australia on behalf of those who had oppressed them (Dominello, 2018). Dominello (2018) conducted a single case analysis focusing on this unique situation and examined the wide range of reactions and research that sparked a broader discussion on the offering of an apology on behalf of those who do not consent to the apology being delivered. Apologies delivered one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many can be delivered in different ways, including publicly and privately. According to Tavuchis (1991) who examined the sociology of the fallout from violating a social norm, it is entirely dependent on the context of the situation and the behavioral preferences of the person delivering the apology.

One of the reasons apologies are often associated with conflict is that the presence of an apology can effectively induce a forgiveness response. Nudelman and Nadler's (2017) study specifically focused on whether an apology from the transgressor impacted the likelihood of the victim's forgiveness by giving scenario-based questions to their participants and analyzing their responses. They found that dispositional justice beliefs as

a coping mechanism have an impact on the likelihood of forgiveness after an apology. They also found that perceptions of intention had an impact on the likeliness to forgive. In other words, an apology can fulfill the victim's need for justice, resulting in forgiveness. Van Dijck (2017) explored this concept by using empirical data, case law, and available scholarly research, looking specifically at ordered apologies. Ordered apologies compel the transgressor to apologize to the victim. The research found that victims who receive an apology that may be ingenuine are still given a sense of peace and are better able to forgive or move on (Van Dijck, 2017).

There is minimal research and literature that focuses on how a leader prefers to deliver an apology and the interplay of that delivery with organizational context. This implies a gap in the studies which can be costly. Organizations often rely on assessments to create a shared language. In a study employing the motivating language framework within an organizational context, having a shared language can stimulate stronger company culture and can have a direct correlation to more motivated employees, as it provides a baseline for effective communication (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017). The motivated language framework includes direction-giving language, empathetic language, meaning-making language, satisfaction with the communication, and the competence of the communicator (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017). Ogiermann (2015) confirms this by discussing how important it is for leaders to speak the same apologetic language as their audience. Using Brown et al.'s theory of politeness, Ogiermann (2015) studied the language responses (apologies) of Polish and Russian leaders to offensive situations in comparison to English responses with consideration for face analysis. The studies showed that apologies can be viewed as controversial depending on the context in which they are

delivered and should be carefully crafted/thought about to ensure the message will be relayed in a way that the harmed parties are willing to accept (Ogiermann, 2015).

Forgiveness resulting from apologies in organizations is often seen as having a limited impact on individuals and their workplace relationships; however, they also can promote good physical health, stress reduction, emotional health, and productivity for employees. Toussaint et al. (2018) sampled individuals from the East Coast and the Midwest in the United States in a field study to look at the correlation between employee health and forgiveness resulting from an apology. They found a robust connection between practicing forgiveness for work-related hurts and employee well-being and productivity.

Apologies can also lead to the use of the integrative conflict style in work. (Sega, 2019). In a study conducted in the United States, the researcher examined the relationship between a supervisor's openness to apologizing and the conflict style (as defined by the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Model) utilized by the employees. The personality of the supervisor (using the Big Five Personality Assessment) was controlled for. The study concluded that a supervisor's openness to apologies, when facilitated by the openness to experience personality trait, could lead the employees to engage in the Integrative conflict style (Sega, 2019). This conclusion provides further depth to the importance of a leader's willingness to apologize.

Origins of Apologies

The literature on apologies has historically had its grounding in the worldview perspectives that mostly focus on human relationships and conflict. The field of psychology tends to take an introspective approach to apologies. Psychology studies the

mind and its impact on behavior. According to Schumann (2018) who examined the psychological barriers to offering a high-quality apology by examining existing research, psychology examines the mental processes that are involved with priming individuals to give an apology and the role of the victim in receiving that apology. The mental influences that drive behaviors include factors such as motivations and personality (dispositional or learned), which are believed to have a profound effect on the behaviors and emotional expressions of an individual (Schumann, 2018). In this perspective, apologies are studied on a microscale and used to make macroscale inferences.

In Ogiermann's (2015) book, *On Apologising in Negative and Positive Politeness Cultures*, apologies are examined from a sociological perspective. Ogiermann (2015) inversely approaches apologies from a macroscale perspective, examining the systemic influences, to make inferences about the microscale. This lens emphasizes social relationships and the relationship between societies and institutions (Ogiermann, 2015). Much of the research introduces apologies in the legal systems and the reaction to behavior that is deemed unexpected/unacceptable by society (Ogiermann, 2015). This is in alignment with the focus on the relationship between institutions and societies.

Another area in which apologies are extensively studied is under the subset of anthropology. In a conceptual paper discussing the necessary facets of anthropology and the interplay of storytelling, Maggio (2014) explains that anthropology focuses on the implications of culture and traditions on apology behaviors. This includes factors like honor/shame cultures, face-negotiation, and banishments/shunning, to name a few. Anthropology also includes the area of linguistics. Within certain cultures, there are certain rules and language that must be used for the apology to be considered adequate.

Moutu (2020) stated that most of the research, across the landscape, tends to address the linguistic aspect of apologies, paying close attention to the content and how the apology is delivered. Moutu (2020) describes an apology in their conceptual book chapter focusing on ethics and knowledge found within anthropology as soothing “the exasperation caused by an analytical language that immortalizes the ethnographic present” (p. 14).

The research and literature on apologies are dispersed and can be expanded to encompass many areas. Most approaches to apologies provide a completely different lens, and subsequently, broaden the phenomena within the area (Brubaker, 2015). This can include apologies themselves as well as any loosely connected aspects of apologies like ethics, manners, and humility. Due to this, the landscape often seems decentralized.

Communication Effects on Apologies

There are extraneous variables that can impact apologies and the subsequent forgiveness of wrongdoing. Many of these variables are introduced by the follower, supporting Northouse’s (2018) claims that leadership is much more like a process between the leader and the follower in his comprehensive synthesis of relevant and recent leadership theories. According to Chiles and Buslig (2012), the way that a leader delivers an apology can have a profound impact on the victim of a conflict or transgression who receives it. Utilizing an experimental design with a questionnaire to guide participants through their responses to variously delivered apologies, the researchers specifically looked at the impact of the transgressor’s ability to communicate on the audience’s perceptions of an apology (Chiles & Buslig, 2012). They found that individuals had different perceptions of what an honest apology looked/sounded like. Their results

indicated that the participants of the study had a higher preference and belief of sincerity for both an apology delivered with confidence and one that appears nervously delivered (Chiles & Buslig, 2012). The relationship a follower has with their leader also factors into the perceived sincerity of the apology. Basford et al. (2013) examined the responses of participants to a leader's apology in conjunction with work-related outcomes. Their research specifically studied the relationship between trustworthiness/caring and perceived apologetic sincerity (Basford et al., 2013). They found that leaders who were viewed as trustworthy and caring before the transgression were perceived as delivering a sincere apology (Basford et al., 2013).

Another study from Wohl et al. (2015) examined the connection between a belief in the ability to change and acceptance of an apology in the form of forgiveness. They examined this relationship in the Palestinian leadership, college students, and a corporate setting, conducting three separate studies to compare and contrast responses from the different categories of participants. The authors found that the stronger the belief in group malleability, the more likely an individual was to forgive the transgressor (Wohl et al., 2015). In the study with university students, they found that individuals were more forgiving with the presence of an apology and the belief in group malleability (Wohl et al., 2015).

In addition to group malleability, the conflict style that the transgressor utilizes while apologizing can have an impact on the perceived sincerity of the apology and the subsequent way that it is received. Donnoli and Weirthem (2012) conducted their research on Australian adults using written responses to scenario-based questions simulating transgressions. They found that the victim was much more likely to perceive

an apology as sincere and forgive the transgressor if they were more yielding in conflict (Donnoli & Weirthem, 2012). The likelihood of reoffending, the severity of the transgression, and the empathy of the individuals involved also impacted perceptions of sincerity and a willingness to forgive (Donnoli & Weirthem, 2012).

Cultural Effects on Apologies

Another variable that impacts leader apologies is the culture that the organization is embedded in. For example, some cultures are impacted by the theory of Face-Negotiation or are classified as honor cultures. Shafa et al. (2017) sampled Turkish and Dutch individuals, focusing on the impact of culture (honor culture vs. dignity culture) on the acceptance of an apology. They gave the participants different transgression scenarios and administered a survey to these participants to measure their reaction to the type of offense. Their research found that the presence of an apology increased the odds of forgiveness; however, honor cultures tended to forgive less than dignity cultures and, instead, pursued retaliation (Shafa et al., 2017).

Eastern cultures tend to perceive apologies and forgiveness in a different way than Western cultures. A field study by Zhang et al. (2015) focused on the integration of the Face-Negotiation Theory and forgiveness in the United States and Chinese cultures. The results showed a negative association between forgiveness and independent self-construal and self-face concerns (Zhang et al., 2015). Additionally, forgiveness had a positive relationship with mediation and a negative relationship with revenge, meaning that those seeking forgiveness often seek mediation (Zhang et al., 2015). Those seeking revenge are not as concerned about forgiveness. The authors were able to establish a multicultural perspective and better understand the intentions of those in conflict.

Although the focus on the cultural impacts of apologies has largely resided in the Eastern and Western dichotomy, within America specifically, there are many different microclimates with unique cultural perspectives on apologies. A good example of this can be found in the Hawaiian culture with the tradition and language of the Ho'oponopono technique (Wilmot & Hocker, 2017). Ho'oponopono outlines a four-step process of apology; I am sorry (first step), please forgive me (second step), thank you (third step), and I love you (fourth step) (Bodin et al., 2016). According to Bodin et al (2016) in an examination of this tradition, this was originally an apology process embedded within prayer and was adapted into a healing technique in conflict.

Hawaii is included in Westernized culture as a part of the United States; however, this process differs from what is perceived as the stereotypical American approach to apologies. Americans are often seen as resistant to apology because there is a desire to win and maintain power (Kirkpatrick, 2020). The dominant or competing conflict style is most frequently associated with the Western American culture, insinuating that the desire to win at all costs is of utmost importance (Wilmot & Hocker, 2017). As Kirkpatrick (2020) observes in a qualitative interview-based dissertation studying performative allyship and apologies in America, this is facilitated by rugged individualism, which is considered a part of the American dream. Additionally, apologies are seen as a sign of weakness, as it is an acknowledgment of wrongdoing and personal failure (Dudden, 2014). Dudden (2014) conceptually examines this interplay between political apology and apologetic history, specifically concerning the American influence on Eastern cultures. This is a stark departure from Ho'oponopono, which is a good reminder that reductionistic thinking (Eastern versus Western culture) is flawed due to the

microclimates of culture from region to region (sometimes even within the same state) and is a byproduct of examining a cultural melting pot.

External Apology Influences

Humility and Authenticity

With the influx of technology, the ability to instantly broadcast individual mistakes that portray people at their worst has become all too easy (Johnson & Shelton, 2014). Johnson and Shelton (2014) illustrate this point in their case study analysis of public apologies made after an ethical transgression. They argue that because the populace has more instant access to information about scandals, apologies or calls for apologies are especially pervasive in modern society (Johnson & Shelton, 2014). Apologies are also more likely to be perceived as ingenuine or inauthentic because the organization's past handlings and misdeeds are much easier to access (Johnson & Shelton, 2014). The role of a well-delivered public apology has become essential to making amends and avoiding the societal cancel culture (Bosch, 2017). Bosch (2017) describes the impact that Twitter has had on creating what is called a cancel culture by examining a South African student-led activism campaign through an examination of a qualitative content analysis of social media posts. Bosch (2017) describes cancel culture as a form of digital activism that highlights a societal issue or more frequently, an individual with illustrated societally undesirable behaviors. It calls for people to boycott or protest these systems or people to obtain some form of justice or reparation for their wrongdoings. Many of those who respond to cancel culture with an apology is perceived as having ulterior motivations for doing so (Bosch, 2017). The apology and promised

change are often delivered after the outrage and cancel culture which will impact their bottom line, making the apology seem ingenuine (Bosch, 2017).

Authenticity can be a difficult construct to conceptualize; however, it is essential to do so. If a leader does not have a solid understanding of what authenticity is, they may be more susceptible to all the repercussions of being perceived as inauthentic as previously discussed. Malley and McNair (2017) through a conceptual study, provide a simplistic framework that articulates what makes an individual appear authentic in the Authenticity Equation model. Malley and McNair (2017) ask the individual to assess whether their Assumptions and Beliefs are equal to their Actions and Behaviors ($AB = AB$). This is a cause-and-effect model which encourages the leader to consider if the values they espouse to be true visibly inform their behavioral output. If it does, then the individual is considered authentic as they are “walking their talk” (Malley & McNair, 2017).

If the Assumptions and Beliefs of an individual are not equal to their Actions and Behaviors, then the informed individual and those following them will experience dissonance (Malley & McNair, 2017). The individual will experience discomfort until they resolve this dissonance, either by altering their espoused values and beliefs or their behavioral output. This not only affects the individual but also the system that they are a part of and, more directly, those who follow them (Malley & McNair, 2017). The leader will appear hypocritical if these facets are misaligned, thereby making an action or apology seem inauthentic and performative. The process of shifting to ensure alignment should not be done secretly. It should be done openly and transparently so that those following can see the work/progress, will feel like a part of the process, and more

importantly, will be aware of the leader's new, better balanced, Authenticity Equation (Malley & McNair, 2017).

The need to be authentic and the repercussions for not doing so have been especially visible recently within American business. With the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter protests, and the 2020 elections, there have been a lot of discussions about the roles of a leader in shaping the societal culture of America. Government and organizational leaders are being called upon to wield their power and privilege toward creating social change and making space at the table for those who are unable. It is not enough for the leader to strengthen their power or the power of their organizational culture. They must leverage that strength and power toward the greater good and the accomplishment of higher ideals.

Many of the institutions in America have been subject to cancel culture due to their responses, or lack thereof, to such sensitive and culturally significant moments. Scott and Davis (2006) explain in their work on systems theories that systems are not insular, and neither are organizational contexts. In much of the recent landscape of apologies, a failure to respond appropriately has forced them to respond, most frequently, with an apology. Many of these organizations mistakenly perceived their structures and policies as not having an impact on the external system. Jan et al. (2020) specifically addresses this failure by illustrating how American organizations attempting to take part in facilitating systemic change to eliminate racism are being perceived as hypocritical in their Washington Post expose. These organizations are being accused of performative allyship, as the leaders are expressing public outrage; however, their internal organizational policies oppress their newly espoused values and perpetuate the system

they are outraged with (Jan et al., 2020). This dissonance between their espoused values and their underlying assumptions can have dire consequences for the organizations. The employees are less likely to trust their company and the pretense is made evident (Jan et al., 2020). This is usually followed by an organizational apology which, as Bosch (2017) explains, is met with skepticism. It can be deduced that leaders valuing authenticity fare better in these situations. Either there is no pretense, and their espoused values match their underlying assumptions, or their apology is sincere and more likely to be interpreted as such. Kotzé and Nel (2015) examined this concept in their quantitative survey of MBA students to further understand the relationship between emotional intelligence and authentic leadership. Authentic leaders have a high level of emotional intelligence and the unique ability to understand/empathize with others (Kotzé & Nel, 2015). In an interview-based study conducted on romantic partners using attribution theory, Ebesu Hubbard et al. (2013) explains that transgressors who quickly identify their misdeeds and articulate them in a comprehensive way that makes the victim feel heard are more likely to be forgiven. This is an approach that would be intuitive to the authentic leader.

Humility is often associated with authenticity due to the open and dialogue-driven nature of both concepts. According to George's (2003) conceptual theory of Authentic Leadership, being authentic is a continuous process of development. This requires the individual to constantly be open to new information, agile in shifting their worldview, while maintaining their standard of ethics, and willing to take responsibility for or quickly acknowledge when they were wrong (George, 2003). In a conceptual study performed by Morris et al. (2005), they focused on the antecedents and consequences of humility in leadership. They explain that remaining open to feedback and acknowledging

wrongdoing openly makes the individual seem more approachable and “down to earth” to their followers (Morris et al., 2005). Collins (2009) also describes this feature as essential to effective leadership, explaining that the individual must be both strong-willed and humility driven.

In the past, leaders were encouraged to avoid humility. Niccolò Machiavelli, a 16th Century Italian strategist, and philosopher was a supporter of this perspective. Machiavelli (1527) portrayed humility as behavior that leaders adopted humble behaviors in a deluded and fruitless attempt at overcoming pride. In Machiavelli’s (1532) later works, he laments that humility is often touted as a virtue but can function as the opposite. If a leader does not strategically share the moments when they are acting generous (it should be noted that generosity is also listed as a virtue that can lead to vice), then no one will know of the leader’s good works, and this will weaken the leader. Machiavelli is largely known for his controversial perspectives on leadership, and his thoughts on humility were no less controversial as they completely departed from the traditional views established by the church (Menchacha-Bagnulo, 2018). This provocative perspective made its way into the consciousness of the mainstream and is still pervasive and romanticized in a modern context. It, however, is not necessarily the most effective approach, as discussed by Morris et al. (2005). Instead of the seemingly untouchable leadership that is often glorified, those who are seen as more approachable and humanized (exhibiting humility) tend to be more successful at sustaining organizational operations (Exline & Geyer, 2004; Morris et al., 2005). In a quantitative study conducted by Exline and Geyer (2004), they found that people were more likely to

have positive perceptions of leaders when they acted with humility, seeing them as having better psychological adjustment than leaders lacking humility.

The theory of humble leadership often houses apology theories. Simpson et al. (2014) explain in their study that took both self-reports of leadership and secondary reports from subordinates that humble leadership might make the leader more inclined to apologize to an offended subordinate. This apology can restore the subordinate's lost trust in the leader because of the vulnerability shown (Simpson et al., 2014). Walters and Diab's (2016) research specifically examined the relationship between humble leadership, which includes apology behaviors, and the psychological safety of their employees utilizing a quantitative questionnaire. They found that when a leader acknowledged their mistakes and viewed mistakes as teachable lessons, an environment of psychological safety was created (Walters & Diab, 2016). Walters and Diab (2016) also found that the employee's absence of fear and anxiety, allayed by the psychological safety created by the leader, allowed them to be fully engaged in their work.

An important factor that facilitates successful apology recovery in humble leadership is the use of self-deprecating humor. Self-deprecating humor frequently includes acknowledgment of flaws and fluidity/ease of delivering apologies. Lipman-Blumen (1996) explains in her work on the Connective Leadership theory that leaders often use self-deprecating humor to put their followers at ease. Leaders attempt to appear strong, tapping into the psychological desire to feel a sense of security. Maslow's hierarchy of needs model (1954) states that the base needs of an individual (security and safety) must be met before they can transcend to higher levels of functioning. Although followers desire strong leadership that will protect them, Lipman-Blumen (1996) asserts

that the leader's strength can just as easily be turned against their followers. When the leader uses self-deprecating humor, they make themselves seem more human or approachable and subsequently allay any fears that the follower may have about their own safety (Lipman-Blumen, 1996). Additionally, this impacts the follower's perceptions of the leader. In Hoption et al.'s (2013) field study, leaders were more likely to be perceived in a positive light and as transformational when they use self-deprecating humor (Hoption et al., 2013). If a leader not only acknowledges their faults but owns them and learns how to turn them into humor, after an appropriate amount of time, then their followers will respond positively and it will be easier for the leader to recover from their misdeeds (Hoption et al., 2013).

This open acknowledgment of flaws stimulates trust between the leader and the follower (Gkorezis & Bellou, 2016). It can help to establish a much-needed rapport when damage is done to trust, and an apology was required from the leader. Gkorezis and Bellou (2016) discuss this in their cross-sectional design examining the correlation between leadership effectiveness and the use of humor. They explain that self-deprecating humor has a positive correlation with leadership effectiveness (Gkorezis & Bellou, 2016). Leaders are often encouraged to use forward-focusing language on apologies that outline what next steps will be taken to make reparations. If the leader rebuilds trust and uses self-deprecating humor, they might be more likely to be seen as effective in their reparation efforts.

Apologies in Politeness Theory

An apology is essentially a confession that conveys an acknowledgment of impoliteness (Brown et al., 1987). For this reason, the politeness theory is a field of

research that often runs parallel to apologies. Holmes (2013) describes an apology as a linguistic tool utilized to illustrate politeness. The author also points out that women are more likely to apologize than men, implying a preoccupation with politeness and is meant to be “affective or social” (Holmes, 2013, p. 4). Holmes (2013) explains that these apologies can be examples of both positive politeness and negative politeness. A positive politeness culture is defined as behaviors that seek to “ratify, understand, approve of, and admire the positive image of the addressee” that maintains friendliness and involvement (Wagner, 2004, p. 23). A negative politeness culture is identified by respect, deference, and maintaining distance (Wagner, 2004).

An apology can be seen as a threat to face; however, it is also an integral part of the politeness theory process. Goffman (1955) describes a four-phase process that helps to correct the imbalance in relationships caused by threatening face. There is a challenge (phase one) that requires the transgressor to offer an apology (phase two), which the victim must accept (phase three), and the offender must thank the victim for accepting (phase four; Goffman, 1955). Redmond (2015) explains that following these phases and offering an apology as a function of politeness helps to repair harm to the threatened face.

Kádár and Haugh (2013) also discuss the interconnectedness of the fields of apologies and politeness. Similarly, they explain the importance of first understanding what politeness and subsequent apology behaviors look like to others while acting accordingly (Kádár & Haugh, 2013). Kádár and Haugh (2013) assert that there is no value in evaluating one’s apology as polite if others do not have the same perceptions. Brown et al. (1987) are known for creating the politeness theory framework. They describe the apology as a speech act that is motivated by this desire for restoration

(Brown et al., 1987). In these situations, the transgressor is expected to take an open posture of learning and exhibiting humility by sometimes explicitly asking how they should apologize/proceed to restore loss of face and be perceived as polite (Kádár & Haugh, 2013).

Wagner (2004) examined this specifically within the Cuernavaca culture in Mexico. The researcher built upon Brown et al.'s (1987) theory of politeness and examined the preference for positive versus negative politeness. Wagner's (2004) findings dispelled Brown et al.'s (1987) theory that negative politeness was globally preferred. Instead, Wagner's (2004) findings lent support to the theory that the Mexican culture preferred positive politeness, which could be due to the extreme weight placed on accepting blame.

Hatfield and Hahn (2011) also examined the impact of culture on politeness theory and apologies, specifically in Korean culture. They presented a model that portrays an apology as a bridge to relationship construction and measured the Korean cultural needs for an apology and politeness against Brown et al.'s (1987) theory (Hatfield & Hahn, 2011). They found some consistencies in power, distance, and act severity; however, they noted that Koreans tended not to focus on strategizing based on the face threat, but rather convey and develop relationship expectations in the form of an apology (Hatfield & Hahn, 2011).

Apologies in Ethical Leadership Theory

The theory of Ethical Leadership can relate to apologies, as it focuses on right and wrong behavior (Northouse, 2018). When there is a set classification for wrong behaviors, there is a protocol for repairing the damage caused by the wrongdoing. Cels

(2017) discussed how top management utilizes ethical leadership in public apologies. The findings indicated that leaders who make public apologies hardly utilize self-promoting strategies. Instead of focusing on all the attributes that make them a great leader, they promote a forward-focused vision and plan to repair transgressions. They found a definite overlap with the theories of authentic, charismatic, and transformational leadership in the described public apology behaviors (Cels, 2017).

Public apologies seem to be rampant, according to Johnson and Shelton (2014). They explain that society is in the “age of apology” and describe cases of public apologies and draw conclusions from those examples (Johnson & Shelton, 2014). Johnson and Shelton (2014) explain that when apologizing, an individual must fully admit the extent of their offenses, ensure the amount of apology matches the transgression, and follow through on the promises made during the apology. Apologies also must be delivered in an appropriate setting that will not detract from the sincerity of the statements made. They ultimately conclude that apologies that are perceived as morally satisfying fulfill an important obligation for an ethical leader (Johnson & Shelton, 2014).

Due to this age of apology, many organizations and governments release apologies on behalf of people in the past. There is an ethical component to doing this; it helps to allay feelings of guilt in those who were complicit, either directly or indirectly. According to Blatz et al. (2009), when a government apologizes for past injustices, it also fulfills several psychological goals. These apologies usually include components of an interpersonal apology (assigning responsibility, promises of forbearance, promises for reparation, etc.). This helps to heal the wounds of historical injustice (Blatz et al., 2009).

These apologies are often extensive and more effective than an informal/spontaneous apology because they are carefully considered and meet many of the psychological needs of the affected parties.

Barkan and Karn (2006) discuss an alternative motivation for apologizing. Apologies show that the side of the transgressor is committed to change (Barkan & Karn, 2006). It removes previous obstacles that stood in the way of integrating the two opposed groups. This provides the leader with the opportunity to establish partnerships and pursue the potential rewards of innovation that result from unity.

Apologies are especially important during times of crisis. Bauman (2011) describes righting the wrongs of an organization as the AAA strategy; acknowledge, apologize, act. The leader must acknowledge the wrongdoing of the company and openly communicate this to the employees/consumers. Refusing to acknowledge the harm done can stimulate resentment and distrust, so this step must be completed (Bauman, 2011). Then, the leader must apologize for the harm caused. Bauman (2011) explains that the highest level of leadership in an organization should deliver the apology in a direct way that makes those they are apologizing to feel that it is genuine and relatable. Lastly, the leader must act to move past the harm they have caused. The acknowledgment and apology usually include some sort of promise of moving forward. In this last step, they must carry out those promises to restore trust (Bauman, 2011).

Leaders often avoid apologies during or resulting from a crisis because of the larger implications of admitting culpability (Diers-Lawson & Pang, 2016). Diers-Lawson and Pang (2016) explain that organizations are afraid to apologize or seek public atonement during a crisis, as it could leave them legally liable. There are countless

examples of organizations and leaders trying to evade legal liability by indirectly admitting to wrongdoing, but not accepting responsibility. Garret (2015) asserts that this is especially present in large organizations when the legal system is involved. A prime example of this is found in organizations that take an Alford plea when in a court case. The defendants essentially admit that they have done what the court is accusing them of by accepting a plea bargain; however, they can maintain their innocence through the process because it is not a confession (Garret, 2015). This allows them to preserve their image but does not tend to satisfy the victim's need for justice or closure (Wilmot & Hocker, 2017).

Another reason leaders avoid apologies is due to their concern that it will damage their image. A common belief is that admitting to wrongdoing will make the leader appear weak (Tucker et al., 2006). As mentioned before, some studies show apologies as harming perceptions of the leader's competency. Alternatively, Tsai and associates (2010) found that an apology can still be successful from a leader that is not favorably perceived before the transgression. When a transgression was integrity-based, Tsai et al. (2010) found evidence to support the effectiveness of an apology as a tool to recover from unethical behavior. Ethics are frequently central to the potential success of an apology because an apology is usually in response to unethical behavior. Hunter (2012) explains that ethical violations transcend the moment in which they happen and have the potential to make or break a leader. This, however, must be considered in the context of their relationship with the victim (Basford et al., 2014). Employee/employer relations that are already positive before the incident are more likely to fair better after the occurrence (Basford et al., 2014).

The employee and general public's perception of a leader's integrity can impact the way they are perceived after a crisis or scandal. Grover and Hasel's (2018) findings run counter to Basford et al.'s (2014). Grover and Hasel (2018) explain that a perceived unethical leader fairs better than an ethical leader who experiences a fall from grace, specifically in extra-role sex scandals. The unethical leader acting unethically is not as shocking, and consequently, not as harmful to the leader's image. Grover and Hasel (2018) state that when an ethical person does something that is publicly unethical, it assaults the senses of the followers. In these cases, sincere apologies from the ethical leader are only effective when a leader is taking personal responsibility. The effectiveness of the leader's apology does not extend to situations where official power is violated or abused (Grover & Hasel, 2018). This again reinforces the impact that a leader's ethics and relationship with the follower before the scandal has on the successfulness of the apology.

Most of the research on apologies is focused on ethical leadership; however, some studies discuss other leadership theories which require ethics. One such study examined the correlation between apologies and the victim's perception of transformational leadership qualities (Tucker et al., 2006). Transformational leadership is defined by Burns (1978) as a leader's ability to recognize and draw upon the values and motivations of the follower to move them into action. Ethics and a sense of morality are the foundational parts of transformational leadership. The characteristic is identified as Idealized Influence (Burns, 1978). This category describes the high standard of excellence and a strong sense of ethics as endearing the leader to their constituents (Burns, 1978). As mentioned, there is a solid connection often drawn between leadership

apologies and ethics. Burns (1978) discusses this in terms of the leader upholding their ethics and taking responsibility, when necessary.

Tucker and associates (2006) examined the connection between transformational leadership and apologies further. They sampled those in an athletic setting with referees/hockey player interactions and those in two different vignettes to enhance the validity of the study (Tucker et al., 2006). They found that a leader's willingness to apologize consistently caused the victim of the mistake to perceive the leader as having transformational characteristics (Tucker et al., 2006). This not only works towards dispelling the belief that apologies are a sign of weakness but also supports the idea that those who apologize could be more transformational than those who do not apologize.

The Role of Trust

Undergirding much of the research on apology and leadership at large is the foundational nature of trust. It is portrayed as influencing the manifestation and interpretation of an apology. As mentioned, the apology of the leader begins long before the transgression. Followers are watching the actions and behaviors of the leader. How that apology is interpreted is dependent on the existing relationship between the leader and their followers, as well as the perceived trustworthiness of the leader. To adequately build trust, the leader must first understand what trust or trustworthiness is (Linnard & Kinney, 2015).

It can be difficult to establish what trust looks like and what makes someone appear trustworthy. Maister et al. (2021) created the Trust Equation to simply explain the necessary components for trust to occur, which can be operationalized for those looking to build or bolster trust. For an individual to be considered trustworthy, they must be

credible, reliable, and connected, all factored into the self-orientation of the individual. Credibility includes being perceived as cognitively and emotionally competent/capable, maintaining a standard of ethicality, and the degree of confidence in the ability of the individual to complete the task (Linnard & Kinney, 2015). Reliability includes consistency, a proven history of follow-through, and the ability to accurately communicate/understand when working with someone else. Connection includes establishing emotional security, psychological safety, and the level of comfortability with engaging in vulnerable conversations. According to Maister et al.'s theoretical model on trustworthiness (2021), the more credible, reliable, and connected the individual is, the better their trustworthiness score. Self-orientation is similarly described as a spectrum. Those perceived as having a higher self-orientation tend to be self-obsessed, are selfish, and are mainly concerned with having their own needs met first. Those perceived as having a lower self-orientation tend to be considerate of others, are seen as selfless, and are often more concerned about the relationship (or the other person) than they are about attaining personal goals. The lower the self-orientation score, the higher the perceptions of trustworthiness (Linnard & Kinney, 2015; Maister et al., 2021).

As mentioned, quite a few leadership theories describe trust as foundational to the other parts of their model. Kouzes and Posner (2017) describe the importance of vulnerability in effectively leading. Kouzes and Posner (2017) have collected over 5 million surveys and conducted hundreds of studies to better understand what makes a leader exemplary. One construct that they emphasize is enabling others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). In enabling others to act, a leader must acknowledge their weaknesses and their shortcomings by accepting help from those who are more knowledgeable/skilled in

those areas (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). This creates a culture of psychological safety, as the leader is modeling behaviors that encourage their employees to follow suit (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). If they foster an environment of collaboration built on trust, then employees will be more willing to admit when they need help and to offer help when they are able (Gardner, 1990).

Apologies are an important tool in these cultures, as they facilitate vulnerability, honesty, and an openness to try new things. Researchers and scholars are often predisposed to believing that organizational cultures which are built on trust are innately superior and exemplary (Gardner, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Lencioni, 2002). Authenticity is associated with trust, and by the transitive property, authenticity is equated with vulnerability. This type of vulnerable trust, however, is not always necessary or as foundational as it seems. Alignment between the values of the organization and the behavior is of greater importance and is dependent on the type of culture that the leadership is attempting to establish.

The Role of Power

As stated, the main motivator for the manifestation of an apology depends on the organization's cultural disposition towards power. In cultures that are concerned with maintaining relationships, it might be advantageous for an individual to apologize as it speaks to their ability to be vulnerable. It also can act as a counterintuitive gesture to diminish the fear associated with the amount of power a leader holds (Lipman-Blumen, 1996). A work hard/play hard leader might utilize what Raven (2008) describes as the relational power bases. These include referent (charisma or identification), expert

(expertise or superior insight), and informational (possessing needed or wanted information) power.

For a leader that values the bureaucracy that the rational system provides, they might be inclined to utilize behaviors that value positional power bases (Raven, 2008). These power bases include legitimate (birth or formally assigned), reward (positive reinforcements or bribery), and coercive (threats or punishments) power. In these cultures, apologies are more likely to be perceived as a sign of vulnerability and weakness that should be avoided. The use of these power bases to facilitate the manifestation of an apology can be perceived as neither innately good nor bad. Understanding the power that appeals to the needs of the organization is what allows a leader to be transformational (Burns, 1978). The context in which the power types are used and the alignment or dissonance between the culture and the selected behaviors is of more consequence in the discussion of good and effective or not. The delivery of an apology is dependent on the preferred use of power, which is dependent on the organizational culture.

Guilfoyle et al. (2022) expand on this belief that the transgressor's level of social power will influence their willingness to engage in apology or non-apology behaviors. Utilizing the power approach theory, Guilfoyle et al.'s (2022) non-experimental study determined that having social power with self-focus is related to non-apology whereas a focus on others is related to an apology. Guilfoyle et al. (2022) explain that

this is consistent with previous research demonstrating that power acts as the gas pedal (i.e., approach motivation) whereas focus acts like the steering wheel, directing individuals to their (behavioral) destinations (p. 11).

This seems to support the notion that power can corrupt an individual and can act as a motivator for whether an individual is inclined to apologize or not.

The Role of Intelligence

A universal theme in the literature on apologies is the awareness of the individual who is delivering the apology. This awareness encompasses emotional intelligence, emotional agility, and contextualized intelligence. Goleman (1995) provides an Emotional Intelligence model that describes self-awareness as indispensable. The self-awareness construct explains that the individual is accurately able to assess and articulate their emotional state, have a deep understanding of their drives, values, and needs, and understand how this impacts others. The Emotional Intelligence model includes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. An emotionally intelligent individual will be able to recognize how their actions impact others, use empathy and understanding to resolve conflict, truly hear the concerns of others to have an accurate understanding of the environmental context, and work towards action with others (Goleman, 1995). This model perceives emotional intelligence as both an internal and external process.

Emotional intelligence can impact an individual's willingness to apologize. Ghenaati and Bemani Naeini (2019) examine this extensively in their quantitative correlational design study. Their study of English teaching majors in Iranian universities demonstrated a correlation between emotional intelligence and apology strategies. They determined that individuals with high interpersonal emotional intelligence were better at employing apology strategies (Ghenaati & Bemani Naeini, 2019). Ghenaati and Bemani Naeini (2019) stated that

A person with high intrapersonal EI knows himself well and is more capable of managing his feelings and motivating himself. Therefore, one can conclude that such individuals may find expressing an apology as a relief, helping them to get rid of the negative emotions involved. (p. 154)

Apologies can be perceived as a threat to one's identity or face, depending on the culture, and Ghenaati and Bemani Naeini (2019) connect one's reactivity to feeling that their face is being threatened to the level of emotional intelligence one possesses. In other words, individuals with low emotional intelligence are less likely to engage in apology strategies (Ghenaati & Bemani Naeini, 2019).

Schein (2017) discusses self-awareness, similarly to Goleman (1995), and suggests that deep reflection and emotional intelligence are essential for successful leadership. The leader must be able to reflect on the organization and the impact that their leadership is having on the culture. They must understand the various lenses and biases that they have and how those biases are fused into the organizational culture (emotional intelligence). The leader must also use their emotional intelligence to read their employees, infer what the true values and beliefs of a culture are, empathize with/alleviate the anxiety of their employees, and make sense of the misalignment that may exist between Schein's (2017) three levels of culture. The three levels of culture include artifacts (stories, symbols, etc.), espoused values (mission statement, vision statement, etc.), and basic assumptions and beliefs (the lived experience of employees) (Schein, 2017). They must recognize the impact that the external environment has on the culture, as well as the internal integration process. The leader must have context on how to solidify and strengthen an organization and how to leverage a crisis for survival. They need to learn while mitigating stress by creating psychological safety that stimulates learning to change successfully. This speaks to the level of awareness that is necessary

for identifying appropriate cultural behaviors, such as apologies. Leaders need to have the emotional intelligence to read the culture and adjust their behaviors to either meet and fit the culture they are in or recognize that a plan needs to be enacted to change the culture and reduce the dissonance.

A line of research that derives from emotional intelligence is emotional agility. Emotional agility focuses on an individual's ability to emotionally navigate complex situations (David, 2016). This process includes accepting the self, keeping a clear perspective, and remaining open to possibilities for change. Buchanan (2001) describes the ubiquitous nature of chaos and change. Leaders must be comfortable existing on the edge of predictability, knowing that the unexpected is always potentially moments away from creating a massive upheaval. These upheavals, however, are simply part of the system and often start the same way that smaller manifestations do. This does not allow for beginning state predictability but, if culturally resilient, can facilitate leadership preparedness for ensuring survival and handling cataclysmic shifts that are natural to the system (Buchanan, 2001; David, 2016). Agility is at the core of successful leadership. Culture is seen as an entity that is constantly shifting, which requires the leader to shift their approach and behaviors accordingly. In this perspective, apology behaviors are not seen as fixed because the culture is not fixed. Using emotional agility, the leader is better able to provide a productive emotional response that is catered to the environment.

Contextualized intelligence, like emotional agility, focuses on a leader's ability to adapt. It, however, emphasizes the leader's ability to adapt to the cultures found in different environments, and subsequently, acknowledge their limitations of knowledge. In terms of delivering an apology, leaders must thoroughly understand the culture they are

in or interacting with (Brouwers & Van de Vijver, 2015). This requires a wide repertoire of behavioral knowledge to quickly and accurately shift mental models to align with the expected norms. This supports the rejection of linear thinking which overly simplifies systems and does not account for the complexity of context. It must be mentioned that contextualized intelligence has an important link to humility, which might facilitate apologies. Leaders are encouraged to acknowledge their shortcomings and surround themselves with those who can translate the context while they close the learning curve (Brouwers & Van de Vijver, 2015). Kouzes and Posner (2017) include this characteristic as one of their exemplary leadership traits. The leader must exhibit some level of humility in openly identifying their shortcomings and disrupting a traditional hierarchy (Scott & Davis, 2006). A part of this may include apologizing for mistakes during the learning process.

Relevant Leadership Theories

Machiavellian Leadership

As discussed, Machiavelli (1532) is best known for his manipulative and strategic tactics that encourage leaders to balance virtue and vice and to understand that the ends always justify the means. Machiavellian leadership is largely informed by his work *The Prince*. His advisements often appear ruthless and unethical because they encourage leaders to use unethical means if the end justifies it; however, the strategy and observations of human nature are still visible and applied in modern leadership. Machiavelli (1532) examines both the structural and societal elements as well as the necessary characteristics that the Prince, or leadership, must possess to contribute toward preserving power.

Machiavellian leadership encourages leaders to eliminate those who threaten their power but to balance this with an appearance of likeability to avoid an uprising (Machiavelli, 1532). Machiavelli (1532) explains that a ruler can do this through deception, when necessary. They may enforce cruel policies, but they should be careful to manage public opinion through charisma and eloquent communication. To further engender goodwill, Machiavelli (1532) suggests that the ruler encourage individual prosperity and development among their people because individual prosperity will increase and consolidate the power of the Prince, as it will all be contributed to the strength of the principality.

Machiavellian leadership requires the leader to be strong and charismatic and the followers to be accommodating and charmed by the leader (Belschak et al., 2016). Belschak et al. (2016) conducted a study on Machiavellian leadership and discovered that the success of this leadership style is dependent on the following style of their employees. Belschak et al. (2016) explain that “when Machiavellian employees have Machiavellian leaders, their trust in their leader significantly decreases, and their level of stress significantly increases” (para. 1). Additionally, in Fatima and Mariam’s (2021) time-lagged data study on leaders in Pakistan, they found that followers with lower levels of moral identity were more susceptible to corruption by leaders. This implies that the followers within an organizational context are just as important to the efficacy of Machiavellian leadership as the leader themselves (Belschak et al., 2016; Fatima & Mariam, 2021).

Passive-Avoidant Leadership

The passive-avoidant leadership style is described by Molero et al. (2013) as being “perceived somewhat like absent parents by their employees” (p. 3). In this respect, passive-avoidant leaders tend to be relatively uninvolved. This style is usually measured in leaders by examining their passive use of management-by-expectation and avoidant laissez-faire strategies. Clinebell et al. (2013) describe passive-avoidant leaders as

indifferent leaders who act passively towards solving potential problems, reacting only when they become chronic or, in general, tend to avoid responsibility in supervising and decision-making (p. 142)

Clinebell et al. (2013) also state that this type of leader will “abdicate their overall responsibilities and keep themselves at a distance from the problems with which their followers deal” (p. 142). Passive-avoidant leaders are often perceived as out of touch with the concerns of their followers and project this into their relationship with their followers (Molero et al., 2013).

Molero et al. (2013) conducted a study to examine the correlation between attachment bonds and leadership styles, illustrating the leader’s disconnection from their employees. They concluded that passive-avoidant leadership has a positive effect on anxious and avoidant attachments of employees (Molero et al., 2013). The employees had an insecure attachment likely created by their need to solve problems without the intervention, support, or help of their employer (Molero et al., 2013).

Another identifiable byproduct of passive-avoidant leadership connected to the leader’s lack of employee involvement is the prevalence of bullying in the workplace. In a study conducted by Sischka et al. (2020), they researched and concluded that there is a

direct correlation between passive-avoidant leadership and workplace bullying. Sischka et al. (2020) explain that,

as passive avoidant supervisors are characterized by not enforcing rules, monitoring subordinates, or managing and intervening in dysfunctional conflicts, they may ignore illegitimate behavior or conflicts among their subordinates. (p. 8)

This implies that a symptom of passive-avoidant leadership can manifest within the organizational context (Sischka et al, 2020). In Sischka et al.'s (2020) work, they explain that because leaders expect group members to solve problems on their own, they rarely become involved with the issue until significant action is a necessity. As such, bullying, which is usually defined by an amalgamized pattern of abuse established over time, is not identified or addressed until it's too pervasive to ignore and damage to the organization and its employees have already occurred (Sischka et al, 2020).

Transactional Leadership

The transactional leadership style is described by Northouse (2018) as an exchange that is motivated by the leader's desire to meet their ends. The leader will utilize primarily reward and punishment to ensure that the criteria for success set for employees are being met (Aarons, 2006). Transactional leadership is often associated with transformational leadership, in that it, as well as laissez-faire leadership which was discussed in passive-avoidant leadership, are a part of the transformational leadership continuum (Northouse, 2018). Transformational leadership departs from transactional leadership in that it focuses on the collaborative relationship between leader and follower that allows everyone to accomplish a shared goal (Burns, 1978). It relies on the leader's ability to identify the values and motivations of their followers, develop a genuine interest in helping the follower achieve this goal, and leverage the goal to meet a shared

goal that is mutually beneficial (Burns, 1978). Transactional leadership avoids the vulnerability that is necessary for a transformational leader to engage with their followers in a meaningful way (Burns, 1978).

There are two main motivators in transactional leadership: contingent reward and management-by-expectation. A contingent reward is defined as “how the leader clarifies the role and task requirements for subordinates as well as the performance criteria and the rewards upon accomplishing desired goals” (Xenikou, 2017, para. 5). This can include external physical rewards such as bonuses or promotions but can also be expanded to include favoritism and nepotism (Almonawer, 2021). In a study conducted by Almonawer (2021) to examine transformational and transactional leadership in secondary schools in Kuwait, the researchers determined that the schools were largely run by transactional leaders who were undemocratic and heavily favored nepotism and favoritism (Almonawer, 2021).

Management-by-expectation can be either active or passive (Northouse, 2018). Passive management-by-expectation, as previously discussed in passive-avoidant leadership, is identified by a leader’s avoidance of corrective action, only intervening or making decisions when serious problems arise (Hetland et al., 2008). Alternatively, active management-by-expectation is defined as watching “followers closely for mistakes or rule violations” and is more consistent with negative reinforcements, departing from contingent rewards (Northouse, 2018, p. 171). Transactional leaders utilize active management-by-expectation and are quick to take corrective action when they see an employee failing to meet the goals or quotas that are set for them (Hetland et al., 2008; Northouse, 2018).

Servant Leadership

Servant Leadership is defined as “a new kind of leadership model – a model which puts serving others as the number one priority” (Greenleaf, 1996, p. 33). In this theory, the leader’s main goal is to serve, which runs counter to other leadership theories (Greenleaf, 1970). Robert Greenleaf (1970) first proposed this framework in an essay. Greenleaf was an engineer who became the Director of Management Development with AT&T, where he discovered a passion for leadership (Frick, 2021). According to Frick (2021) of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, from this career at AT&T, Greenleaf developed a model that proposed that

the best leaders were servants first, and the key tools for a servant-leader included listening, persuasion, access to intuition and foresight, use of language, and pragmatic measurements of outcomes. In the next four years, two more essays explored ideas that an entire institution—and a society—could act as servant, and that trustees should act as servants. (para. 6)

This seminal work has inspired many scholars to expand the study of this framework in leadership studies (Ehrhart, 2004; Eva et al., 2019; Ozyilmaz & Cicek, 2015; Russell & Stone, 2002).

Russell and Stone (2002) developed a practical model of Servant Leadership that emphasizes ten core leadership attributes informed by Greenleaf’s (1970) work: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. The attributes place the follower’s needs above the leader’s and these tenants are said to stem from a leader’s personal values (Russell & Stone, 2002). Spears and Lawrence (2002) explain that this list is not exhaustive but communicates “the power and promise that this concept offers to those who are open to its invitation and challenge” (p. 8).

According to Page and Wong (2022), servant leaders are quick to apologize and forgive. In a conceptual framework developed for servant leadership, Page and Wong (2022) explain that forgiveness and extending grace is essential to servant leadership as it emphasizes the leader's responsibility to care for others, even if it is not reciprocated. Wong et al. (2007) discussed the best practices for servant leadership at a roundtable. They state that a servant leader's

heart is big enough to embrace the entire organization and the whole world. They are neither partisan nor petty. They reach out to those who do not agree with them. They do not mind being proven wrong or outshone by others; their main concern is for the common good. They don't hold grudges; they are always ready to forgive and apologize. Their capacity for compassion is equivalent to their understanding (p. 9)

A servant leader is open to vulnerability and humility which facilitates their comfort with admitting to wrongdoing (Wong et al., 2007).

Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership model was created by James MacGregor Burns, who was a "Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer and political scientist who wrote voluminously about the nature of leadership in general and the presidency in particular" (Weber, 2014, para 1.). Burns' work was varied and expansive; however, his book entitled *Leadership* is said to be a seminal work in the field of leadership, outlining transformational leadership, which is one of the most popular leadership models in the landscape (McGregor, 2014). Transformational leadership is defined as a process where leaders induce "followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations - the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations - of both leaders and followers" (Burns, 1978, p. 19). Burns' (1978) model calls the leader to develop a genuine interest in helping the follower achieve their personal goals and leveraging these

goals toward a mutually beneficial shared goal that centers around transforming the lives of followers. The transformational leader must individually consider the needs of their followers, spark curiosity to promote innovation, inspire their followers, and act as a role model that can be idealized (Burns, 1978).

This model includes a list of four specific elements that a transformational leader will have access to. These elements are individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. Individualized consideration requires the leader to consider the needs of their followers on an individual basis (Burns, 1978). This attribute calls the transformational leader to listen empathically to the follower to determine their needs and identify their struggles so that they can craft an individualized growth plan. This causes the follower to feel valued as an individual and can help the leader identify and tap into their intrinsic motivations.

Intellectual stimulation calls the leader to prompt curiosity in the follower (Burns, 1978). The hope is that curiosity will spark new ideas, which will lead to innovation. This attribute requires the leader to challenge the follower's thoughts and encourage risk-taking. The leader must trust the judgment of the follower and thrive in the uncertainty that innovation necessitates. This causes the follower to invest in the process of learning and engage in creative behaviors to answer the questions they are encouraged to ask.

Inspirational motivation requires the leader to inspire and express a shared vision that will motivate the followers to act (Burns, 1978). This attribute calls the leader to have excellent communication skills that will provide followers with the motivation they need to reach the shared vision. It requires the leader to have an optimistic perspective and energy that will engage the follower. This causes the follower to feel a sense of

purpose in their actions, which stimulates productivity and a willingness to contribute towards accomplishing the vision.

Idealized influence requires the leader to become a role model for their followers (Burns, 1978). The leader does this through the values and motivations that the follower aspires to achieve. This attribute calls the leader to hold a high standard of excellence and maintain a strong sense of morals or ethics. Idealized influence portrays the leader in an endearing light that charms and captivates the follower. Subsequently, the follower will be able to develop a relationship of trust and respect with the leader because of this positive association.

Transformational leadership is intuitively appealing to individuals, as its core mission is to transform the lives of others. Burns (1978) creates a model that draws from psychological wants and needs, which has made this theory appealing to those who study leadership. These factors cemented transformational leadership as one of the most comprehensive theories in the landscape. Burns' (1978) definition and model focus on the micro-level that can become macro-level transformation. This is a more holistic approach and can truly be transformational on all levels.

Authentic Leadership

The authentic leadership model was created by Bill George, who has an extensive background in engineering, leadership, and the corporate landscape (George, 2022). In an article written for McKinsey and Company (2021) about George's model for authentic leadership, they explain that George took a meditation course to cope with the stresses he was experiencing personally and professionally. Learning the art of meditation "inspired a daily practice that the former Medtronic CEO and Harvard Business School professor

continues to this day” (McKinsey & Company, 2021, para. 1). The mindfulness techniques utilized by George are a foundational part of his model for authentic leadership which encourage resilience, adaptability, and clarity for leaders. George is quoted by McKinsey & Company (2021) as saying that

As leaders, we’re going to get knocked down. Things are not going to go our way. You’re going to lose a client or a client’s going to be unhappy or something’s going to go wrong. Meditation gives me a sense of resilience, so I can come bouncing back. We all need that. And I can tell you the higher up you are, the more stress you feel. You need that sense of well-being and resilience. (para. 9)

Authentic leadership is defined by five characteristics: purpose, values, relationships, self-discipline, and heart (George, 2003). The purpose dimension refers to the leader’s understanding of what their role means in guiding their employees to specific goals (George, 2003). George (2003) describes authentic leaders as inspired intrinsically, making their motivations purely based on their genuine interest in the work. They are fueled by the passion they feel for the cause and are deeply invested because of this.

The values dimension refers to the leader’s strong identification with their values and beliefs. Again, this aligns with the leader having a clear understanding of what their true north is, which informs what the right course of action is (George, 2003). Values are very important to authentic leaders because it creates a set of morals and ethics that they try to live up to in their leadership. If these values are compromised in any way, it is essential to the well-being and self-esteem of the leader that they make reparations to reestablish their sense of pride in their authenticity (Byrne et al., 2014).

The relationships dimension refers to the leader’s ability to form a deep connection and bond with those they are leading (George, 2003). The leader discloses a certain amount of vulnerability, which in turn, encourages the follower to engage in this

vulnerability and establish trust. The leader is open to admitting mistakes they have made, which again, can foster a system of open apologies due to the positive associations with honesty. This reciprocity allows the leader to humanize themselves to their followers and stimulate loyalty and organizational citizenship behaviors (Northouse, 2018).

The self-discipline dimension refers to the leader's ability to stay focused and maintain the energy necessary to accomplish their goals to the standard of excellence that their values demand (George, 2003). In the midst of pressure or difficult situations, the authentic leader will have the discipline to act as a constant for their followers. They try to stay above reproach or take responsibility for mistakes, which allows them to act as a reliable compass for the organization that provides stability. George (2003) explains that this also allows them to hold others accountable to the set of standards so they can meet their objectives.

The heart dimension refers to the leader's passion for accomplishing the mission. This dimension requires the leader to show compassion for the plight of others and act from their heart (George, 2003). Being sensitive to the needs of the follower aids in the leader's aim for authenticity. George (2003) explains the importance of this empathy coming from a genuine place and that this compassion can be built. If the leader practices genuinely concerning themselves with the good of their people, this will eventually become a lens that allows the leader to lead from their heart as well as from their head (George, 2003).

Case Study Literature

The Watergate Scandal

Richard Nixon's apology and resignation public announcement is a frequently discussed and pervasive example of a non-apology, resulting from an organization that was overly accommodating to its leader. The infamous nature of this apology partnered with the ample access to contextual information about the Nixon administration or organization, including archival recordings, news reports from the time, and countless books and papers written on the topic making it a detail-rich case study to examine and include in this research.

History and Context

Richard Nixon was elected as the 37th President of the United States of America in 1969 after a career as a lawyer, Congressman, member of the Senate, and Vice President (Freidel & Sidey, 2006). The former Republican President was known for his aggressive and "denigrative" method of running for public office, often using attack strategies on his opponents to create a negative association in the minds of voters (Tucker, 1981). This earned him the nickname "Tricky Dick" (Tucker, 1981). Nixon was elected as the Vice President for Dwight Eisenhower, where he gained a reputation for his foreign policy expertise and sometimes adversarial relationship with foreign powers, which endeared Nixon to the American public (Freidel & Sidey, 2006). He served as Vice President for two terms.

In 1960, Nixon ran for the Presidency against John F. Kennedy. In the first televised Presidential debate, Nixon lost favor with Americans (Druckman, 2003). This was for an amalgamation of reasons which included an economic recession, answering

for the failures of the Eisenhower administration, and the lack of physical charisma on Nixon's part that was displayed on a television (Druckman, 2003). After Nixon lost this election, he wrote a book entitled *Six Crises*, which discussed his time in office and involvement in six political situations (Nixon, 1962). In 1962, Nixon ran for Governor of California and lost to Democratic incumbent, Pat Brown (Schwartz, 2017).

In 1968, Nixon ran for the Presidency once again, this time with an organizational strategy that was superior to his opponents, leading to a win (Broder, 1968). According to Broder (1968), a Washington Post reporter at the time, it was seen as a great political comeback that was largely helped by a split vote. Nixon ran for re-election in 1972 and won with 60.7% of the popular vote which remains the largest popular vote margin in any Presidential election (Greenberg, 2003). Nixon was seen as a unifying force in America and was well-liked at this time. According to the Richard Nixon Foundation (2013),

inflation had been curbed, the GNP had increased, the real earnings of Americans were increasing at an annual rate of 4 percent and increasing crime rates had been curtailed from 122 percent from 1960-1968 to 1 percent in 1972. Perhaps more importantly to the American citizen at that time, draft calls had been reduced from 299,000 to 50,000 from 1968 to 1972, and relations with China and the Soviet Union had been improving. (para. 19)

These factors led to Nixon's landslide victory. His strategy was to focus on making himself appear to be a proven leader with a track record of success, using his platform of visibility to allow his work to speak for itself (The Richard Nixon Foundation, 2013).

The Break-In

On May 11, 1972, there was a break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington, D.C. (Noble, 2009). The individuals who broke in were not caught and were able to access secret documents and place wiretaps in those offices.

When those five individuals attempted to break in again to repair broken wiretaps and retrieve more secret documentation on June 17th, 1972, they were apprehended and arrested. This incident is widely referred to as the Watergate break-in or the Watergate scandal. According to Noble (2009), this building was known as a part of the Watergate Complex because it overlooked the gate that regulated the flow of water from the Potomac River to the Tidal Basin near the Jefferson Memorial. This is where the name of the scandal was derived from.

News of this break-in was released before Nixon's election. He was able to deny any involvement or knowledge of this incident on behalf of his administration and successfully kept his name out of the scandal, for most of the months leading up to his re-election. In October of 1972, however, Watergate was linked to Nixon by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Greenberg, 2003). They determined that the operation at Watergate was developed and enacted by Nixon's aids and Committee to Re-elect the President (CRP) as a means of maintaining the upper hand against their Democratic opposition. The two reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, who had been actively investigating this case with the help of an official working within the Nixon camp were dismissed by Nixon as being "on a witch hunt" (Paul, 2019). This denial strategy worked and as mentioned, Nixon was successfully re-elected by a landslide.

Maintaining this distance, however, became more difficult as more information was released to the American public. After the five individuals had been apprehended for the break-in, they provided fake names to those questioning them and would only describe themselves as anti-communists, being careful not to mention their connection to the Nixon administration. Despite this initial deception, James McCord was identified as

one of the perpetrators the day after they were apprehended (Rugaber, 1973). James McCord was a former Central Intelligence Agency officer and Security Coordinator for Nixon's re-election committee. As such, he had also acted as a personal security guard to those working to re-elect Nixon, directly connecting McCord to the administration (Rugaber, 1973). Additionally, G. Gordon Liddy who was the finance counsel for the CRP as well as E. Howard Hunt, a former White House aide was also connected to the five burglars (Rugaber, 1973). Nixon's administration promptly denied any involvement or prior knowledge.

Martha Mitchell

After news of the Watergate break-in was initially released, Woodward and Bernstein became fascinated with the story and began to investigate. They are largely credited with being the first reporters to report on the found connections and coverup within the Nixon administration. This was done with the help of their informant known only at the time as "deep throat", later revealed to be Mark Felt, the Deputy Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the Nixon administration (Shepard, 2008). It must be noted, however, that these reporters were not the first to report on an extensive Nixon cover-up. Martha Mitchell was the wife of John Mitchell, who was the former Attorney General and Chair of the CRP for Nixon. Martha Mitchell was known for her love of leaking information that she would overhear from her husband's work conversations to the press, which earned her the nickname, "the mouth of the south" (Roig-Franzia, 2022). McCord had been her personal security detail and when she saw him in the newspapers, she recognized him. She attempted to relay this information to Helen Thomas, a reporter for the New York Times women's section, but was eventually thwarted by the security

detail her husband assigned to her and temporarily held against her will. Thomas (1972) recounts the phone interaction in a small article, specifically framing Martha Mitchell's disdain for politics and the ultimatum she gave her husband to leave politics or divorce.

Thomas (1972) further explains,

The conversation ended abruptly when it appeared that somebody had taken the phone from her hand. She was heard to say, "You just get away." The connection was broken, and her suite at a motel refused attempts to restore it, "Mrs. Mitchell is indisposed and cannot talk," the operator said. When reached at his Washington apartment, Mr. Mitchell expressed amusement at his wife's turning to the telephone—her trademark as a public figure—confirmed that politics was a bone of contention between them and said that he was going to do something about it. (para. 5)

Martha Mitchell later described this interaction as a kidnapping, explaining that the phone had been ripped from her hand and off the wall (Carlin, 2022). She also claimed that she had been physically assaulted, allowed no food, and was heavily sedated by doctors. Martha Mitchell originally believed that her husband was not involved in her kidnapping or the coverup; however, it was later discovered that John Mitchell was involved and ordered the kidnapping (Carlin, 2022). A smear campaign was later launched to discredit Martha Mitchell as an alcoholic with mental disorders (Carlin, 2022). McCord corroborated her account of being held as a political prisoner in a New York Times interview (United Press International, 1975).

Fall-Out and Legacy

In addition to attempting to silence Martha Mitchell, the Nixon administration also ordered investigations on the Watergate break-in to cease, fired investigating individuals, openly lied to investigators and the American public, and tampered with evidence, providing only partial evidence (Greenberg, 2003). Nixon announced his

resignation on August 8, 1974, delivering a public statement of apology. His legacy includes ending American involvement in the Vietnam War, ending the military draft, fostering positive relationships with China, and concluding the anti-missile treaty with the Soviet Union (Greenberg, 2003). These actions, however, are often eclipsed by his administration's active participation in a coverup, making Nixon synonymous with the Watergate scandal (Greenberg, 2003).

NFL's Colin Kaepernick Controversy

Roger Goodell's apologies on behalf of the NFL to Colin Kaepernick and other people of color who had experienced the systemic racism embedded in their organization is often perceived as resulting from avoidance of attention. This apology garnered a lot of attention during the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests due to the public discourse about performative allyship. The high-profile nature of this apology paired with the time in which the Kaepernick apologies occurred ensures enough distance from the event to indicate the sincerity of the apology and a view of reparation plans. The research for this case study will largely rely on news articles, social media responses, and expressed lived experiences from those who publicly comment about the organizational context.

Kaepernick's Background

Kaepernick was raised in Turlock, California by his adoptive parents (Peter, 2016). This area and the teams that Kaepernick played with largely lacked diversity, meaning that he had to learn to assimilate with those he played around with quickly (Peter, 2016). In an interview with Corsello (2015) a reporter from a fashion magazine, which is another passion of Kaepernick's, he explained,

he is the biological son of a black man and a white woman from Milwaukee, and the adopted-from-birth son of Mr. Rick and Ms. Teresa

Kaepernick – lily-white Wisconsin cheesemakers who relocated to California four years after Colin was born. Even before he was old enough to describe them, Mr. Kaepernick had two guiding feelings. The first, simply, was that “I knew I was different to my parents and my older brother and sister.” The second was less of a feeling than the absence of one: “I never felt that I was supposed to be white. Or black, either. My parents just wanted to let me be who I needed to be.” The world, of course, was less abiding in its notions of what a brown-skinned boy, standing out in bold relief against a uniformly white background, ought to be. This made him conscious of his posture, both literal and figurative, from an early age. (para. 3)

Kaepernick was described by his college teammates as coming of age at the University of Nevada, where he earned a scholarship to play football becoming the starting quarterback his freshman year (Peter, 2016). As a Junior in college, he joined the historically Black fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi. At this fraternity, he found and developed a sense of brotherhood that led him to want to use any platform he might hold to champion on behalf of those he saw as marginalized (Peter, 2016).

After graduating from college, he was drafted in the second round by the San Francisco, California 49ers in 2011 (Reineking, 2014). He acted as the backup quarterback starting after their main quarterback suffered a concussion (Reineking, 2014). Kaepernick led the 49ers to the Superbowl in 2013, which was their first appearance there since 1994, losing and regaining the spot as the main quarterback for the 49ers over the next three seasons (Reineking, 2014).

The Protests

In August of 2016, there seemed to be a disproportionate amount of police brutality towards unarmed Black men that were largely being reported on (Reid, 2017). In an Op-Ed with the New York Times, Kaepernick’s teammate Eric Reid (2017) explains that this had deeply affected him:

In early 2016, I began paying attention to reports about the incredible number of unarmed black people being killed by the police. The posts on social media deeply disturbed me, but one in particular brought me to tears: the killing of Alton Sterling in my hometown Baton Rouge, La. This could have happened to any of my family members who still live in the area. I felt furious, hurt and hopeless. I wanted to do something but didn't know what or how to do it. All I knew for sure is that I wanted it to be as respectful as possible.

Kaepernick had been sitting on the bench during the National Anthem but was wearing street clothing, so went unnoticed (Boren, 2020). Reid (2017) spoke with Kaepernick at length about deciding the best way to use their platform to raise awareness and speak on behalf of the voiceless. After this discussion and asking the advice of Nate Boyer, a retired Green Beret, and former NFL player, they decided to kneel instead of sitting during the National Anthem, seeing the action as a metaphor for the flag being at half-mast (Reid, 2017). A half-mast flag symbolizes mourning and respect for the loss of life (Reid, 2017). On August 26, 2016, during the National Anthem at an American football game, they knelt as a form of peaceful protest against systemic racism (Bailey, 2020). This act of protest was controversial and received widespread backlash, from the fans of the sport to the President of the United States. Many others in the league, however, joined Kaepernick in kneeling (Bailey, 2020).

The NFL Commissioner, Roger Goodell, stated that he did not agree with Kaepernick's actions (Vera, 2018). Kaepernick was said to be blackballed by the league after his contract expired in 2017 (Vera, 2018). No team signed Kaepernick, and he has not since been re-signed. This led to a lawsuit by Kaepernick and several other Black players, alleging that the NFL had colluded to withhold employment from these individuals due to their act of peaceful protest (Mangan, 2019). Both parties reached a settlement; however, the terms of this settlement remain confidential (Mangan, 2019).

Kaepernick remains a free agent and was recently seen working out with the Las Vegas Raiders, raising speculation that the team may be interested in signing him (Schefter, 2022).

After Kaepernick's departure, many other football players continued to kneel during the National Anthem, until May of 2018, when the NFL released a statement explaining that players would be punished if they knelt during the National Anthem. As a compromise, players were permitted to remain in the locker room during the National Anthem (Boren, 2020; Vera, 2018). This was largely contested and, after a year, put on hold.

2020 Black Lives Matter Protests

In response to the murder of George Floyd which sparked the Black Lives Matter protests, Goodell released a video of apology. He stated that he was sorry for not listening to the players who had previously attempted to bring awareness to this issue and voiced support for the Black Lives Matter movement (Maske, 2020). Goodell's (2020) apology specifically stated,

We, the National Football League, condemn racism and the systematic oppression of black people. We, the National Football League, admit we were wrong for not listening to NFL players earlier and encourage all to speak out and peacefully protest. We, the National Football League, believe Black Lives Matter. I personally protest with you and want to be a part of the much-needed change in this country. Without black players, there would be no National Football League. And the protests around the country are emblematic of the centuries of silence, inequality, and oppression of black players, coaches, fans, and staff. We are listening, I am listening, and I will be reaching out to players who have raised their voices, and others on how we can move forward together for a better and more united NFL family.

Many on Twitter reacted negatively to this statement, calling it an act of performative allyship. Goodell failed to mention or issue a formal apology to Colin Kaepernick,

bringing the sincerity of his statement into question. Goodell later was a guest on a YouTube show hosted by a former football player, Emmanuel Acho (2020). Goodell directly addressed Colin Kaepernick and answered the accusations of performative allyship. This led to a mostly negative response from the audience, as will be discussed further in the research.

Legacy and Recent Developments

Kaepernick is perceived as one of the most controversial players in the NFL because of his peaceful protests (Strauss, 2017). With the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, many NFL players continued to kneel in solidarity, continuing Kaepernick's legacy (McManus, 2020). Goodell attempted to broker an act of goodwill by arranging a try-out for Kaepernick with the Atlanta Falcon's which is described as crumbling due to "mistrust on both sides" (Kilgore, para. 6, 2020).

Although Kaepernick is not a visible fixture in the league currently, his presence continues to be felt, not only through the other players who adopt his form of activism but also in the individuals willing to associate with the league. Many performers refused to headline the halftime show in 2020 due to Kaepernick's treatment (Kilgore, 2020).

For the NFL, there continues to be a reckoning for their longstanding systemic racism that is illustrated in the recent legal suit from Former Miami Dolphins Coach Brian Flores alleging the rampant racism in hiring People of Color in top management positions (Pruitt-Young & Franklin, 2022). Flores' suit specifically addresses the Rooney rule, which was an initiative meant to ensure more equitable and diverse hiring practices; however, as is evidenced by the NFL's 2021 Occupational Mobility Report, 82% of Head Coaching jobs and 84% of General Manager positions were occupied by White men

(Harrison, 2021). If the report is further examined, the systemic disadvantaging of individuals begins with who they allow in their talent pool, hiring predominantly White men to occupy roles that are seen as leading to top management positions, as well as nepotism (Harrison, 2021).

After Brian Flores went public about his lawsuit against the NFL, Colin Kaepernick's name began trending on social media (McCarty, 2022). Many saw Flores' lawsuit as a vindication for Kaepernick, as well as a warning to Flores about what will likely become of his career (McCarty, 2022). Flores is said to recognize,

he may become a martyr as far as his career goes, not unlike Kaepernick. But he hopes his lawsuit increases the influence black individuals have in the hiring/firing process and incentivizes the hiring/retention of black HCs and GMs

Kaepernick is seen as paving the way for future People of Color to engage in the league and political activism, changing the way that athletes are allowed to engage in discourse (Zirin, 2021).

Wells Fargo Fraudulent Accounts Scandal

Wells Fargo's corporate apology released by Tim Sloan, CEO at the time, to the customers who had fraudulent accounts opened in their name or additional services they had not asked for by Wells Fargo employees can be seen as resulting from a competitive organizational context. This apology was released in the Wall Street Journal as a full-page advertisement as a part of its campaign to regain the trust of its customers and repair the damaged image. The pervasiveness of this issue across stores combined with the involvement of the government made this a high-profile case that was well documented. The research for this case study will largely rely on news articles and publicized experiences from those who worked within the organizational context.

Founders

The Wells Fargo bank, known at the time as Wells, Fargo, & Co, was founded by Henry Wells and William G. Fargo in 1852 (Bentz, 2018). According to Bentz (2018) a Wells Fargo Historian, Henry Wells left behind his apprenticeship as a tanner and shoemaker to pursue a career in banking. In addition to his career in banking, which Wells was most famously known for, he also had a pronounced stutter which he actively sought help for eliminating, but was ultimately unsuccessful in his attempts (Bentz, 2018). Despite this, he opened several schools meant to cure stuttering or “stammering” as it was known then (Bentz, 2018). Fargo had worked on his father’s farm before working as a mail carrier at the age of 13 (Bentz, 2018). He eventually moved into industry and investment, specifically investing in railroad companies, and eventually became the Director of the Northern Pacific Railroad (Chandler, 2006). Fargo also invested in business and became a stockholder of the Northwestern National Bank which later merged with Wells Fargo in 1998 (Bentz, 2018).

21st-Century Business Structure

Wells Fargo originally started as an express transporter, transporting valuables (gold, silver, etc.) from one location to the next with a hyper fixation on security (Babal, 2018). At the beginning of the 21st century, Wells Fargo had gained a reputation for being the largest employing bank in the United States, being dubbed by Aspen (2013) of American Banker as too big to fail. The CEO of the time, John Stumpf, was hailed as unassuming, modest, and team-oriented in his interview after earning the title of “Banker of the Year” in 2013 (Aspen, 2013). He had many successes, including remaining largely unscathed during the recession, several successful mergers with other banks, a large-scale

expansion plan, and being one of the largest mortgage lenders in the country (Aspen, 2013).

Wells Fargo had a strong outward public image as a community bank with a customer-centric approach (Aspen, 2013). The structure of this bank differed from others in that they saw themselves as a retailer, rather than a bank, placing value on the products (accounts, loans, etc.) they were selling (Colvin, 2017). The banks were not referred to as branches as is colloquially common, but as stores (Colvin, 2017). As mentioned, shared language that is created in an organization has a profound impact on the established context of the organization and the lived experiences and motivations of the employees (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017). The language of retail was infused into the system and context at Wells Fargo, shifting the motivations and experiences of employees (Colvin, 2017).

Referring to Deal and Kennedy's (2000) conceptual model for organizational culture, they describe banks and retail stores as existing in separate categories. Work hard/play hard cultures include businesses that receive quick feedback about how well they performed but come at minimal risk to employees (Deal & Kennedy, 2000). These cultures are usually highly energetic and, although heavily relying upon teamwork, will also often utilize competition amongst employees to stimulate motivation and perceive external competitors harshly (Deal & Kennedy, 2000). This can include highly competitive sales teams or retailers (Deal & Kennedy, 2000).

Alternatively, process culture organizations receive slow feedback about how well they are performing and the risks to the employees are also low, meaning no singular transaction will have a profound impact on the success or failure of the organization

(Deal & Kennedy, 2000). According to Deal and Kennedy (2000), these employees tend to focus more on how they accomplish things because identifying or quantifying what they have accomplished is too difficult of a task. Hence, technical expertise is valued (Deal & Kennedy, 2000). These two different perspectives in culture will likely yield very different responses, as was evident at Wells Fargo.

In a New York Times article discussing the court proceedings between the government and large banks at the helm of “Mortgage Mania” (also known as the inflation of mortgages), Morgenson (2013) reports on the disparity between the public face of the companies and the internal competition stimulated by Wells Fargo.

Morgenson (2013) reported a Judge as chastising Wells Fargo, stating,

The disconnect between Wells Fargo’s publicly advertised face and its actual litigation conduct here could not be more extreme. A quick visit to Wells Fargo’s Web site confirms that it vigorously promoted itself as consumer-friendly, a far cry from the hard-nosed, win-at-any-cost stance it has adopted here. (para. 9)

In this quote, the shadow side of the work hard/play hard culture is visible. Retailers often appear externally hospitable to their customers to make the sale, but internally, are highly competitive and will seek to win however possible (Deal & Kennedy, 2000).

Aspen (2013) describes this facet of their organizational context as both their strength and their weakness.

The Scandal

Their organization was structured as a retailer, rather than a bank, placing value on the products (accounts, loans, etc.) they were selling (Colvin, 2017). Colvin (2017) describes the scandal at Wells Fargo Bank as stemming from their corporate push to cross-sell. Cross-selling is described as signing customers up for multiple products at

once (Colvin, 2017). The expectations for sales were unreasonably high, causing the employees to look for ways to meet those expectations, no matter the cost (Frost, 2017). Frost (2017) a CNBC reporter explained that if the employees could not meet those expectations, their jobs were threatened, and they were punished. There was no direct supervision for those responsible for independent stores making it easy to falsely boost their store's statistics report (Frost, 2017). According to the United States Department of Justice (2020), Wells Fargo engaged in cross-selling strategies which included

using existing customers' identities – without their consent – to open checking and savings, debit card, credit card, bill pay, and global remittance accounts. From 2002 to 2016, gaming practices included forging customer signatures to open accounts without authorization, creating PINs to activate unauthorized debit cards, moving money from millions of customer accounts to unauthorized accounts in a practice known internally as “simulated funding,” opening credit cards and bill pay products without authorization, altering customers' true contact information to prevent customers from learning of unauthorized accounts and prevent Wells Fargo employees from reaching customers to conduct customer satisfaction surveys, and encouraging customers to open accounts they neither wanted nor needed. (para. 12)

The lack of oversight created the perfect storm for unethical practices, as the managers of the stores were receiving pressure from their superiors to perform and, in turn, would place that pressure on their direct reports, creating a hostile environment (Colvin, 2017). Many warning symptoms spoke to the illness within the organizational culture; however, it was dealt with topically (Ochs, 2016). In 2002, they found several employees who created false accounts to meet their quotas (Colvin, 2017). According to Ochs (2016) in a Harvard Business Review article based on leadership blind spots at Wells Fargo, those employees were fired and perceived as a few bad apples. Wells Fargo failed to consider that a few bad apples not only *spoil the whole bunch* but are also often a product of the environment they are in (Ochs, 2016).

Repercussions and New Developments

Wells Fargo was held to account in several court proceedings held by the government and agreed to pay \$3 billion to resolve criminal and civil investigations into sales practices involving the opening of millions of accounts without customer authorization (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California Nick Hanna is quoted as saying “This case illustrates a complete failure of leadership at multiple levels within the Bank. Simply put, Wells Fargo traded its hard-earned reputation for short-term profits, and harmed untold numbers of customers along the way” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020).

In addition to paying \$3 billion in damages, the organization was also forced to take drastic steps to change the organizational structure (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). Wells Fargo will not be prosecuted for any potential crimes resulting from this period as long as they adhere to the law going forward and cooperate with any future governmental investigations (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). Wells Fargo has undergone several management changes since John Stumpf’s resignation in 2016; however, each new leader promises to systematically address each issue that contributed to the previous toxic culture (Colvin, 2017). The leadership has consolidated the power structures and reduced their push for aggressive sales tactics (Colvin, 2017). They have changed their system to support the culture they aspire to by determining rewards based on customer satisfaction, rather than the ability to meet a quota (Ochs, 2017). CEO since 2019, Charlie Scharf, has replaced many top managers who fostered the past organizational structure working to further distance Wells Fargo from the past scandal (Ungarino et al., 2021).

JetBlue's 2007 Crisis

David Neeleman, the founder and CEO of JetBlue in 2007, issued a campaign of apology and public image reparation after a company crisis caused by mass flight cancelations, displaced customers and crew, and a full plane of passengers that were stranded on the tarmac for six hours. This apology was released in interviews, a full-page ad in several East Coast newspapers, and an accompanying video where Neeleman introduced himself, apologized, described a plan for reparations, and provided a strategy for ensuring that the events within the crisis would never occur again. The cause of this crisis was complex but identified and openly acknowledged by JetBlue. The research for this case study will rely on news articles and publicized experiences from those who worked within the organizational context.

Company History

JetBlue Airways, more commonly known simply as “JetBlue”, is an American air travel company. JetBlue operated its first flights on February 11, 2000, with two planes flying out of John F. Kennedy airport in New York (Pallini, 2020). This airline rapidly expanded due to its “low-cost service to previously underserved cities, while giving passengers a high-quality experience” (Hoyt et al., 2010). JetBlue was heavily endorsed by local politicians which allowed the airline to expand its operations significantly (Pallini, 2020). Their mission was to bring humanity back to air travel (Hoyt et al., 2010).

JetBlue was known for its unusual approach to business that departed from the competitors in the field. They were egalitarian in their seating, meaning there were no class differentiations in seating, they provided free entertainment in the form of satellite televisions built into the backs of each seat, complimentary snacks and refreshments for

all customers, and free checked bags, all for a lower price than competitors (Pallini, 2020). According to Zuckerman's (2001) New York Times article, during the fallout of the September 11 terrorist attacks in America, the company remained relatively unscathed, and, in fact, was flourishing. On September 11, 2001, terrorists hijacked four planes filled with passengers and coordinated suicide attacks by crashing them into several American buildings and landmarks (Zuckerman, 2001). At this time, the air travel industry was significantly impacted as many were afraid to travel by plane (Zuckerman, 2001). JetBlue, however, was reported by Zuckerman (2001) to be

...making money at a time when nearly all major airlines are posting record losses. The fast-growing low-fare airline, based at Kennedy Airport in New York, is expected to announce a profit today of \$10.5 million in its third quarter on \$82.6 million in revenue. The profit includes \$6.7 million in government aid in the wake of September's attacks. So far this year, the airline has net income of \$28.3 million on \$225 million in revenue. (para. 1)

They did this by raising "\$30 million from major investors, which include investment funds managed by J. P. Morgan Chase and Weston Presidio, as well as the financier George Soros", eventually raising a total of \$175 million (Zuckerman, 2001, para. 7). They maintained their low-cost advantage for customers and maintained a high number of passengers (Zuckerman, 2001).

David Neeleman's Background

David Neeleman was born in Brazil, where his father was assigned to work by United Press International, moving back to his family's hometown of Salt Lake City, Utah when he was five years old (Wynbrandt, 2004). In Wynbrandt's (2004) biography about the life and success of Neeleman, he explains that Neeleman's leadership and approach to building a business reflected the example of his grandfather, John Neeleman,

who owned and operated a local convenience store. This experience is discussed in Wynbrandt's (2004) book with Gary Neeleman, David's father, stating that

David Neeleman gained his first work experience when he started working at his grandfather's store at age nine. This focus on customer service had a lasting impact on the boy. "If there wasn't an item in the store that somebody wanted, he'd actually run out and buy it somewhere else and bring it back, because he [my grandfather] hated disappointing customers," Neeleman says. "He knew the value of a valued customer, and I think that was instilled in me." John Neeleman's ideas about delivering the best possible product were also absorbed by young David. (p. 12)

These lessons were visible in David Neeleman's work ethic as an adult. Neeleman was known for his desire to serve and please the customer and employees and for delivering a good quality product for a reasonable price.

Another tangible impact on Neeleman was his struggle with ADHD and Dyslexia, which impacted his performance in school, ability to read and write, and self-confidence (Wynbrandt, 2004). In college, Neeleman avoided courses with an emphasis on reading and writing, instead favoring accounting and math. It was through his time in school and his devoutly Mormon upbringing that he found himself involved in the travel industry (Wynbrandt, 2004). He marketed timeshares, eventually owning a travel agency, and became familiar with discount travel airlines. Although this business ultimately failed, Neeleman persevered and eventually co-founded two other airline companies: Morris Air and WestJet (Pallini, 2020). Additionally, he briefly worked for Southwest Airlines, further gaining experience with low-cost airlines that helped inform the way he ran JetBlue.

The Crisis

On February 14, 2007, the airline suffered a crisis that was later referred to as the Valentine's Day Massacre by spectators and passengers (Avila, 2007). According to Nance (2007),

On Valentine's Day, JetBlue Airways watched as its entire schedule melted into thin air. Gateless, inbound flights piled up on the JFK ramp, and outbound flights were prevented from departing, even after leaving their gates. The tugs and other equipment needed to move empty airplanes away from the jetways froze in place. (para. 5)

The weather had originally forecasted for a winter ice storm, which ultimately changed to a forecast of rain (Avila, 2007). Due to the change in the forecast, the staff at JetBlue continued to load flights, anticipating that the weather would clear up and no flights would need to be canceled (Hanna, 2008). The conditions did not clear, and passengers were subsequently detained on the aircraft for six hours, affecting more than 130,000 customers and employees (Hanna, 2008). As Hanna (2008) explains in a Harvard Business Review case study,

That day, only seventeen of JetBlue's 156 scheduled departures left JFK, a fact that caused ripple effects throughout the system and displaced crew and aircraft. In subsequent days, JetBlue management canceled more and more flights, angering thousands of passengers, until finally, on February 20, normal operations resumed. (para. 6)

This crisis resulted from a dispersed organizational structure that was in place for cost-cutting reasons that allowed the airline to rapidly expand at an unprecedented rate (Nance, 2007). These cost-efficient measures caused the airline to value profit over people by refusing to cancel flights due to the potential storm because of the peak travel numbers during the holiday (Avila, 2007). They ultimately had to cancel over 1,000

flights, which stranded passengers for days and incurred far greater financial losses than if they had canceled the flights in the first place (Avila, 2007).

Crisis Communication Plan and Organizational Changes

Customers were outraged over the bungling of this situation. Management at JetBlue responded to this crisis with a multi-pronged approach to communicating and apologizing for their mistakes (Nance, 2007). As Nance (2007) explains in an ABC News report,

So, what do you do when thousands of people are angry at the results of such a meltdown? Put a human face on the airline (i.e., send the chairman out to face the cameras), admit what went wrong in great and honest detail, do your best to make it right with those most inconvenienced (full refunds, replacement trips, personal apologies, etc.), and then go on every radio and television show you can find to explain how your human system glitched and what systemic changes you're going to make (without blaming only individuals or letting the heads roll) in order that it never happens again. (para. 6)

The airline issued a formal letter of apology with an accompanying video of David Neeleman introducing himself and outlining a plan from the airline to ensure that JetBlue customers would never experience a crisis of this magnitude again (Neeleman, 2007).

Another strategy that the organization employed was issuing a "Customer Bill of Rights" (Neeleman, 2007). The Customer Bill of Rights, which is found on the website, states,

JetBlue is dedicated to inspiring humanity. We strive to make every part of your experience as simple and as pleasant as possible. But we know there can be times when things do not go as planned. If you're inconvenienced as a result, we think it is important that you know exactly what you can expect from us. That's why we created our Customer Bill of Rights. These Rights will always be subject to the highest level of safety and security for our customers and crewmembers. (JetBlue Airways, 2022, para. 1)

In this Bill of Rights, the company describes at length about compensation for cancellations, delays, and onboard flight groundings (JetBlue Airways, 2022). It also describes all the services promised to customers who travel with JetBlue, which include in-flight entertainment, a best fare guarantee, and a carry-on bag guarantee (JetBlue Airways, 2022). This acknowledges the fallibility of the airline and attempts to provide answers in preparation for the worst-case scenario. It issues a clear promise to customers and was meant to instill customer confidence when booking a flight with them (Hanna, 2008).

It must be noted that Neeleman was ultimately forced to resign his role at JetBlue by the Board of Directors a few months after the crisis in May (Isidore, 2007). Although the Board kept Neeleman's strategic plan in place and his attempts at reparations were generally well-received, it was believed that he was forced to resign due to the crisis and the Board's disapproval of Neeleman's handling of it (Breitfelder & George, 2011; Isidore, 2007). The Board did, however, retain Neeleman as chair of the company, allowing him to remain in some capacity (Isidore, 2007). He was, however, removed soon after this (Murphy, 2019). A formal statement discussing the cause for this move was never issued. The Board only stated that they had been considering this move for a while before the crisis occurred (Murphy, 2019). Neeleman, however, was convinced that the Board's decision was a result of the crisis (Isidore, 2007).

Emma Watson's Performative Allyship Accusations 2020

Emma Watson is a well-known film actress and humanitarian who issued a statement of reparations in 2020. This statement was issued after she was accused of performative allyship for a social media post during the 2020 Black Lives Matter

protests. This follow-up statement was issued on Twitter and was well-publicized as a result. This statement was released after the backlash and was noted to be a post that she had been working on drafting prior to the backlash. This statement, however, is largely perceived as in partial response to the backlash. The research for this case study will rely on news articles, social media posts, and publicly available discussions on this topic.

Emma Watson's Background

Emma Watson was born in Paris, France in 1990 to British parents, who returned to Oxfordshire, England when she was five (Blasberg, 2017). Watson first appeared in movies at the age of ten as Hermione Granger in the *Harry Potter* franchise, which is, perhaps, what she is best known for (Blasberg, 2017). Her character is often described as a feminist symbol, appearing on protest posters, in metaphors for the importance of female empowerment, and as an encouragement to defy the tropes that female characters are often relegated to (Gray, 2017). Hermione's appeal is described by J. K. Rowling, the author of the *Harry Potter* series, as

...rooted in her ability to be a stand-in for smart, hard-working girls — girls who yearned to see those qualities rewarded and valued in a world that still largely determines the worth of women and girls by their looks. As a girl who grew up being infinitely more confident in my academic and oratory abilities than my physical skills or looks, reading about Hermione was a form of wish fulfillment. What a world it would be if the smart girl got to save the day standing shoulder-to-shoulder with her male peers, and be celebrated for her accomplishments. (Gray, 2017, para. 12)

There are many similarities between Watson and the character that she portrayed over the course of eight movies (Shamsian, 2016). Watson explains in Shamsian's (2016) article that,

At first I was really trying to say, "I'm not like Hermione. I'm into fashion, and I'm much cooler than she is"... And then I came to a place of acceptance. Actually, we do have a lot in common. There are obviously

differences, but there are a lot of ways that I'm very similar. And I stopped fighting that! (para. 2)

Watson is also known for her role in Disney's live-action adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast*, which was largely regarded as a role that resonated with Watson. In a Vanity Fair article, Gloria Steinem, a giant in the world of feminism and a close personal friend of Watson, was quoted as saying of Watson's portrayal of Belle that

It was fascinating that her activism could be so well mirrored by the film," Steinem says, noting that Belle uses—you guessed it, again—reading as a way to expand her world. "It's this love of literature that first bonds the Beauty to the Beast, and also what develops the entire story." (Blasberg, 2017, para. 27)

In addition to acting, Watson graduated from Brown University in 2014 with a bachelor's degree in English Literature (Derschowitz, 2014). Watson was concerned about ensuring that she pursued an education in addition to her acting, being intentional about choosing roles that resonated with her values (Gray, 2017). In *Beauty and the Beast*, Belle is portrayed as an intelligent inventor and activist who uses her intelligence, like the Hermione character in Harry Potter. These characters are reflections of Watson's personal values (Blasberg, 2017).

Past Ally Work

Watson has also been an outspoken advocate for many equality-driven causes, illustrating a desire to utilize her platform of fame for humanitarian causes (Giuliano, 2015). According to Giuliano (2015),

Watson has been involved in the promotion of girls' education for several years, visiting Bangladesh and Zambia to further her humanitarian efforts. She has also worked to promote fair trade and organic clothing and serviced as an ambassador for Camfed International, a movement to educate girls in rural Africa. (para. 8)

Ensuring equal education and attempting to regulate the exploitation of children in foreign countries has been a core part of Watson's activism. She visited Bangladesh and Zambia secretly in 2010, meeting at the homes of garment workers for large-scale retail companies to examine the authentic conditions of those workers (PTI, 2010). This was all meant to contribute to her push for awareness of worker conditions.

In 2014, Watson was given the title of United Nations (UN) Women's Goodwill Ambassador (UN Women, 2014). Part of her work was to advocate for the HeForShe campaign (UN Women, 2014). The HeForShe campaign mission is "for men and people of all genders to stand in solidarity with women to create a bold, visible and united force for gender equality" (HeForShe, 2020). This campaign is meant to act as a formal invitation for all genders to champion equality in relevant sectors. Some examples of this might include normalizing women in sports and men expressing their emotions (HeForShe, 2020). It also attempts to remove the negative associations with the term "feminism" (Blasberg, 2017). Feminism can broadly be defined as a human rights issue that allows all genders to recognize that there is a problem in society with equality and the desire to do better (Adichie, 2013). Adichie (2013) explains that feminism is often associated with hatred of men, the desire to disadvantage or disparage one gender to strengthen another, or the emasculation of men to assert feminine dominance. The connotations associated with feminism have caused many who actually do believe in the cause to oppose it (HeForShe, 2020). Watson delivered several speeches that called all genders to recognize that the problems of their fellow person were also their problem, hence the name HeForShe.

Accusations of Performative Allyship in 2020

During the Black Lives Matter protests in the Summer of 2020, many celebrities participated in something called “Blackout Tuesday.” This was initially started as an effort to “pause” the release of new music so as not to distract from the publicity of the protests (Coscarelli, 2020). This led many celebrities, organizations, and leaders to post a black square on their social media platforms with the tag #blacklivesmatter. This movement was largely derided as a performative attempt at allyship and solidarity which allowed many to not actively speak out against racism and was perceived as the bare minimum for action (Coscarelli, 2020). Additionally, the use of the hashtag inadvertently muted many of those who were posting meaningful information about the protests and the movement, subverting and undermining the cause. Further, the original creators of the initiative, Jamila Thomas and Brianna Agyemang, were not acknowledged for the initiative, subsequently appropriating the cause that two Black women started (Coscarelli, 2020).

Emma Watson took part in Blackout Tuesday, by posting three photos of black squares on her feed. Accompanying these pictures were the hashtags “#blackouttuesday #theshowmustbepaused #amplifymelanatedvoices #amplifyblackvoices” (Watson, 2020). Due to the largely controversial and somewhat counterproductive nature of this form of protest, many accused Watson of performative allyship. The black squares that she posted were also edited to include a white border, and many claimed that this signaled her concern for her social media aesthetic over a concern for the actual cause (Singh, 2020). Watson had additionally failed to post or directly speak out about the Black Lives Matter protests to that point. These two concerns led to widespread criticism and a call for the

canceling of the actress which further obfuscated the actual stories of Black Lives Matter protesters (McNamara, 2020).

Watson quickly issued several statements of seeming apology and reparation. She acknowledged the topical concerns of her accusers, remedied her process by posting several links to fundraising efforts for the Black Lives Matter movement, and attempted to remedy her relationship with the hurt parties by explicitly acknowledging her privilege and the alignment of her values and beliefs with the identity of the protesters. Although her statement addressed many of the concerns that people raised about her initial post, she made a notation claiming that these statements were drafted beforehand and were not a reactionary statement.

Imola Grand Prix Controversy of 2022

Wolff's apology on behalf of the Mercedes Formula 1 racing team to Sir Lewis Hamilton after the driver lost the Imola Grand Prix, finishing in thirteenth place, will be discussed. This apology occurred over a radio transmission after the loss of the race. It specifically addressed the loss that Hamilton experienced and blamed the loss on the issues with the car, rather than the skill of the driver. Wolff immediately offered an apology before the drivers exited the track, ensuring that the transmission would be heard by the general public. The research for this case study will rely on news articles, fan forums, social media, and publicized experiences from those who worked within the organizational context.

Formula 1 Background and Context

Formula 1 is a prestigious international racing competition that formally began in 1950 with the first world championship (Formula 1, 2022a). According to the official

Formula 1 (2022a) website, “the 2019 FIA Formula One World Championship runs from March to December and spans 21 races in 21 countries across four continents.” There are currently ten teams that participate in Formula 1: Mercedes, Ferrari, Red Bull Racing, McLaren, Haas F1 Team, AlphaTauri, Alfa Romeo, Alpine, Aston Martin, and Williams (Formula 1, 2022b). Each team has two primary drivers that compete in a series of races, securing points for their team that will determine a winner at the end of the season. Unique to this sport, teams not only compete against other teams but also against each other as there is an individual winner and a team winner at the end of the season (Hamilton & Brawn, 2020).

Formula 1 is governed by the Fédération Internationale de l’Automobile (the FIA) which was founded in 1904 to ensure the safety of the drivers and create rules to govern the sport (FIA, 2022). According to the FIA’s (2022) website,

The FIA’s involvement in motor sport is almost as old as the automobile itself. With city-to-city racing becoming popular in the early 20th century, but with no rules governing safety or fair competition, the Automobile Club de France allied itself with 12 clubs from around the world to form the Association Internationale des Automobile Clubs Reconnus, the direct antecedent of the FIA. (para. 4)

The FIA oversees a multitude of racing sports, which include Formula 1 racing, Formula 2 racing, Formula 3 racing, the World Endurance Championships, RallyCross, and the World Touring Car Championships (FIA, 2022). Formula 2 and Formula 3 racing were created to limit the number of drivers participating in Formula 1 to address safety concerns, as well as to act as a tiered “proving ground” that drivers could utilize to essentially audition for a spot on a Formula 1 team (FIA, 2017). This implies that Formula 1 is the pinnacle of racing in these circuits and is the sport that most drivers hope to eventually find themselves in (Hamilton & Brawn, 2020).

Formula 1, although previously popular, especially internationally, has received a resurgence of interest and attention due to a recent docuseries released on Netflix called *Drive to Survive* (Battan, 2022). In a New York Times article detailing the impact of the Netflix series on the sport, Schoenfeld (2022) states that

Like all reality TV, “Drive to Survive” structures its episodes around emotional plotlines. It benefits from the almost preternatural competitiveness of the drivers and team executives, and the unusual access that the show has negotiated with the sport, punctuated by the occasional fiery crash. It can seem more like a soap opera than a sports show, a real-world “Friday Night Lights.” Except just when the narrative starts to flag, cars suddenly scream down a straightaway at 200 miles an hour. With a boost from the bingeing of competition starved viewers during the pandemic, it has nudged Formula 1 into the United States mass market. (para. 23)

The emotional appeals have sparked the fascination of many with the sports and lives of the drivers, boosting the ratings and revenue for the sport but also leading to the Americanization of a previously euro-centric sport (Schoenfeld, 2022). Many have voiced concerns over this move, stating that some of the decisions being made within the field are influenced by generating entertainment value, causing the loss of credibility within the governing body (Battan, 2022; Schoenfeld, 2022; Smith, 2021).

Mercedes Background

The Mercedes AMG Petronas racing team, referred to in short as Mercedes, was built on the former AMG team, which was founded in 1967 by engineers Hans Werner Aufrecht and Erhard Melcher (Petronas, 2014). The united racing team later partnered with Petronas, a Malaysian gas and oil company since 2010 (Petronas, 2014). The team boasts eight Constructors’ and seven Drivers’ World Championships, claiming “an unparalleled track record in the pinnacle of motorsport” (Petronas, 2014). Their base is in

Brackley, United Kingdom and their first formal team entry using a Mercedes motor is listed as 1970 (Formula 1, 2022b).

Their principal drivers are currently Sir Lewis Hamilton and George Russell. Hamilton, the veteran driver, has participated in and entered 302 Grand Prix's, won seven world championships, and is seen as a trailblazer in the sport (Heath, 2022). Hamilton is not only an advocate for diversity within the sport but is also known for his love of fashion and willingness to challenge the authority of the FIA (Heath, 2022). Heath (2022) describes a recent situation where Hamilton was instructed not to wear any jewelry while racing, the FIA citing a rule from 2005 that had never previously been enforced. Heath (2022) describes Hamilton's response, stating that he

attended a press conference before the Miami Grand Prix in May wearing—in an act of playful mockery and protest—rings on every finger, multiple chains, and three watches. “I just put on as much as I could,” he says. He announced that, if need be, he would refuse to race rather than remove his race-day jewelry, and also upped the ante—and sent the internet bubbling—with this comment: “As I said, I can't remove at least two of them. One, I can't really explain where it is.” (para. 8)

George Russell is newer to the team, having previously driven for Williams Racing (Smith, 2021). Smith (2021) explains that

Russell moved into Formula 1 with Williams, which uses Mercedes engines, in 2019. The team finished last in the championship for his first two seasons as it struggled with an uncompetitive car. Russell did not score any points for Williams until this year's Hungarian Grand Prix. But Russell won acclaim from his Formula 1 rivals as he regularly outperformed the capabilities of the Williams car. His performances were enough to convince Mercedes that it was time to put its faith in him. (para. 7)

Although there is inevitable competition between the two drivers, the Team Principal and CEO of the Mercedes team, Toto Wolff, believes that the dynamic will be healthy for both drivers and ultimately push them to perform better (Smith, 2021).

Toto Wolff Background

As mentioned, Toto Wolff is the leader of the Mercedes team, self-identifying as the “chief cheerleader” (Wolff, 2020). In this position, Wolff (2020) is responsible for meeting with investors and sponsors as well as being on track with the drivers, deeply embedding himself within the organization. Wolff was born in Austria to his mother who was a doctor and his father who was a business owner (Mitchell-Malm, 2021, April 4). He describes his upbringing as “modest” and marked by the trauma of his father’s struggle with brain cancer (Mitchell-Malm, 2021, April 4). Wolff explains in an interview with Mitchell-Malm (2021, April 4) that these childhood experiences shaped his approach to leadership. Wolff is known as a highly relational leader that stresses openness, accountability, and unification amongst his team. Trust and protection of those he works with is an essential part of his brand. Wolff explains that having a team to lead,

...triggers in me an instinct of ‘this is my tribe, and I need to protect my tribe, no matter what’. It triggers an emotional response in me. It’s not even something that I’m doing on purpose. I can analyse rationally what I’m doing. But I don’t know, it just comes out. This is the most important part. I won’t let anybody hit out on anybody within the tribe. (Mitchell-Malm, 2021, April 4, para. 19)

Wolff is resistant to laying singular blame on any individual, instead providing a cover for each worker to enable vulnerability within the organization (Mitchell-Malm, 2021, April 4). Wolff is often portrayed as a story of triumph over personal adversity (Cooper, 2021; Mitchell-Malm, 2021, April 4). Due to his upbringing, he felt compelled to constantly press forward and do more (Cooper, 2021). According to Cooper (2021),

He set up his own investment firm at the age of 26 and it was not long before he combined his love of finance with his love of racing and made his first ventures into the world of Formula One, buying a stake in Williams F1 in 2009. (para. 10)

It was this foray into Formula 1 that allowed those in Mercedes to see Wolff's talent and hire him to lead the Mercedes team, which is where he has received accolades for being the most successful sports manager (Cooper, 2021).

The Controversy

On April 24, 2022, the Formula 1 drivers competed on the Emilia Romagna track (Fairman, 2022). This track is also known as Imola because the track is located in Imola, Italy (Fairman, 2022). The track was initially built in 1950 and held its first Grand Prix in 1980 (Formula 1, 2022c). The track is known for being more traditional or old school, surrounded by natural landscapes, and known as particularly thrilling for its anti-clockwise circuit and iconic corners Acque Minerali and Piratella (Formula 1, 2022c).

On the day of the race, there was rain, which was a complication that prevented drivers from utilizing the Drag Reduction System (DRS) and subsequently could not increase their speed (Suttil et al., 2022). The increase in speed would allow the driver to potentially pass drivers that are ahead of them and improve their position in the race (Suttil et al., 2022). Hamilton finished in thirteenth place for a multitude of reasons which centralized around the issues associated with racing in the rain (Edmondson, 2022). Mercedes, however, was also struggling with a technical issue called porpoising within their cars that became evident during this race and were exacerbated by the nature of the track (Suttil & Straw, 2022). Porpoising is defined as

an aerodynamic phenomenon that F1 cars have started to suffer from since the adoption of the so-called 'ground effect' philosophy, where air is sucked underneath a car to pull it down onto the track at high speed, rather

than over the top of the car to push it down...The trouble is, the faster you go, the further a car wants to be sucked to the floor. And if it gets too close it can cause the airflow to stop - or 'stall' - meaning the downforce created suddenly drops off a cliff. At that point, the cars spring upwards. (Holding, 2022, para. 6)

This is a result of car modifications meant to generate downforce and reduce turbulent air to make the cars move faster. Porpoising occurs when the team “can’t control what the downforce does to the airflow under your car” (Holding, 2022, para. 15). It is called porpoising because it mimics the motion of a dolphin bouncing above the water’s surface (Holding, 2022). Both Hamilton and Russell experienced physical pain due to the severity of the porpoising which impacted their performances, specifically, the performance of Hamilton (Edmondson, 2022; Suttill & Straw, 2022).

Response and Address

After the race, Wolff offered an immediate apology to Hamilton over the team radio, calling the car “undriveable” (Hunt, 2022). In addition to this public apology, Wolff spoke about the issue to several news outlets. Suttill et al. (2022) quoted Wolff as stating,

because of the bouncing, we are not able to run it where it should run. That has huge ramifications on the set-up, on the tyre grip etc. One is interlinked to the other, and I think if we were to get on top of the porpoising we would unlock much more in terms of performance on the car. (para. 10)

Reporters such as Edmondson (2022) describe Wolff’s apology as a public acknowledgment that the failure to perform lie squarely with the car, diffusing blame from Hamilton. Latham-Coyle (2022) cited Wolff as saying that

We saw from George what the car can do in free air but we are not good enough for a world champion, not worthy for a world champion. We just need to fix the car... I think we can make a step in the understanding of the car. It’s another day, we just really need to understand more and bring development to the car which will fix the bouncing.” (para. 15)

Wolff has maintained this position, defending the drivers and focusing on learning and improving as a team to fix the porpoising issue (Latham-Coyle, 2022). According to Medland (2022) in an interview with Wolff, Mercedes has since remedied the porpoising problem, following through with Wolff's promises for improvement delivered after his apology.

Summary

The literature on apologies is dispersed and varied. Some researchers claim that apologies are always the best option, while others illustrate the potential downfalls of apologizing. The main point that is consistent across the research is that apologies are largely dependent on context, implying a deep complexity that is dependent on culture and preferred behaviors. Apologies and apologetic behaviors manifest differently and value different things, depending on the cultural climate. Apologies can address the topic, relationship, identity, or process of the conflict and should be catered to meet the needs of the culture.

This connects to the importance of authenticity. The leader's decision to select a certain set of behaviors (apologies) should include the consideration of if those actions and behaviors are in alignment or experiencing dissonance with the assumptions and beliefs of the organization (McNair, 2018). The leader must have a thorough understanding of the underlying values and beliefs of the organization by using a systems perspective to identify what the best practice is for their specific culture. Leaders must also feel authentic in their chosen method for apologizing, creating a potential dialogue about the importance of organizational fit. If a leader feels inauthentic in their apology style, then perhaps the culture is not suited for their preferred behaviors.

Part 1 The Nature of the Research Problem	Chapter 1	Introduction
	Chapter 2	Literature Review
Part 2 Research Methodology and Procedures	Chapter 3	Research Methodology
Part 3 Findings	Chapter 4	Research Results and Analysis
Part 4 Conclusion	Chapter 5	Discussion
	Chapter 6	Study Examination and Conclusions

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This study aimed to understand how leader apology behaviors manifest based on their organizational context and the leadership style utilized, identifying apology styles instead of seeking a generalized apology framework within an organizational context. The researcher sought to analyze the public apologies elicited from leaders and to examine any existing correlations between the organizational context, leadership style, and the apologetic behaviors exhibited. Past mistakes are much more accessible to public consciousness due to expanded technology (Johnson & Shelton, 2014). It is, therefore, more important than ever for leaders to have a thorough understanding of any correlational factors that influence the relationship between their leadership apology behaviors and the context of their organization. The researcher examined the cases of Nixon's Watergate apology, the NFL's Colin Kaepernick apology, Wells Fargo's apology from its 2016 fraudulent accounts scandal, JetBlue's apology to passengers and customers after its 2007 crisis, Emma Watson's address to the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, and Toto Wolff's apology to Lewis Hamilton at the Imola Grand Prix.

Research Questions

There were three primary questions asked in this case study analysis:

Q1: How do the leadership apology behaviors utilized after a conflict or transgression interact or relate with the organizational context?

Q2: How does the leadership style utilized within the organization impact the organizational context and subsequent apology?

Q3: How can leader apology behaviors potentially be classified into a style on an apology spectrum?

Approval

This research did not interact with live participants as it relied on publicly available statements or posts, archival data, and news articles. This research utilized secondary data samples, had no minor participants, posed no more than minimal risk or risk has been appropriately mitigated, utilized no deception, and had acceptable data protection procedures. Thus, an exemption approval was required from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from California Baptist University. The exemption was secured on June 27, 2022 (Appendix A). Data collection began, following the approved protocol.

Data Collection and Analysis

Before beginning this study, the researcher examined various forms of qualitative and quantitative research within the confines of academic coursework as well as independently. The researcher decided to use a social constructivist lens as it would best address the need for examining situational social settings, in which reality and the knowledge gleaned from these situations are often reliant on the examination of social interactions. Using a social constructivist lens lends itself to qualitative research. After careful consideration, the researcher selected the qualitative content analysis case study approach.

The case study approach can be helpful to employ when there is a specific area of interest that has not been well researched and can be understood using bounded cases to begin the examination (Creswell, 2004; Merriam, 1998; Morrow & Brown, 1994; Yin, 2003). According to Merriam (1998), a case is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. xiii). From this perspective, a researcher can utilize the case study

approach, if they can specify the phenomenon they wish to examine and can create firm boundaries around the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). This approach is ideal for meeting the needs of this study. This research utilized frameworks that were foundational to the creation of these perspectives, which include Yin's (2003) five components for a successful case study, Merriam's (1998) definition of case study research, and Creswell's (2004) data spiral to approach the cases discussed and examined in this study.

The researcher attained triangulation in the collection of the research by using multiple methods for examining and analyzing the data. The researcher used hand-coding for the comments and research literature to draw main themes from them, the Diction Software to examine the computer-generated *M* of the emotional tones found within speech, journalistic reporting which provides general narrative discussions and direct quotes from those within the situation, and surveys administered to relevant individuals by well-respected research groups such as Reuters and CG42. The researcher additionally attained triangulation by examining multiple factors within each of the cases and examined the ways in which they connected to and supported each other. These factors included organizational context, leadership style, the apology itself, and the constituent response.

American and Western ideologically leaning public figures were examined in this study but were not directly contacted. Leaders were chosen from this particular lens to protect from unintended cultural influences. This mitigated some of the threats to accuracy that constructs like Face-Negotiation might pose to the examination of the cases. To select the cases for this study, the researcher preliminarily examined the specifics of the case, the individual who was apologizing, and their followers to ensure

that the cases were distinct enough from each other to provide a commentary on the research questions. By looking at the specifics of the case, the researcher was able to select cases from different industries, as well as ensuring that enough data were available about the case to fully examine the details and provide a robust commentary. By examining the primary leader involved in the case, the researcher was able to ensure that the leadership style was different from others within the cases examined in this study, could ensure that they had a part in creating the organizational context, and were directly responsible for delivering the apology. By examining the followers of the leader, the researcher was able to ensure that the leader had a substantial enough base of followers so as to create some level of generalizability across the cases. The primary desire of this study was to examine the connection between the leadership style, organizational context, and apology delivered as well as to determine if these apology style behaviors could be bracketed into different themes and categories. To do this, the cases had to be dissimilar from each other to ensure proper differentiation.

The researcher utilized information that was readily accessible to the public and stored on those perspective websites where they are accessed, meaning no special permissions were required to access it. Publicly available information includes archival data, news articles, interviews, past relevant scandals and lawsuits, and social media to provide context and content. The researcher did not include identifying information for those who comment on social media; however, those considered to be public figures were identified for the content analysis, and their publicly made statements were appropriately addressed. The researcher never directly engaged with any of these individuals. These public figures were selected by the researcher based on the content of the cases, ensuring

that the cases were different from each other, and based on the amount of information available to ensure as much context as possible to create thick description. The researcher searched for themes in the publicly available qualitative data to decipher the relationship between leadership apology behaviors, the leadership style, and the organizational context to identify language to describe the apology styles within the cases. The researcher primarily used EBSCOHost, JSTOR, Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar, and Google search engine to find articles, studies, and journalistic reporting that were relevant to each case.

To assist in creating the themes, the researcher made use of the Diction speech analysis software to identify emotional tones in the apology and social media posts. Diction software is designed to determine the tone of verbal communications by utilizing a database of predefined dictionaries to process and compare the speech input to the built-in norms. It is one of the most comprehensive English speech analysis software systems on the market. This program was purchased at the expense of the researcher. Identifying the emotional tone of the conversation aided the researcher in bracketing, coding, and finding the main themes in the qualitative data.

The researcher looked at several other speech analysis software systems. Many of those systems, which include Nvivo, Knowvu, and Forsa require auditory speech to measure for inflection, pitch, and cadence. This would disqualify any of the apologies which were not delivered with the benefit of audio or visual, which is why they were not selected for this case study research. Additionally, many required exhaustive computer coding, which the researcher is not certified or qualified to do, or required a live

participant to speak into the system in real-time, which limited the forms of apology the researcher could choose.

The Diction software not only has the capacity to measure emotional tones in written speech or transcripts but is also one of the most user-friendly platforms that have the emotional language pre-coded. It did not require extensive knowledge of software coding, was affordable, and has an extensive list of articles and books in which its technology is featured in and spoken of highly. In a content analysis on strategic management conducted by Short and Palmer (2007), they specifically examine the efficacy of the Diction software when used in a content analysis case study context. Short and Palmer (2007) state

Our results suggest that Diction can be extremely useful in research involving language usage because Diction taps into difficult-to-measure “unobservables” inherent in strategic management research... Diction allows for the integration of theoretically rich word count techniques while also providing the benefits of artificial intelligence techniques that are rare in strategic management research. (p. 749)

Diction’s ability to identify the “unobservables” was the main reason why the researcher chose this software. Using artificial intelligence, the researcher attempts to better partition their biases from the interpretation of the case.

Diction software reports the “high” and “low” scores from the mean, which are derived from analyzing over 50,000 passages drawn from a wide variety of English-language texts from all sectors. It standardizes each score against its normative database and treats the word homographically to ensure that the actual intent of the word is accounted for. The variables measured were commonality, activity, optimism, certainty, and realism. The sub-tones measured were numerical terms, ambivalence, self-reference, tenacity, leveling terms, collectives, praise, satisfaction, inspiration, blame, hardship,

aggression, accomplishment, communication, cognition, passivity, spatial terms, familiarity, temporal terms, present concern, human interest, concreteness, past concern, centrality, rapport, cooperation, exclusion, liberation, denial, motion, insistence, embellishment, and complexity.

Realism is defined as language describing tangible, immediate, recognizable matters that affect people's everyday lives. Diction software coded this emotional tone to include familiarity, spatial awareness, temporal awareness, present concern, human interest, concreteness, past concern, and complexity. Optimism is defined as language endorsing some person, group, concept, or event or highlighting their positive entailments. Diction software coded this emotional tone to include praise, satisfaction, inspiration, blame, hardship, and denial. Activity is defined as language featuring movement, change, the implementation of ideas, and the avoidance of inertia. Diction software coded this emotional tone to include aggression, accomplishment, communication, motion, cognitive terms, passivity, and embellishment. Commonality is defined as language highlighting the agreed-upon values of a group and rejecting idiosyncratic modes of engagement. Diction software coded this emotional tone to include centrality, cooperation, rapport, exclusion, and liberation. Certainty is defined as language indicating resoluteness, inflexibility, completeness, and a tendency to speak. Diction software coded this emotional tone to include tenacity, leveling, collectives, insistence, numerical terms, ambivalence, self-reference, and variety.

All data is digital, meaning no physical notes were required; however, data were collected and sifted using Microsoft Word and Excel. As mentioned, the data collection was solely online, taking a naturalistic observation approach. Although the researcher

examined the social media responses to the given apology by people, they did not make note of or store the names of those individuals in any capacity. Only the content of their post was examined. Also, no identifying information, such as gender, and living location, was noted, stored, or included.

Once the major themes were confirmed, the researcher used inductive reasoning to develop categorical labels to describe the apology styles exemplified in these cases. The researcher followed the Creswell (2004) data analysis spiral model by collecting, managing and organizing, reading and memorizing, classifying codes, developing and assessing interpretation, and representing an account of the findings through understandable data. As mentioned, this research also utilized Yin's (2003) five components for case study to develop "yardsticks" for success and Merriam's (1998) definition of case study research to help create a boundary around each case. Throughout this process, the researcher implemented self-reflexivity to ensure that their lens was not tainting the data and good hermeneutics were practiced.

Summary

This case study examined the potential connection between the way that a leader apologizes, their organizational context, and the leadership style utilized. A qualitative research methodology was utilized to analyze six distinctive and public apology case studies along with the reception of these apologies within the organizational context. The researcher made use of public access social media posts, archival data, and published works that discuss the response to the apology. These data were processed through Diction software, which measures emotional tones and assisted the researcher with

identifying major emotional themes in both the apology behaviors and the organizational context. This information was stored and organized using Microsoft Excel.

The research from this study helped add to the landscape of literature and analysis of leadership apologies and their potential relationship to their organizational context, leadership style, and constituent response. It demonstrated the important role of organizational context and leadership style in the crafted apology. This research will give an account of six cases to better illustrate this point in the next chapter.

Part 1 The Nature of the Research Problem	Chapter 1 Introduction
	Chapter 2 Literature Review
Part 2 Research Methodology and Procedures	Chapter 3 Research Methodology
Part 3 Findings	Chapter 4 Research Results and Analysis
Part 4 Conclusion	Chapter 5 Discussion
	Chapter 6 Study Examination and Conclusions

Chapter 4: Case Study Findings

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand how leader apology behaviors might manifest based on their organizational context and chosen leadership style, with a focus on leaders within the United States. The researcher examined the cases of Nixon's Watergate apology, the NFL's Colin Kaepernick apology, Wells Fargo's apology from its 2016 fraudulent accounts scandal, JetBlue's apology to passengers and customers after its 2007 crisis, Emma Watson's address to the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, and Toto Wolff's apology to Lewis Hamilton at the Imola Grand Prix. As no live participants interacted with this study, it was essential to select cases where the apology or apologies were delivered in a publicly available forum and had well-documented responses. The researcher primarily used EBSCOHost, JSTOR, Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar, and Google search engine to find relevant articles, studies, and journalistic reporting that was relevant to each case. This chapter focuses on providing an in-depth analysis of the variables of interest in each of these cases, which will include organizational context, the apology, and the constituent response, by presenting the data and the results.

Research Questions

Q1: How do the leadership apology behaviors utilized after a conflict or transgression interact or relate with the organizational context?

Q2: How does the leadership style utilized within the organization impact the organizational context and subsequent apology?

Q3: How can leader apology behaviors potentially be classified into a style on an apology spectrum?

The Watergate Apology: Richard Nixon

The Organizational Context

The environment that the Nixon Administration created can best be described as capitulating in nature, as they were concerned with the good of the group over their own well-being. As such, they participated in groupthink frequently. Groupthink is a multifaceted principle that encompasses a wide variety of psychological tenets. Simply put, groupthink is when the need for harmony induces conformity, silence, and irrational decision-making (Janis, 1982). There are three conditions that Janis (1982) describes as priming a situation for groupthink to occur. The leader must be strong and persuasive, the group must be highly cohesive, and there must be external pressure to make a good decision. Janis (1982) outlines seven symptoms of groupthink: rationalization, complacency, moral high ground, stereotyping, peer pressure, censorship, and the illusion of unanimity.

Rationalization refers to an individual believing that their position is the best, regardless of contrary evidence (Janis, 1982). Individuals engaging in groupthink will often favor a specific approach and never stop to question their resistance to other points of view or why they are participating in mental gymnastics to eliminate their cognitive dissonance. A reinforcer for this behavior is if the past decisions made have been rewarded in some way, leading to a sense of overconfidence and complacency. This was evident in the context of Nixon's administration. The individuals involved in initiating the break-in and the subsequent coverup were convinced that the Democrats had intel that could potentially ruin the Nixon campaign (Graff, 2022). Graff (2022) explains in his expositional book on this scandal that those in the CRP were deeply paranoid individuals

who saw enemies everywhere. To mitigate the chances of their administration being caught unaware, they orchestrated a plan to wiretap the phone of the Democratic Party chair, Larry O'Brien, and examine their secret files (Graff, 2022). These individuals strongly believed that their position and strategy were necessary to survival and could not be convinced otherwise (Graff, 2022). In the past, they had used a defense approach, attempting to attack first rather than needing to counter-attack later (Tucker, 1981).

Additionally, Nixon had previously ordered a burglary at the Brookings Institute to secure information that might potentially be embarrassing to his administration to prevent them from appearing weak (Miller, 2017). According to Miller (2017), Nixon had specifically issued this order to John Mitchell, Charles Colson, and H.R. Haldeman, all of whom were imprisoned for their role in the Watergate break-in. They were able to rationalize their beliefs both before and afterward. The Nixon administration began to see things in concrete and polarized terms (Janis, 1982). There was a firm belief that their actions were done with the most moral of intentions (they held the moral high ground). This false equivalency implied that because the motivations of their group to secure the legacy and gravitas of President Nixon were pure, any actions or outcomes were also pure (Janis, 1982). Janis (1982) explains that stereotyping is supposing moral superiority which leads to the belief that those in opposition are morally inferior. As mentioned, the Nixon administration saw anyone who opposed them as a threat, leading to paranoid behaviors (Graff, 2022). The Democratic Party was seen as an enemy that stood in the way of enacting the values of the Republican Party.

Another core part of groupthink is the self-reinforcing structures put in place to ensure that the members stay aligned with the hivemind's purpose (Janis, 1982). This is

done through peer pressure, censorship, and the illusions of unanimity. With peer pressure, a dissenting individual that is a part of the in-group will quickly be silenced by other group members (Janis, 1982). The most obvious example of this is found with Martha Mitchell who the Nixon administration, her husband included, attempted to scare her into silence (United Press International, 1975). To avoid the external pressure that is exhibited by peers, those within the group learned to censor their own thoughts to avoid the uncomfortable questions that created cognitive dissonance (Bazerman & Moore, 2012). John Mitchell left his wife and clung to the Nixon administration when it became clear that Martha was not relenting to their scare tactics (Roig-Franzia, 2022). Martha would not conform to the administration's demand for self-censorship and was willing to face ostracization.

This is also visible with Mark Felt otherwise known as Deep Throat. Felt (1979) explained in his book that he had dissented with the administration on multiple occasions about their use of the Federal agency for political gains. This rift had caused many within the Nixon administration to call for his removal (Felt, 1979). Although Felt was the whistleblower who helped Bernstein and Woodward ultimately reveal the Watergate scandal, he went to great lengths to ensure that his identity would not be revealed (O'Connor, 2006). He confessed to his family members towards the end of his life and explained that he did not want anyone to know because he was worried about appearing dishonorable (O'Connor, 2006). Speaking out directly was not accepted or encouraged within this organizational context, leading to illusions of unanimity that prevented a robust discourse that could have prevented the Watergate scandal.

The Nixon administration seemed to be hyper-concerned with the good of the group and failed to acknowledge the repercussions that their actions to preserve that core would have on their reputations, relationships, and lives. Janis (1982) states that at the height of the Watergate crisis, the Nixon administration

spent much more time talking about what to do, but their rambling conversations invariably ended up reaffirming and extending the cover-up policy. These long conversations could be characterized as displaying collective uncritical thinking. Apparently, under conditions of high stress, the members had become highly dependent on the group for social support, to maintain their morale as well as to protect them from criminal liability through their affiliation with the presidency. (pp. 252- 253)

The group experienced an irrational escalation of commitment to the group which made them highly cohesive. Stress from the potential scandal forced the group to rely on their fellow members, insulating them from dissenting voices that might have discouraged a coverup and encouraged the individuals to better look after their own self-interest.

Nixon's Leadership Style

Nixon's leadership style can be described as Machiavellian. In a study conducted by Deluga (2001) examining 39 presidents (from Washington to Reagan), he examined the Machiavellianism of the individual presidents and found a positive correlation with charismatic leadership. The findings were analyzed by "Machiavellianism and charismatic leadership including high levels of expressive behavioral activity, self-confidence, emotional regulation, and the desire to influence others" (Deluga, 2001, p. 339). Nixon was rated as one of the most Machiavellian presidents, illustrating a strong positive correlation with charisma and strong emotional regulation to "choreograph emotions to elicit strong affective attachment and performance from followers" (Deluga, 2001, p. 354). Nixon's Machiavellian leadership style can be illustrated in two specific

ways; he garnered trust by appearing likable and he weaponized fear so that his followers would cling to him.

Machiavelli (1532) describes the importance of winning the people's trust by appearing likable. Nixon followed this principle by endearing himself to the American public. A prime example of this is found in the now infamous "Checkers Speech" (Nixon, 1952). Nixon had been accused of abusing a political expense fund and, in the first American political speech to be televised, attempted to answer these charges while salvaging his place on the Republican ticket as General Dwight Eisenhower's Vice President (Huebner, 2012). In this speech, Nixon extensively discusses his family's personal finances (Nixon, 1952). The piece of the speech that not only secured his place on the ticket but also is credited as restoring his favor with Americans is found in his discussion of their family dog, Checkers (Huebner, 2012). Nixon (1952) states,

One other thing I probably should tell you, because if I don't they'll probably be saying this about me, too. We did get something, a gift, after the election. A man down in Texas heard Pat on the radio mention the fact that our two youngsters would like to have a dog. And believe it or not, the day before we left on this campaign trip we got a message from Union Station in Baltimore, saying they had a package for us. We went down to get it. You know what it was? It was a little cocker spaniel dog in a crate that he'd sent all the way from Texas, black and white, spotted. And our little girl Tricia, the six-year-old, named it "Checkers." And you know, the kids, like all kids, love the dog, and I just want to say this, right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we're gonna keep it. (18:18)

Nixon utilized humor, his connection with the concerns of working-class people, and his family to charm the audience and endear himself to them (Huebner, 2012). As Machiavelli (1532) suggested, Nixon won the trust of Americans, and ultimately, that election, by appearing likable and relatable.

Another principle that is essential for Machiavellian leadership is the ability to strategically wield fear to manipulate followers and constituents into compliance, but balance this with maintaining a likable persona. Machiavelli (1532) explains that the hatred of the subjects makes the ruler susceptible to an uprising and can only be avoided by limiting the cruelty or harshness of their reign. They must begin by instilling fear into their people but balancing this by treating them well to show that the ends justified the means (Machiavelli, 1532). Nixon can be seen doing this by campaigning as the “law and order” president (McArdle, 2018). Nixon expertly weaponized fear of communism and lawlessness, promising to act as a strong leader that would restore and maintain order (McArdle, 2018; Tucker, 1981). Given Nixon’s impressive strides for America which included improving the economy and a stark drop in crime rates, his often denigrative attacks on opponents that were sometimes shown to be baseless, and his fear-mongering style was often seen as acceptable because ultimately, the ends justified the means (McArdle, 2018; Tucker, 1981; The Richard Nixon Foundation, 2013). With his track record proven, his followers and constituents naturally clung to him.

The Apology

To examine Nixon’s apology speech (Appendix B), the researcher utilized Diction software to determine the mean of different emotional tones found within the speech. The main emotional tones searched for were realism, optimism, commonality, activity, and certainty with 33 emotional sub-tones. The researcher included in Table 4.1 the five main emotional tones and the preceding sub-tones found within the speech placed in rank order.

Table 4.1 – Nixon apology data

Measures	<i>M</i>	Total Words Analyzed
Realism	52.8	1799
Optimism	51.5	1799
Commonality	51.4	1799
Activity	48.8	1799
Certainty	50.9	1799
Familiarity	159.8	1799
Insistence	43.8	1799
Tenacity	35.4	1799
Self-reference	28.6	1799
Human Interest	22.7	1799
Temporal Terms	19.6	1799
Concreteness	19.4	1799
Leveling Terms	18.5	1799
Accomplishment	15.6	1799
Spatial Terms	14.2	1799
Ambivalence	12.9	1799
Present Concern	11.2	1799
Praise	10.5	1799
Inspiration	9.1	1799
Collectives	7.9	1799

Table 4.1 *cont.*

Measures	<i>M</i>	Total Words Analyzed
Hardship	7.1	1799
Passivity	6.1	1799
Denial	5.7	1799
Numerical Terms	5.3	1799
Rapport	5.1	1799
Past Concern	5.0	1799
Aggression	4.8	1799
Complexity	4.2	1799
Cognition	3.6	1799
Communication	2.9	1799
Liberation	2.7	1799
Satisfaction	2.2	1799
Cooperation	2.1	1799
Blame	2.0	1799
Centrality	1.3	1799
Embellishment	0.8	1799
Motion	0.5	1799
Variety	0.5	1799
Diversity	0.4	1799
Exclusion	0.3	1799

Nixon's apology was the longest of the six case studies. It was thorough in highlighting his accomplishments as President, indirect in discussing the flaws, and generally held a friendly tone.

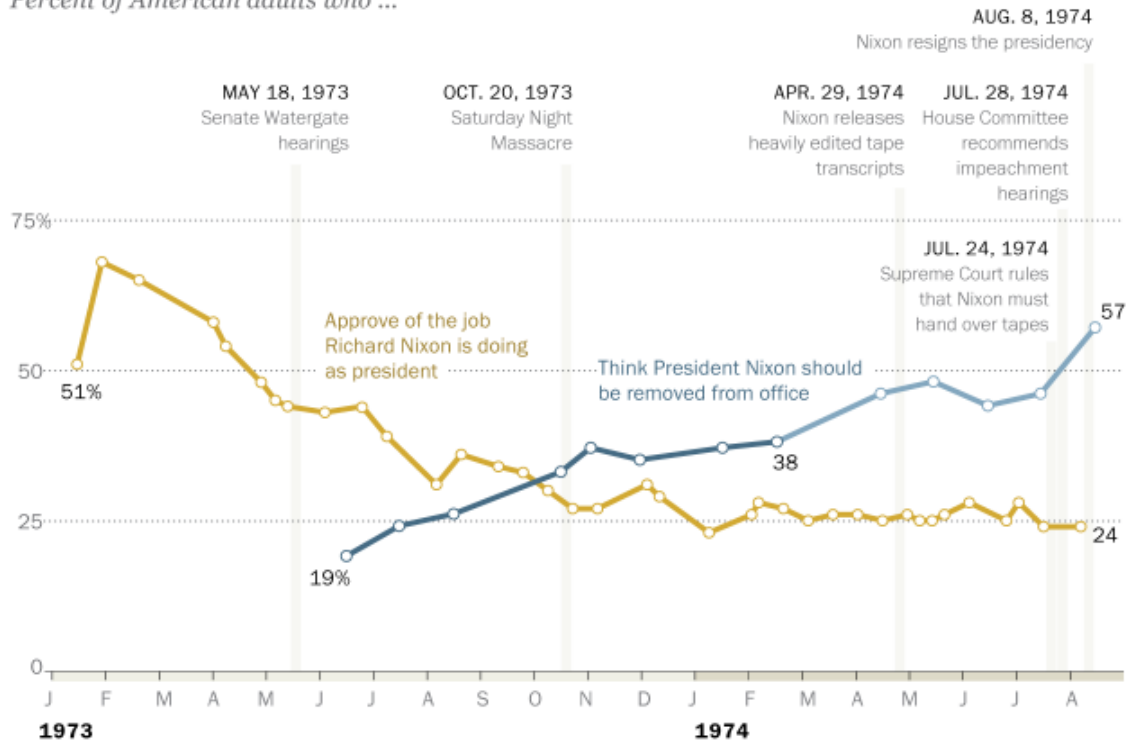
Constituent Response

As the President of the United States, Nixon had many constituents. Fellow Republicans were eventually grateful for the resignation. Many had moved from defending Nixon and attempting to launder his image, to strongly encouraging him to step down and explaining that his reputation "could not, and potentially should not, be salvaged" (Naughton, para. 2, 1974). 15 days before Nixon's resignation, there was a long list of Republicans and Southern Democrats who all intended to vote to impeach Nixon, which ultimately motivated Nixon to resign first (Naughton, 1974). The Republicans also felt a great deal of sadness and emotion at the resignation of Nixon, seeing the ordeal as necessary but bittersweet (Wertheimer, 2014).

The opinion of the American people as Nixon's constituents can best be described as degrading slowly. As illustrated in Figure 4.1, America's approval of Nixon declined starkly at the same time as the opinion that he should be removed from office increased. There was a mixture of sadness, shock, restoration of faith in the American system, and optimism for the future (Wertherimer, 2014).

How Watergate Changed Public Opinion of Richard Nixon

Percent of American adults who ...



Source: Gallup polls, January 1973 to August 1974

Note: Question on Nixon's removal from office June 1973 to February 1974 was, "Do you think President Nixon should be impeached and compelled to leave the Presidency, or not?" and from April 1974 to August 1974 was, following an explanation of the impeachment process and a question on wrongdoing, "Do you think [Nixon's] actions are serious enough to warrant his being removed from the Presidency, or not?"

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Figure 4.1 – Illustration of opinion shift about President Nixon

NFL's Apology to Kaepernick: Roger Goodell

The Organizational Context

The organizational environment developed by the NFL can best be described as avoidant. There was a distinct lack of concern for their employees and constituents, as well as a lack of self-preservation found in their minimal concern for their own future.

The NFL formally started in the 1920s with 14 charter teams and has since expanded to 32 teams (National Football League, 2020). As such, their history is deeply rooted and

well documented as being slow to change. An issue or injustice may be brought to their attention, but they have a long-standing history of attempting to dismiss concerns and avoid addressing them whenever possible.

There are countless examples of this avoidant strategy employed by the NFL which helps to establish a clearer picture of the organizational context. One such example is the enduring conflict over the name of the Washington “Redskins” football team. This name and image are profoundly offensive to Native Americans, as the name is considered a violent slur (Bowman, 2022). Although the term “redskin” did not begin as a slur, it eventually became synonymous with the “grotesque act of hunting down and skinning their ancestors’ scalps for cash bounties” which is why many have been calling for the team to change their name and image for years (Bowman, 2022, para. 11).

Dan Snyder told reporters that “We’ll never change the name. It’s that simple. NEVER — you can use caps” claiming it was a point of pride for fans and a great tradition (Brady, 2013). When the reporter explained to Snyder that the Plaintiff, Amanda Blackhorse asked if he would call her a “redskin” to her face, he responded with “I think the best way is to just not comment on that type of stuff. I don’t know her.” This showed a pattern of deliberately withdrawing from the problem, rather than facing it (Brady, 2013). Goodell consistently and publicly supported Snyder’s decision and steadfast refusal to change the name, imagery, or mascot of the team (Knoblauch, 2018). The name was eventually changed to “The Commanders,” largely spurred by the racial reckoning that occurred amid the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests (Bowman, 2022).

Another example that illustrates the avoidant nature built into this organizational context is found in a practice called “racial norming,” which was formally removed by a

Judge in 2022 (Belson, 2022). Racial norming is a practice that was utilized by the NFL to assess dementia in former players that supposes that Black players started with worse cognitive function than White players (Belson, 2022). This is a harmful and scientifically untrue supposition that has impacted an untold number of former Black players disproportionately (Hobson, 2021). Although the NFL claims that this practice was never mandatory, they actively utilized race norming and would appeal claims filed by Black players if race norming was not utilized (Freeman, 2021). The NFL has yet to issue a formal apology, as their legal settlement prevents them from admitting to wrongdoing and has largely avoided taking responsibility for their past actions and the harm they might have caused (Freeman, 2021).

Lastly, when examining the avoidant nature of the organizational context of the NFL, one needs to look no further than within the Colin Kaepernick case. When Kaepernick first kneeled during the National Anthem of a football game, he received many negative responses both externally and internally. Lockhart (2020), the former NFL Executive Vice President responsible for Communication, explicitly stated in a CNN Op-Ed that Kaepernick did not lose his place on a football team due to lack of talent, disagreements about contracts, or any of the normal conflicts that many football players find themselves losing a contract over. It was because he was seen as controversial, and therefore, a liability to prospective teams (Lockhart, 2020). The team management did not want to become a part of the controversy and Kaepernick was essentially blacklisted and avoided.

Furthermore, Goodell was explicitly warned about the repercussions of Kaepernick remaining unsigned (Strauss, 2017). In an email that read, “Don’t make him a

martyr” Goodell was warned that league and team avoidance of Kaepernick would not eliminate the controversy but exponentially increase it and prove Kaepernick’s point (Strauss, 2017). These warnings were not heeded, and the avoidance continued.

These three examples establish a pattern of avoidance within the NFL’s organizational context. This was not a singular or new issue, but rather their long-standing business model. This illustrates a behavior where they respond as the issue reaches a breaking point rather than taking preemptive action that would show concern for their own well-being or the well-being of others. When issues are brought to their attention, the NFL avoids enacting any change until there is enough of a public outcry or they are facing legal repercussions.

Goodell’s Leadership Style

Roger Goodell’s leadership style can be described as passive-avoidant. This leadership style is known for conflict avoidance and refusing to intervene until necessary or unavoidable. Goodell’s passive-avoidant leadership can be illustrated in two specific ways; he avoided addressing problems within the organization until they were serious enough for corrective action and also in the pervasiveness of bullying found within the NFL.

The NFL organization has a long-standing history of reacting to crises rather than preventing them. An example of this can be found in the NFL’s efforts to change safety regulations for players in terms of concussions and physical injuries. Casson et al. (2010) conducted a study to examine whether the increased attention on player concussions had helped to decrease the number of concussions. Casson et al. (2010) used longitudinal data to analyze the player position, type of play, concussion signs and symptoms, loss of

consciousness, and recorded medical action taken. They found that the “injury rate was lower in quarterbacks and wide receivers but significantly higher in tight ends during the second 6 years” and that the

most recent 6 years of NFL concussion data show a remarkable similarity to the earlier period. However, there was a significant decrease in the percentage of players returning to the same game, and players were held out of play longer. (Casson et al., 2010, p. 1)

It is important to note that those who conducted this study were directly involved with the NFL, as Casson was the chairman of the NFL’s committee on concussions (Associated Press, 2009). Casson had previously claimed that there was no correlation between the head injuries suffered by players and their later brain disorders (Cwiek, 2010).

During this time, Goodell was called by the House Judiciary Committee to answer questions on behalf of the NFL regarding player safety, specifically focusing on brain injuries. Goodell was reported to “not acknowledge a connection between head injuries on the football field and later brain diseases while defending the league’s policies on concussions before Congress” (Associated Press, 2009). In 2016, the NFL for the first time acknowledged the connection between head injuries sustained by players and the brain disorder chronic traumatic encephalopathy (Martin, 2016). Under Goodell’s leadership, the league did not mobilize to make changes to adequately protect players or acknowledge the harm caused to them until it was clear they had no other option (Martin, 2016). After several well-publicized suicides from former NFL players suffering from brain disorders and the preceding lawsuits, Goodell and the NFL could not avoid or evade their culpability any longer. This was still not addressed directly by Goodell, as the individual who acknowledged the link was Jeff Miller, the NFL’s Senior Vice President of Health and Safety Services (Martin, 2016). Goodell maintained evasive language.

Another passive-avoidant leadership characteristic exhibited by Goodell is found in the pervasiveness of bullying in the NFL. As found in Sischka et al.'s (2020) study, there is a correlation between bullying and passive-avoidant leadership. This is visible in the case of Johnathan Martin, a former player for the Miami Dolphins. In a report conducted by Wells et al. (2014), they investigated claims made by Martin that he had been subjected to consistent bullying by teammates which led to a psychological break (Rosenthal, 2014). The report confirms these claims, describing management as tasking the identified bullying players with "toughening up" Martin (Wells et al., 2014). They did this through a "pattern of harassment" which included insults, emotional abuse, racial slurs, and homophobic slurs which ultimately caused Martin significant mental harm and caused him to leave the league (Wells et al., 2014, p. 3). Wells et al. (2014) state that

the evidence establishes that persistent harassment by Incognito, Jerry and Pouncey contributed to Martin's decision to leave the team. The facts we uncovered do not support the view of Incognito and his teammates that this conduct was all good-natured fun among friends. (p. 4)

Wells et al. (2014) illustrate Sischka et al.'s (2020) findings, explaining that Goodell did not authorize the investigation into these claims until "Martin's departure, allegations of an abusive environment, the Dolphins' request for a league review, Incognito's suspension, the release of the voicemail, and the gathering media attention" (p. 51).

Furthermore, Goodell had met with primary investigator, Incognito, to discuss his pattern of behavior, but ultimately decided against implementing further discipline on the player (Wells et al., 2014). Goodell did not mobilize into action until the problem could no longer be ignored.

The Apology

To examine Goodell's second apology speech (Appendix C), which directly addresses Kaepernick after the first one failed to do so, the researcher utilized Diction software to determine the mean of different emotional tones found within the speech. Again, the main emotional tones searched for were realism, optimism, commonality, activity, and certainty with 33 emotional sub-tones. The researcher included in Table 4.2 the five main emotional tones and the preceding sub-tones found within the speech placed in rank order. The emotional sub-tones of collectives, satisfaction, inspiration, blame, aggression, concreteness, past concern, centrality, rapport, exclusion, and liberation were not included in this table, as they received an *M* of 0.

Table 4.2 – Goodell apology data

Measures	<i>M</i>	Total Words Analyzed
Realism	50.6	129
Activity	50.4	129
Commonality	49.0	129
Optimism	48.1	129
Certainty	42.0	129
Familiarity	143.4	129
Tenacity	54.3	129
Human Interest	46.5	129
Ambivalence	31.0	129
Self-reference	27.1	129

Table 4.2 *cont.*

Measures	<i>M</i>	Total Words Analyzed
Communication	19.4	129
Temporal Terms	15.5	129
Insistence	12.4	129
Denial	11.6	129
Cognition	7.8	129
Passivity	7.8	129
Spatial Terms	7.8	129
Praise	7.8	129
Accomplishment	7.8	129
Cooperation	7.8	129
Motion	7.8	129
Complexity	4.1	129
Numerical Terms	3.9	129
Leveling Terms	3.9	129
Hardship	3.9	129
Present Concern	3.9	129
Diversity	3.9	129
Embellishment	1.8	129
Variety	0.6	129

The apology directed at Kaepernick was relatively short, indirect, and deflective. The words “sorry” or “apologize” were not included and Goodell seemed to deflect the responsibility onto Kaepernick by expressing regret but stating that Kaepernick did not make himself available to have a conversation with the NFL about what he was protesting.

Constituent Response

Roger Goodell was a guest on a YouTube show hosted by a former football player, Emmanuel Acho (2020). Goodell directly addressed Colin Kaepernick and answered the accusations of performative allyship. Out of the 450 responses that the researcher read through, five main themes emerged as seen in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4. The negative themes included disbelief (coded to include skepticism, inauthenticity, performative, insincere or not sincere, disingenuous, and PR stunt), disappointment (coded to include weak, soft, and disheartened), and anger (coded to include calls to do better, aggressive language, name calling, disgust, calls for cancelling, and outrage). The positive themes included belief (coded to include the power of change, belief in sincerity, heart emojis, and forgiveness) and better late than never (coded to include hopeful language, thanking Goodell for participating in the conversation, and praise for Acho’s ability to engage Goodell). As expected, these reactions rarely made use of purely one theme. Most responses made use of multiple themes and were coded accordingly.

Table 4.3 – Negative YouTube comments section data

Negative Response Themes	Number of Responses
Disbelief	120
Anger	237
Disappointment	70
Total	387

Table 4.4 – Positive YouTube comments section data

Positive Response Themes	Number of Responses
Belief	27
Better Late than Never	56
Total	63

Wells Fargo Apology: Company and Tim Sloan

The Organizational Context

Wells Fargo’s organizational context can best be summarized by the terms dispersed and highly competitive. This systemic nature contributed to the rewarded behaviors that created this scandal. Wells Fargo rapidly expanded their franchises by utilizing a mentality meant to allow for the company to “be big and still act small” allowing them to grow faster (Aspen, 2013, para. 24). The structure was overly bureaucratized, which allowed for diffusion of responsibility amongst upper management as the individual stores were left to their own devices (Colvin, 2017). Although the top management was aware of the illegal and unethical behaviors within stores, they ignored

it and instead relegated the blame to a select few instead of recognizing the impact of their highly competitive and unrealistic sales goals that they expected employees to meet (Egan, 2021). Their bottom line was being met because employees were finding a way to meet unrealistic goals through unethical means (Egan, 2021).

This context drove the employees to fear for their own security and job safety. These employees not only defrauded customers of the bank but their own family members. One woman describes opening 24 false accounts for her daughter and 21 false accounts for her husband (Cowley & Kingson, 2017). Cowley and Kingson (2017) explain that these employees were desperate to keep their jobs and were assured that if they did not find a way to meet the quotas, no matter how unreasonable, they would be fired. Employees described the internal environment as soul-crushing as the only way they could avoid termination in that organization was to be highly concerned with themselves and their own outputs and not as concerned about others, making a competitive environment (Ochs, 2017). The only way to survive was to play the game (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). Colvin (2017) describes a woman who stated that they were consistently told they would lose their job and end up working for McDonald's if they failed to meet quotas.

There were also many reports of verbal and retaliatory abuse perpetrated by management on those who did not meet quotas. An employee is quoted as saying “managers constantly hound, berate, demean, and threaten employees to meet these unreachable quotas” and that “Employees who do not reach their quotas are often required to work hours beyond their typical work schedule without being compensated for that extra work time, and/or are threatened with termination” (Colvin, 2017, p. 143).

They clearly conveyed the message that the only way to ensure job security and avoid harsh punishments or termination was to outsell your peers by any means necessary (Colvin, 2017). Many organizations, especially organizations with internally competitive contexts, avoid showing any vulnerability, as employees fear that they will be perceived as weak, incompetent, or unfit for their job. This is consistent with the work hard/play hard structure that Wells Fargo seemed to adopt.

Their leader created an insular structure that did not value feedback (or warnings), as was well illustrated in Stumpf's hearing appearance before the United States Senate Committee on banking, housing, and urban affairs (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). When questioned by Congress about listening to whistleblowers, Stumpf denied any prior knowledge, although there is ample evidence that top management was made aware of this practice and the pervasive danger as early as 2002 (Shen, 2016). Many whistleblowers claimed to have been fired for reporting the fraudulent account practices to the Wells Fargo employee ethics hotline (Berliner, 2017). After termination, these employees also claim that the bank essentially blacklisted them from future employment in banks or financial advising by leaving negative comments on their permanent records (Berliner, 2017). All these factors created a toxic organizational structure that pervaded every level.

Wells Fargo's Leadership Style

The leadership at Wells Fargo has changed over time, making this case potentially more complex than the others. Although the apology studied in this research was delivered under the tutelage of Tim Sloan, the organizational context that led to the scandal had previously been developed and influenced by the leadership style of John

Stumpf, the prior CEO. For this reason, the apology delivered will be attributed to Tim Sloan, but the examined leadership style will be attributed to John Stumpf.

John Stumpf's leadership style can be described as transactional. The two characteristics of transactional leadership that are clear in Stumpf are his use of contingent reward, which can include protective nepotism for favored employees, and active management-by-expectation. It also should be noted that Stumpf and Sloan are said to have had similar leadership styles, making many feel that the two men were essentially indistinguishable (Freed & Dilts, 2016; Stempel, 2021). According to Freed and Dilts' (2016) Reuters article, Sloan was "Long considered Stumpf's successor. Sloan has spent most of his career at Wells working with corporations and institutional investors, not the retail division, where the fraudulent accounts were opened" (para. 8). Given Sloan's embeddedness into the organizational context of Wells Fargo and the leadership of Stumpf, their leadership approaches were similar (Freed & Dilts, 2016).

When Stumpf was called to answer for the fraudulent account scandal in 2016 in a Senate hearing, he is described as exposing his blatant favoritism for those within top management while blaming those working on the frontline of Wells Fargo (Kelton, 2016). Favoritism is described by Almonawer (2021) as a characteristic of a transactional leader. In Kelton's (2016) Forbes article discussing the hearing, she explains,

Stumpf tried to justify allowing Carrie Tolstedt, the former head of Wells Fargo's retail banking branch unit where the phony accounts were created, to retire at the end of this year rather than firing her. When the bank announced in July her retirement, Stumpf said she was "a standard-bearer of our culture, a champion for our customers, and a role model for responsible, principled and inclusive leadership. (para. 5)

Stumpf is regarded as rewarding the loyalty of Tolstedt and others at the center of the scandal showing blatant favoritism (Kelton, 2016). Alternatively, Stumpf deflected blame

from the unreasonable goals set and the system that enforced compliance to the customer service and sales representative employees (Kelton, 2016).

Another example of the contingent reward system enabled by Stumpf's leadership is the heavy reliance on incentivization for cross-selling and increasing the company's bottom line (Zoltners et al., 2016). Employees were monetarily rewarded for meeting and exceeding sales quotas (Zoltners et al., 2016). The quotas were unrealistically high, leading many employees to feel that there was no other option if they wanted to secure their contingent reward and avoid punishments (Colvin, 2016). The punishments within the system were severe and often enacted by an active management-by-expectation.

Cowley and Kingson (2017) describe the employee experience at Wells Fargo as oppressive and punishing to those who did not meet quotas. The employees were under constant scrutiny from management and were harshly punished or berated for mistakes or the inability to meet the goals of management (Berliner, 2017). Stumpf is demonstrated to support this form of management, as he was made aware of the fraudulent accounts as early as 2002 but did nothing to investigate the claims of whistleblowers (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). The whistleblowers were not only ignored but also retaliated against either by cruel work practices or by losing their job (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). Stumpf utilized transactional leadership in his primary concern, which was ensuring his goals and quotas were met (Berliner, 2017). He fostered an organizational context of fear and competition through contingent reward incentives and active management-by-expectations which led to negative reinforcements (Berliner, 2017; Colvin, 2016; U.S. Department of Justice, 2020).

The Apology

To examine Wells Fargo's apology letter (Appendix D), the researcher utilized Diction software to determine the mean of different emotional tones found within the speech. The main emotional tones searched for were realism, optimism, commonality, activity, and certainty with 33 emotional sub-tones. The researcher included in Table 4.5 the five main emotional tones and the preceding sub-tones found within the speech placed in rank order. The emotional sub-tones of collectives, self-reference, aggression, exclusion, liberation, and motion were not included in this table, as they received an *M* of 0.

Table 4.5 – Wells Fargo apology data

Measures	<i>M</i>	Total Words Analyzed
Realism	52.3	243
Certainty	51.6	243
Commonality	50.3	243
Optimism	50.1	243
Activity	46.6	243
Familiarity	88.5	243
Human Interest	74.1	243
Insistence	43.2	243
Tenacity	37.7	243
Present Concern	29.5	243
Leveling Terms	24.7	243
Concreteness	14.4	243

Table 4.5 *cont.*

Measures	<i>M</i>	Total Words Analyzed
Temporal Terms	14.4	243
Ambivalence	13.7	243
Cognition	9.8	243
Accomplishment	9.4	243
Praise	7.0	243
Passivity	6.2	243
Diversity	6.2	243
Inspiration	5.5	243
Spatial Terms	5.1	243
Complexity	4.5	243
Blame	4.1	243
Numerical Terms	4.1	243
Past Concern	4.1	243
Centrality	4.1	243
Rapport	4.1	243
Cooperation	4.1	243
Denial	4.1	243
Communication	3.5	243
Satisfaction	2.1	243
Hardship	2.1	243

Table 4.5 *cont.*

Measures	<i>M</i>	Total Words Analyzed
Variety	0.6	243
Embellishment	0.4	243

The apology was indirect, impersonal, and eager to move past the scandal. The words “sorry” and “apologize” were in no part of the apology letter. There was no signature included indicating who exactly was sorry, making the apology seem impersonal. The language was mostly forward focused.

It should be noted that this apology letter was released while Tim Sloan was CEO, so although this research will refer to the apology more generally by the company name, it can be attributed to Sloan. The researcher will refer to this case’s apology more generally by the company name because the apology lacks a signature. It also must be noted that additional apologies followed this one from specific people within Wells Fargo’s management; however, for the intents and purposes of this study, the researcher will focus on this apology letter as it was the first apology released by the company on this scandal.

Constituent Response

There are three categories of constituent responses that should be addressed and analyzed: the shareholders of the company, the United States Government, and the existing customers. Some shareholders of Wells Fargo filed a lawsuit against the company, specifically accusing Tim Sloan (the CEO after Stumpf) of making “deliberately or recklessly false or misleading” statements about the status and recovery

of the company (Stempel, 2021). Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway Inc. previously held a 10% stake in the bank and has recently relinquished nearly all of it (Stempel, 2021). According to CNN Business reporter Egan (2021), the fake accounts scandal from the past has had a persistently negative impact on the company. They closed 267 stores in 2021 to compensate for their financial downturn (Miao, 2022).

The United States government has had a relatively strong response to the Wells Fargo scandal. The government attempted to hold the company legally responsible by requiring them to account for their unethical behaviors in hearings and requiring them to pay \$3 billion to resolve criminal and civil investigations (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). Janet Yellen, the Federal Reserve Chair, also placed an unprecedented asset cap limiting Wells Fargo's ability to lend and requiring it to spend more to resolve its compliance issues (Egan, 2021). The hope was to send a message to Wall Street and future banks about unethical behavior at the expense of the consumer.

Lastly, the public opinion of existing customers had skewed negatively. In Figure 4.2, data is shown from a CG42 analytics survey that measured 1,500 customers' perceptions of Wells Fargo, as well as the likelihood of people staying with Wells Fargo before and after the scandal (Egan, 2016). Before the scandal, only 15% of people held a negative perception of the company, juxtaposed with an increase to 52% after the scandal. Examining the percentage of people willing to stay with or join Wells Fargo before the scandal, 22% reported that they would not join (Egan, 2016). After the scandal, this number doubled to 54% saying they would not stay with or join Wells Fargo (Egan, 2016).

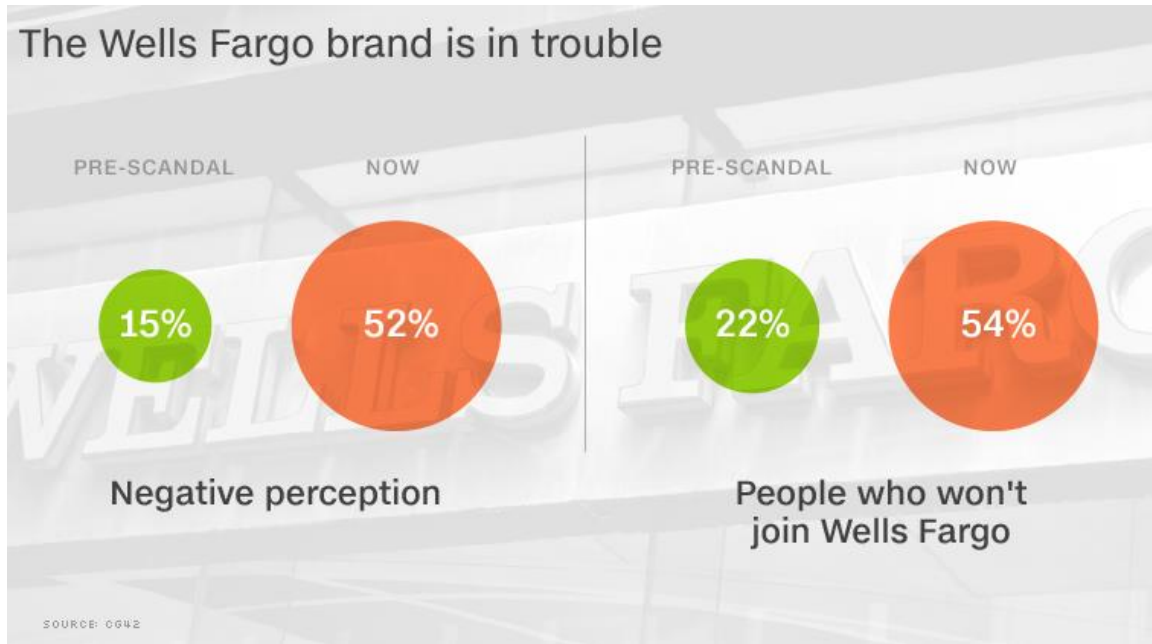


Figure 4.2 – Illustration of declining customer opinion at Wells Fargo

JetBlue 2007 Apology: David Neeleman

The Organizational Context

The organizational context developed by JetBlue can best be described as having an open system and acting with internal support and service. Those within the organization were proactive in addressing the crisis and quickly provided support to the customers who were affected, as well as utilizing image repairing tactics for future customers. As mentioned, Scott and Davis (2007) describe an open system by stating that

organizations are not closed systems, sealed off from their environments, but are open to and dependent on flows of personnel, resources, and information from outside. From an open system perspective, environments shape, support, and infiltrate organizations. Connections with “external” elements can be more critical than those among “internal” components; indeed, for many functions the distinction between organization and environment is revealed to be shifting, ambiguous, and arbitrary. (p. 31)

JetBlue's crisis was heavily influenced by the shifting prediction of poor weather and the pressure to perform during peak holiday travel, which were both external factors (Avila, 2007; Scott & Davis, 2007). Their internal system was not prepared for these external factors, and they were required to quickly adapt their organizational context to address this new known threat. They were responsive to the concerns of customers after the crisis and actively engaged with the issue. This is consistent with an open systems perspective.

Although David Neeleman is no longer working with JetBlue Airlines, his organizational mission to bring "humanity back to air travel" which the organizational structure was built upon is still visible and pervasive under the current leadership (Humphries, 2017, para. 3). According to Humphries (2017) in an interview with JetBlue's SVP of Talent, Rachel McCarthy, JetBlue's

...focus on community service, its dedication to diversity and a family feel among colleagues have all received praise from employees in reviews published on Indeed. But perhaps one employee summarized it best: "The culture in JetBlue is like no other. They really value their employees and their customers." (para. 1)

This is consistent with the service orientation that Neeleman is said to have imbued into the organizational structure (Wynbrandt, 2004).

Management at JetBlue places intentional value on equalizing their power structure, explaining that all office sizes at headquarters are the same, and priority office views are not determined by rank (Humphries, 2017). Additionally, Humphries (2017) states that managers are expected to complete tasks many might view as remedial, such as picking up trash, working shifts on planes, and helping customers with luggage. Every employee is said to be treated equitably and expected to honor each other (Humphries, 2017). In an interview with Director of Marketing Phil Ma, St. Louis (2015) quotes Ma as

stating that investing in the employees or team at JetBlue is a key part of their recipe for success. Ma states that

At the end of the day, JetBlue is able to deliver award-winning customer service because of the talented, passionate and committed crew members who truly believe in our values and our mission, delivering on both each and every day. Whether on the front lines or behind the scenes, it's the crew members who leave lasting impressions on customers. (St. Louis, 2015, para. 11)

JetBlue illustrates a strong commitment to serving and supporting its employees. They place an emphasis on humanizing their employees and attempting to truly understand how to best support them (St. Louis, 2015).

JetBlue encourages employees on all levels to participate in giving back to and serving their local communities. JetBlue (2022) discusses this in-depth on their company site stating that “Since 2012, JetBlue crewmembers have logged more than 1.3 million volunteer hours in our communities in support of their favorite causes. JetBlue is focused on ensuring diverse, fresh perspectives across all areas of the company” (para. 4). With an open system, JetBlue is hyper-aware of the external influences of surrounding communities on their business dealings (Humphries, 2017). JetBlue cements the organizational culture of serving others by encouraging public outreach (Humphries, 2017; JetBlue, 2022; St. Louis, 2015).

Neeleman's Leadership Style

David Neeleman can be described as utilizing servant leadership. This leadership style is known for the belief that one should start with active service to others first before leading (Greenleaf, 1970). Many scholars in the field of leadership describe Neeleman as a servant leader (Breitfelder & George, 2011; Christensen, 2009; Hiatt, 2010; Jarimillo et al., 2015; Valdes, 2009). According to Breitfelder and George (2011), “Neeleman had

built his career on the idea that serving others was a noble calling. He created JetBlue around the proposition that his airline would set a new standard in customer service” (p. 1). Neeleman illustrated this style in two main ways; his dedication to service or generating opportunities for service and his willingness to defy the desires of his Board of Directors to illustrate humility because it was in the best interest of the customers, and he felt he had a higher moral obligation.

In a Harvard Business Review article by Dowling (2005) she discusses the impact of Neeleman’s time spent in Brazil on his Mormon mission. He states that in his exit interview, the interviewer stated,

when you go back to your life in the U.S., everything you do will be for you. You’ll be in school for yourself, earning money for yourself, and so on. And you’re never going to be as content as you were here unless you feel like you’re serving—like you’re helping other people. (Dowling, 2006, para. 5)

He attempted to infuse this principle into JetBlue’s organizational context by creating an egalitarian system that eliminated status and power differentials as much as possible and by providing as many opportunities as possible for everyone within his organization to serve (Dowling, 2005). He led by example, often seizing any possible opportunity to assist employees with in-flight service duties and engaging directly with the customers (Dowling, 2005). Additionally, he encouraged employees to donate money to the JetBlue Crewmember Crisis Fund, which would directly help employees struggling with unexpected financial expenditures (Dowling, 2005). This illustrated a more holistic concern for employees as well as providing an opportunity for employees to serve and help each other.

Another prime example of Neeleman's servant leadership is found within the confines of the specified case. After the 2007 crisis, Neeleman issued several public and thorough apologies that sought to take full responsibility for the events that affected the employees and customers (Breitfelder & George, 2011). Members of the JetBlue board were not as supportive of this strategy and reportedly "had doubts about his actions, suggesting to Neeleman that he had gone overboard in apologizing in admitting JetBlue's shortcomings" (Breitfelder & George, 2011). Neeleman did not feel he could, in good conscience, face the employees and customers whom they had let down without offering as complete and genuine an apology as possible (Breitfelder & George, 2011; Isidore, 2007).

In Neeleman's actions to right the wrongs of the company, he felt he was answering to a higher power (Breitfelder & George, 2001). As mentioned, Neeleman was devoutly Mormon and as such, his worldview was frequently informed by this set of beliefs (Wynbrandt, 2004). Neeleman's set of ethics demanded that he and the company take full responsibility for their actions and go above and beyond to serve the community that they had harmed (Breitfelder & George, 2011; Christensen, 2009). Greenleaf (1996) describes the importance of ethicality in servant leadership, explaining that the leader must have a strong moral code of ethics and a good understanding of what values and beliefs inform those ethics. Neeleman is clearly illustrated as upholding this ethicality before, during, and after the crisis occurred (Benedict, 2007; Breitfelder & George, 2011; Murphy, 2019; Wynbrandt, 2004).

The Apology

To examine Neeleman's apology speech (Appendix E), the researcher utilized Diction software to determine the mean of different emotional tones found within the speech. The main emotional tones searched for were realism, optimism, commonality, activity, and certainty with 33 emotional sub-tones. The researcher included in Table 4.6 the five main emotional tones and the preceding sub-tones found within the speech placed in rank order. The emotional sub-tones of self-reference, past concern, and rapport were not included in this table, as they received an *M* of 0.

Table 4.6 – Neeleman apology data

Measures	<i>M</i>	Total Words Analyzed
Realism	48.83	332
Optimism	51.82	332
Commonality	48.78	332
Activity	47.87	332
Certainty	49.36	332
Familiarity	99.4	332
Human Interest	64.76	332
Tenacity	24.55	332
Insistence	18.98	332
Temporal Terms	15.06	332
Present Concern	15.06	332
Hardship	12.05	332

Table 4.6 *cont.*

Measures	<i>M</i>	Total Words Analyzed
Praise	11.57	332
Inspiration	10.54	332
Collectives	10.54	332
Accomplishment	10.54	332
Passivity	10.07	332
Cognition	9.04	332
Concreteness	8.11	332
Leveling Terms	7.53	332
Spatial Terms	6.78	332
Motion	6.02	332
Complexity	5.03	332
Numerical Terms	4.52	332
Denial	4.52	332
Communication	4.32	332
Satisfaction	3.01	332
Centrality	3.01	332
Cooperation	3.01	332
Ambivalence	2.26	332
Blame	1.51	332
Aggression	1.51	332
Diversity	1.51	332

Table 4.6 *cont.*

Measures	<i>M</i>	Total Words Analyzed
Exclusion	1.51	332
Liberation	1.51	332
Embellishment	0.88	332
Variety	0.56	332

The apology delivered to JetBlue customers by Neeleman was thorough, personable, and reparation focused. This statement is the second longest apology examined, using thorough, but succinct language. Neeleman's statement utilizes the most apologetic language of the six cases examined in this research, as he specifically says the word "sorry" three times. The tone of the apology conveys regret, humility, acceptance of responsibility, and a desire to make reparations through better service. Several resources are provided for customers to identify what they are entitled to for reparations and Neeleman signed the apology, adding a direct and personal touch to the apology.

Constituent Response

The customer response to JetBlue's apology strategy was generally positive and well-received (Breitfelder & George, 2011; Isidore, 2007; Murphy, 2019). The statement, in addition to the apology video where Neeleman introduces himself, directly addresses employees and customers, takes responsibility once again for JetBlue's failures, and outlines a plan to ensure accountability and avoidance of this specific issue in the future (Neeleman, 2007). This direct and humanizing approach combined with JetBlue's

unbeatable services ensured that the company was still favored by Americans after the crisis occurred (Reuters Staff, 2007). According to a Reuters (2007) article,

The survey, by Consumer Reports National Research Center, ranked JetBlue as No. 1 in customer satisfaction with a score of 87 out of a possible 100, beating out rivals overall in terms of check-in ease, seating comfort, on-time performance and in-flight service. The poll, in which 23,000 people rated their experiences on 31,455 U.S. domestic flights, was conducted in early February, just before a Valentine's Day ice storm in New York led JetBlue to cancel almost 1,200 flights over the following days and left passengers stranded on planes for hours. Consumer Reports said a smaller follow-up survey conducted in April found that JetBlue's Valentine's Day problems had little effect on the airline's overall levels of satisfaction, with the carrier remaining among the top-rated airlines in the second survey. (para. 3)

JetBlue still had a higher favorability rate than other major airlines, implying that Neeleman's extensive apology tour was well-received enough to repair misgivings and assuage the fury of customers.

The apology was widespread and delivered quickly, which Renner (2013) states were essential factors for avoiding the negative press. Renner (2013) states that "JetBlue's open and constant communication strategies helped them to recover more quickly from these events...Their positive performance in responding to the 2007 crisis helped reduce the threat of an ongoing unfavorable reputation and attributions of crisis responsibility" (p. 48). Additionally, Hanft (2007) states that

The fact that the airline was able to survive the incident, and that JetBlue's apology was accepted by most of the flying public, was solely based on the enormous reservoir of affection that the airline had built up thanks to Neeleman's vision of an airline that would challenge the conventional wisdom of the industry on every level. (para. 4)

This general sentiment is consistent with the literature that implies that an apology begins long before the conflict or the transgression occurs. Hanft (2007) implies that the

reception of the apology is due to the relationship that Neeleman had cultivated with employees and customers throughout the years.

Although customers responded generally favorably towards the delivered apology, there were still some criticisms and disapprovals of the delivered apology, specifically found within the Board of JetBlue and politicians. As mentioned, the Board of JetBlue was not entirely enthusiastic about the degree to which Neeleman apologized because some believed that it was excessive (Breitfelder & George, 2011). This crisis was also the catalyst for governmental repercussions enacted by enraged politicians (The Associated Press, 2007). Neeleman had preemptively decided to release a customer Bill of Rights, and politicians in the House Committee attempting to hold airlines accountable passed “mandates that airlines supply basic services to passengers stranded during flight delays. Among the requirements are that the carriers provide food, water and adequate restroom facilities while planes are grounded” (Cox, 2007). When Neeleman testified before the committee, they were unmoved by his apologies or claims that JetBlue had internally resolved the issue and, therefore, did not require a mandate (The Associated Press, 2007).

Performative Allyship 2020 Apology: Emma Watson

The Organizational Context

Organizational context is defined in this research as the created and lived culture found within the examined organization. It can include the structure, general environment, reward systems, and values. The organizational context examined for Watson will differ from the other case studies, as she is a celebrity with followers, rather than a business with employees. For the intents and purposes of this case study, her

organizational context will be referred to as her personal branding, the values held within her brand, and the general contexts of the causes and groups that she associates herself with which influenced the way her actions were perceived in this case. The researcher selected this case because the celebrity had such a strong and consistent personal brand that could be defined as an organizational context and was a well-documented example of celebrity controversy and apology.

The personal brand that Watson has built can best be defined as inclusive, aspiring, and persistent. Her messaging is often centralized around the desire to ensure that everyone feels included, receives equitable treatment, and that those with the platform and the ability to make space at the metaphorical table for marginalized individuals have a responsibility to act as allies. In an interview with Robinson (2015), Watson discusses this, in part pointing to her involvement with the HeForShe campaign. Watson states,

HeForShe is about men coming to support women for femininity and for feminine qualities, because they are currently valued less by our society. Femininity needs to be embraced wherever its found, whether it be found in a man or a woman or a non-conforming gender person. Wherever it's found we need to value it.

I'm also against racism, and homophobia, and classism, and ableism, and xenophobia, and all of it. My specific mandate is to advocate for women and girls, I'm the U.N. ambassador for women so I'm here to do that. But I also understand that these oppressions are interlocking, mutually reinforcing and that intersectionality is a really important word here. We just need to be supporting each other. (Robinson, 2015, para. 7-8)

In this statement, her brand is made clear. She desires to use her platform to encourage everyone to be kinder and more empathic to each other, aspiring toward a better future (Robinson, 2015). This mentality aligns with Scottish Philosopher Thomas Reid's (1785) famous saying, "The chain is only as strong as its weakest link, for if that fails the chain

fails and the object that it has been holding up falls to the ground.” Watson proposes that society is stronger together and encourages her followers to adopt a similar perspective (Robinson, 2015).

In addition to Watson’s value placed on inclusion and reaching for an aspired state of equitability, Watson frequently illustrates and encourages persistence in her followers. This persistence is clearly illustrated when Watson’s advocacy resulted in her receiving death threats. She describes the experience in an interview with Robinson (2015), where she explains that many did not see the relevance of her advocacy, believing that gender equality issues were non-existent in a modern context. Watson states that

A lot of people that were close to me knew gender equality was an issue but didn’t think it was that urgent. And particularly, “We live in Great Britain – this is a thing of the past, oppression of women. We’re fine. We’re good. We’ve got far enough.” When they saw that the minute I stepped up and talked about women’s rights I was immediately threatened. I mean within less than 12 hours I was receiving threats. I think they were really shocked and one of my brothers in particular was very upset. It’s funny, people were like, “Oh she’s going to be so disheartened by this.” If anything, it made me so much more determined. I was just raging. It made me so angry that I was just like, “This is why I have to be doing. This. This is why I have to be doing this.” If they were trying to put me off, it did the opposite. (Robinson, 2015, para. 3)

Watson was not deterred from her cause, even at the risk of her own personal safety. In addition to the death threats she received, there were also online threats of posting hacked nude photos of Watson as a means of intimidation (Baker-Whitelaw, 2014). Her response was to condemn the hatred illustrated online, stating that the only thing sadder than the violation of a woman’s privacy was the lack of empathy illustrated by those supporting or perpetrating those actions (Baker-Whitelaw, 2014). She was determined to continue her advocacy and felt that the reaction she received further validated her passion for the

cause. This persistence and refusal to allow her message to be obfuscated by external sources was praised by her followers (Baker-Whitelaw, 2014; Robinson, 2015).

Watson's Leadership Style

Emma Watson can best be described as using the transformational leadership style. Transformational leaders are best known for their deep connection and understanding of their followers (Burns, 1978). The transformational leader utilizes idealized influence, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation to motivate their followers toward a common goal that they believe will be in everyone's best interest. As previously discussed, transformational leaders are perceived as highly ethical so they may be perceived as an ideal to aspire to (Burns, 1978). Not only has Watson behaved in ways that are consistent with her espoused values, but she also is often seen as a role model (Shamsian, 2016). The comparisons between the on-screen heroines that she portrays, and her personal life often describe Watson as a generationally defining actress with a strong influence on upcoming generations, making her an idealized influence (Blasberg, 2017; Shamsian, 2016).

Watson also can be seen utilizing individualized consideration in her push for diversity and the value of the individual experience. This can be seen in her secret trip to Bangladesh and Zambia. Watson's primary focus was to hear the stories of the individuals working in those factories firsthand (PTI, 2010). There is also a concern with helping followers become the best version of themselves through diversity found in intellectual stimulation (Burns, 1978). Watson is seen engaging in these relationship-focused behaviors, where she leverages her social capital to cultivate the context her brand and values have created. Social capital is defined as a social group's ability to

mobilize into action by leveraging the bonds made, bridges built, and the foundation of trust within their community (Putnam, 2000). Social capital behaviors include things like sharing resources and connections. Chen et al. (2016) explains that an individual's ability to leverage and build social capital is fundamental to the highly relational transformational leadership style. A transformational leader's strength is found in their ability to relate to their followers, encourage their followers to cross-pollenate by sharing their unique experiences with each other to broaden the individual's worldview, and lead to innovative change (Chen et al., 2016). Watson is attempting to change the paradigm of the societal culture surrounding gender with the help of her followers, evidencing her transformational leadership behaviors.

Lastly, Watson can be seen utilizing inspirational motivation in her public communications. According to Burns (1978), inspirational motivation requires the leader to encourage their followers to intrinsically desire to work towards the shared goals outlined by the leader. It also requires the leader to secure a commitment from those followers to act and believe in the espoused values of the team (Burns, 1978). In Watson's (2014) speech where she first proclaims herself as an ambassador for the UN working with the HeForShe campaign, she states

In my nervousness for this speech and in my moments of doubt I've told myself firmly—if not me, who, if not now, when. If you have similar doubts when opportunities are presented to you, I hope those words might be helpful... We are struggling for a uniting word, but the good news is we have a uniting movement. It is called HeForShe. I am inviting you to step forward, to be seen to speak up, to be the “he” for “she”. And to ask yourself if not me, who? If not now, when?

In this speech, Watson articulately attempts to remove the negative connotations of the term “feminism” and unify those who might have previously been apprehensive about

identifying with that term (Watson, 2014). She appeals to the listener's core sense of humanity and empathy, appearing humble, charismatic, and endearing which are described by Burns (1978) as essential characteristics for inspirational motivation (Blasberg, 2017; Robinson, 2015; Shamsien, 2016).

The Apology

To examine Watson's apology speech (Appendix F), the researcher utilized Diction software to determine the mean of different emotional tones found within the speech. The main emotional tones searched for were realism, optimism, commonality, activity, and certainty with 33 emotional sub-tones. The researcher included in Table 4.7 the five main emotional tones and the preceding sub-tones found within the speech placed in rank order. The emotional sub-tones of leveling terms, praise, aggression, passivity, rapport, diversity, and motion were not included in this table, as they received an *M* of 0.

Table 4.7 – Watson apology data

Measures	M	Total Words Analyzed
Activity	49.63	146
Realism	45.76	146
Commonality	45.15	146
Optimism	40.11	146
Certainty	37.66	146
Familiarity	119.86	146
Tenacity	44.52	146

Table 4.7 *cont.*

Measures	M	Total Words Analyzed
Self-reference	34.25	146
Human Interest	23.97	146
Inspiration	22.26	146
Present Concern	18.84	146
Accomplishment	17.12	146
Exclusion	14.68	146
Hardship	13.7	146
Denial	13.7	146
Cognition	10.27	146
Cooperation	10.27	146
Blame	9.07	146
Collectives	6.85	146
Communication	6.85	146
Ambivalence	4.95	146
Complexity	4.74	146
Concreteness	3.42	146
Satisfaction	3.42	146
Liberation	3.42	146
Spatial Terms	3.42	146
Insistence	2.74	146

Table 4.7 *cont.*

Measures	M	Total Words Analyzed
Variety	0.74	146
Embellishment	0.43	146

Watson's reparations addressed topical concerns by answering the general criticisms of her initial post. Her tone was relational, as she acknowledged not only her privilege, but the harm that it does to the systemic perpetuation of racism. She aligned her values with those in the movement by stating that she recognizes their hurts, and although she cannot fully understand them because she has not lived them, she is trying to. Additionally, Watson promised to, and did, post links to helpful resources that brought awareness to the stories of those being oppressed and the Black Lives Matter movement. She approached the situation with a disarming humility that made many feel that she was on their behalf. Her attempts at reparations through a second allyship attempt were generally received positively.

Constituent Response

Emma Watson's (2020) reparations were posted on Twitter through the use of images to allow for a higher character count. This is a tactic that individuals often engage in to circumvent Twitter's maximum character count of 280, allowing for a more robust statement to be released. They amassed 1,631,707 likes and received generally positive reviews, with very few negative comments. One such positive comment featured from a defender in Evan's (2020) article states, "Imagine thinking Emma Watson is a white feminist... Emma has been uplifting black voices for years when it wasn't a trend. Y'all

are trash and I am NOT here for you dragging an ally” (para. 20). Many of Watson’s constituents or followers had a similar response, coming to her defense and discussing times in the past where she had actively used her platform to advocate for a marginalized or disadvantaged group. Examining this situation through the lens of Maister et al.’s (2021) trust equation discussed in the literature review, Watson had previously been seen as credible, reliable, and connected, with a low self-orientation. This implies that she had built a solid foundation of trust with her followers prior to the transgression, which demonstrably positively impacted their perception of her apology and statement.

The entirety of this situation was relatively short-lived, and Watson did not face any discernable or lasting repercussions (Evan, 2020). Again, it must be noted that while this act can and was perceived as an apology by many followers and the media, it can be best defined as a more complete or comprehensive statement of allyship, which made reparations for the past comment. Out of 450 comments, there were five main themes that emerged. The negative themes found in Table 4.8 included disbelief (coded to include skepticism, performative, fake activist, and accusations of using a PR team) and unforgiveness (coded to include tone deaf, insufficiency, and unfollowing). The positive themes found in Table 4.9 are belief (coded to include belief in authenticity, sincerity, and her past record for allyship), overreaction (coded to include the belief that others overexaggerated and were over dramatic), and appreciation (coded to include heart emojis, thanks for more complete statement, and praise).

Table 4.8 – Watson negative comments section data

Negative Response Themes	Number of Responses
Disbelief	23
Unforgiveness	14
Total	37

Table 4.9 – Watson positive comments section data

Positive Response Themes	Number of Responses
Belief	350
Overreaction	268
Appreciation	374
Total	413

Imola Grand Prix Controversy of 2022: Toto Wolff

The Organizational Context

The environment of the Mercedes organization can best be described as a bottom-up culture that values the individual contributions of employees and requires total engagement from its workers (Mitchell-Malm, 2021, January 5). They do this by creating an environment of psychological safety where they provide for their employee's needs so their employees can work to the best of their abilities. The Mercedes team has been immensely successful in the past, leading many to specifically examine what aspects of the organization facilitate their overall success (Barretto, 2019; Mitchell-Malm, 2021, January 5; Van der Hofstadt, 2019). Most of the highlighted organizational context

characteristics that differentiate them from their competition stem from their desire to put the needs of their people first and embrace the strategy of winning together as a unit. They embrace the spirit of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is a Zulu principle that is best translated as “I am because we are” (Lutz, 2009) In other words, there is power in the we. Humans are given purpose and a self-concept because of the existence of others (Lutz, 2009). The Mercedes organizational context embraces the power of the we and attempts to leverage that power towards a collective win.

There are two specific ways that Mercedes attempts to address the needs of their employees; physical and emotional. Some of the physical ways that Mercedes provides for their employees are by ensuring each employee at the factory has a parking space, providing on-site cuisine that is loved by the staff, free drinks, and having access to a gym facility to address the employees’ health holistically (Barretto, 2019). During races, Mercedes is known for flying pillows to the racing locations for staff members to ensure that they rest as soundly as possible (Barretto, 2019). In an interview by Barretto (2019), Wolff states that

It’s about the marginal gains...It’s about putting everything together and not leaving one stone unturned, having a no-blame culture, empowering [people], even when it’s difficult sometimes when you would rather control things. I think the strengths go very deep, values that are engrained in the teams that you can’t put on a Powerpoint and say, ‘now we are empowered’. (para. 9)

This attention to detail and provision of physical comforts communicates the authenticity and consistency of the organization. They walk their talk by ensuring that their assumptions and beliefs are aligned with their actions and behaviors, as recommended by Malley and McNair (2017). Mercedes’ espoused values of placing their people as the most important facet of their organization is visibly reflected in the minute details of how

they treat their employees daily, satisfying the authenticity equation (Barretto, 2019; Malley & McNair, 2017).

Perhaps more important than the physical provisions for employees and establishing a successful organizational context is the emphasis placed on psychological safety within every level of the team. Mercedes is said to have adopted a “no-blame culture” which discourages the pointing of fingers when something does not work, instead channeling that energy into problem-solving (Mitchell-Malm, 2021, January 5). Human nature often causes people to instinctually shift the blame from themselves or their in-group to someone else, alleviating experienced pressure (Goleman, 1995; Mitchell-Malm, 2021, January 5). This behavior, however, is highly discouraged and not rewarded within Mercedes (Barretto, 2019). Designer for the Mercedes team James Allison, explains in an interview with Mitchell-Malm (2021, January 5) that

I think the team’s done a really, really good job in making sure everyone feels protected. We want to learn from the mistakes that we make. But the team’s very, very good about those, there’s no blame. And I credit a lot of this to Toto as a figurehead, who stands in front of the team and says the right things. (para. 15)

As mentioned, there is a push for psychological safety within the organization. An example of this principle can be seen in the 2017 Azerbaijan Grand Prix race, where Hamilton was forced to pit his car and lose the race because of a technical failure where his headrest had become loose (Baldwin, 2017). In interviews with the press, Wolff was pressured to name the person (Baldwin, 2017). Wolff was infuriated by this and would only say “This team has won three world championships and I will not point the finger at a single person... things will always go wrong, it’s the culture of fixing them that matters” (Baldwin, 2017).

This approach pulls from Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs previously discussed in the literature review. Employees need to feel safe to innovate by feeling safe to fail (Runco, 2014). John Owen, Engineer for the Mercedes team, explains "If you have a culture where failure, if you've done something like DAS, would be seen as a big negative for the people involved, why would they ever try anything else" (Mitchell-Malm, 2021, January 5). Mercedes attempts to provide a sense of security and safety for its employees, both physically and psychologically, so they can perform at their best and transcend the hierarchy (Maslow, 1954; Mitchell-Malm, 2021, January 5).

Wolff's Leadership Style

Wolff can best be identified as utilizing the authentic leadership style. In an interview with Here to Help, Wolff (2022) self-identifies as leading authentically. When asked how he would describe his leadership style, Wolff (2022) states "There's no such thing as leadership style. It's all about being authentic. Who you are and that's what we do. We know about our strengths and weaknesses. We try to focus on the strengths" (2:22). Although Wolff is hesitant to declare a leadership style that he subscribes to, he immediately mentions authenticity as foundational to the way he leads within the organization (Wolff, 2022). He values transparency within his organization and has a history of openly acknowledging faults within the team without directly placing blame on one individual (Mitchell-Malm, 2021, April 4). This illustrates a leadership style that is grounded in reality and quick acceptance of responsibility while maintaining a barrier of protection for employees to stimulate an environment of trust and loyalty.

The authentic leadership style is known for the genuine, self-aware, and transparent approach to leading people which establishes a relationship of trust and

loyalty. These leaders are driven by their sense of morality and ethicality which allows them to never lose sight of their core values (George, 2003). Wolff illustrates these constructs in his leadership of the Mercedes team. Wolff has a strong sense of purpose that fuels his passion, as well as his team's passion, for what they are accomplishing (Wolff, 2022). In an interview, Wolff (2020) explains this more in-depth by saying his leadership style is

all about hiring and developing the right individuals, forming a culture and team spirit around them, and then defining the core objective. And once that is defined, we leave it to each other in our respective fields to deliver on the core objective. (5:58)

Establishing a sense of purpose for the team is what Wolff (2020) believes pushes the team forward and maintains an intrinsic passion that keeps them motivated. In this quote, his value of relationships is also emphasized.

Wolff exemplifies the second characteristic of an authentic leader through his knowledge of what his values are, not compromising on those values, and behaving in a way that is consistent with those espoused beliefs. This is clearly seen in his discussion of Hamilton's controversial championship loss in 2021 (Whiley, 2022). Wolff describes his values of fairness and desires to protect those within his team, and how he felt that those values were "kicked in" based on the circumstances of that loss (Whiley, 2022). Even despite his values being violated, he explicitly states that he refuses to be bitter about the outcome or to continue to complain about it and will instead learn from it and fix it for the future (Whiley, 2022). This is consistent with Wolff's previously discussed value of avoiding finger-pointing and instead emphasizing teamwork to improve and find a solution (Mitchell-Malm, 2021, April 4).

Wolff can be seen as a consistent leader who leads simultaneously from a place of logic and compassion. He entrusts his employees to do their job without immediate supervision, encouraging a level of self-discipline (Barretto, 2019; Cooper, 2021; Mitchell-Malm, 2021, April 4). He engenders loyalty and buy-in from his followers through his openness and inclusiveness, which is a core part of authentic leadership. Wolff has openly discussed the mental health struggles and trauma associated with growing up as a child with a dying parent (Barretto, 2019; Cooper, 2021; Mitchell-Malm, 2021, April 4). In an interview with Cooper (2021), Wolff states that

There's various grades of trauma... I'm not speaking about trauma that is caused by abuse or war. But losing a parent is trauma. And everything that's linked to it, because it took a long time for this to happen. That follows me every single day. Because as a husband, as a father, as a business owner, as a friend, I just like to avoid anybody around me having the same experience that I had. (para 15)

Wolff is observably sensitive to the needs of others and the protection and provision for those under his purview. These are values that align with his behaviors, as discussed. Through the study of his beliefs and behaviors, it can be concluded that he exhibits a strong sense of purpose, values, relationships, self-discipline, and heart, which are the five characteristics of authentic leadership as outlined by George (2003).

The Apology

To examine Wolff's apology speech (Appendix G), the researcher utilized Diction software to determine the mean of different emotional tones found within the speech. The main emotional tones searched for were realism, optimism, commonality, activity, and certainty with 33 emotional sub-tones. The researcher included in Table 4.10 the five main emotional tones and the preceding sub-tones found within the speech placed in rank order. The emotional sub-tones of numerical terms, leveling terms, praise, satisfaction,

inspiration, aggression, communication, passivity, centrality, rapport, cooperativeness, diversity, exclusion, liberation, and insistence were not included in this table, as they received an *M* of 0.

Table 4.10 – Wolff apology data

Measures	<i>M</i>	Total Words Analyzed
Realism	56.06	44
Activity	54.56	44
Commonality	49.17	44
Certainty	39.28	44
Optimism	36.26	44
Familiarity	181.82	44
Human Interest	45.46	44
Tenacity	38.65	44
Present Concern	30.11	44
Hardship	22.73	44
Accomplishment	22.73	44
Cognition	11.36	44
Past Concern	11.36	44
Spatial Terms	11.36	44
Temporal Terms	11.36	44
Blame	11.36	44
Ambivalence	11.36	44

Table 4.10 *cont.*

Measures	<i>M</i>	Total Words Analyzed
Self-reference	11.36	44
Denial	11.36	44
Motion	11.36	44
Collectives	8.91	44
Concreteness	5.68	44
Complexity	3.68	44
Variety	0.84	44
Embellishment	0.29	44

The apology delivered to Hamilton by Wolff was concise, responsibility driven, and forward focused. This statement is the shortest apology examined in this research. It was delivered informally, directly, and publicly from the leader to the affected party. The informality of this statement differentiates it from the other cases, as it was not preplanned, scripted, rehearsed, or generated by a public relations team. This apology also differs from the previous cases in that it is the most immediate apologetic response delivered. Wolff expressed it almost immediately after the harm was caused. The tone of the apology accepts responsibility and acknowledges the reality of the situation but is mostly focused on moving forward as a team. He also offered an additional apology and explanation for the apology delivered after the race in an interview. Cooper (2022) quotes Wolff as stating

...we are not good enough for a world champion, not worthy for a world champion. We just need to fix the car. I had a little bit of an exchange and

said sorry for the car he needs to drive at the moment and we will sort it out and he acknowledged, so it's ok. (para. 20)

The initial apology and additional explanatory statement can be perceived as realistic, authentic, and infused with humility.

Constituent Response

The general response to Wolff's apology to Hamilton varied from positive and supportive to negative and harsh. Major themes extracted from constituent responses were hand-coded and taken from several YouTube videos illustrating the apology as well as articles written, commented on, and reposted to social media sites. Some saw this apology as a natural extension of Wolff's leadership style. As mentioned, a core value for Wolff is protecting those he perceives to be a part of his "tribe" (Mitchell-Malm, 2021, April 4; Suttill et al., 2020). Suttill et al. (2022) reported Wolff as stating, "This guy is the best driver in the world, and he is not having a machine and equipment underneath him to be able to execute and to take that" (para. 15). These individuals perceived Wolff's apology as consistent and a positive example of management protecting their talent (Suttill et al., 2022).

Some of the positive comments from fans included support for Hamilton and pointing out differences between Hamilton's car and his teammates (Edmondson, 2022; Haq, 2022; Medland, 2022; Suttill et al., 2022). Edmondson stated that it was "easy to see how their diverging fortunes were not a fair reflection of the gap in performance between the two" (para. 2). Edmondson (2022) continues to directly point to the car as the issue, quoting Wolff as saying "I have to protect him. It's not his low, it's the low of the car performance" (para. 22).

Hamilton's response to Wolff's apology was to offer an apology of his own. According to Suttill et al. (2022), Hamilton said, "It's been difficult, we all feel it as a team... At least George [Russell] got some points today for the team, apologies to everyone that I wasn't able to do the same." Russell was able to finish in fourth place, nine positions ahead of Hamilton. Hamilton was portrayed as gracious but seemingly defeated by this (Haq, 2022; Medland, 2022; Ripley, 2022; Suttill et al., 2022). Hamilton's reciprocal apology can be seen as reflective of this. Russell's response to this situation and subsequent apology were to simply affirm the issues within the car, specifically in regard to porpoising (Ripley, 2022). He did not directly comment on the apology that Wolff delivered to Hamilton; however, both drivers appeared to receive the apology well and remained a united front.

A former competitor and member of the Mercedes team known for his rivalry with Hamilton, Nico Rosberg, used his platform as a sports commentator to espouse a different perspective of Wolff's motivations for delivering the apology (Leach & Seymour, 2022; Smith, 2021). Rosberg is quoted as saying that Mercedes was

...taking the blame themselves, really trying to support Lewis mentally, lifting him up and saying, "Hey, Lewis, it's not your doing, it's really on us". That's very smart, because it's not quite the truth...Let's not forget that Russell is in P4 with that same car, so Lewis definitely had a big role to play in that poor result this weekend. (Leach & Seymour, 2022, para. 11)

This theory was adopted by a percentage of the Formula 1 audience, according to Bhattacharjee (2022). Some fans were reportedly outraged over this apology, one quoted as tweeting "Hello Russell got 4th!!!! Maybe call a spade a spade and accept that LH had a superb car + engine for almost a decade and it hid his true skill level" (Bhattacharjee, 2022, para 12). Some fans were not as upset with Wolff for offering the apology to

Hamilton but were upset that he did not offer one to Russell as well (Ripley, 2022; Suttill & Straw, 2022).

Part 1 The Nature of the Research Problem	Chapter 1 Introduction
	Chapter 2 Literature Review
Part 2 Research Methodology and Procedures	Chapter 3 Research Methodology
Part 3 Findings	Chapter 4 Research Results and Analysis
Part 4 Conclusion	Chapter 5 Discussion
	Chapter 6 Study Examination and Conclusions

Chapter 5: Discussion

This research illustrated potential connections between leadership apology behaviors, leadership styles, and the organizational context they exist in. The general problem that this research attempted to address is that the predominant amount of research on this topic attempts to find a one-size-fits-all framework for effective apologies. The field of study is not as robust in identifying the relationship between organizational context and leadership behavior. This research hoped to begin the process of bridging that gap by examining public and very popular examples of leadership apologies and the organizational context that may have been connected to the specific apology behaviors in the delivery. The researcher did this by asking what relationship leadership apology behaviors had with the organizational context and the leadership styles utilized and how labels describing the apology styles exemplified in these cases could be developed. By using a social constructivist theoretical framework, the researcher attempted to construct an understanding of the knowledge within the situations and the socially created reality.

Chapter 2 provided an overview of existing literature on the broad topic of organizational apologies, an introduction to leadership styles exemplified in the cases, and the history and context of the six cases examined. This addressed the first part of the Creswell (2004) data analysis spiral by collecting, managing and organizing, and reading and memorizing. Chapter 4 examined the three main constructs (organizational context, the leadership style, the apology delivered by the leader after the scandal, and the responses from the constituents to the scandal from the cases), mentioned general themes from the cases, and used evidence to support the discovered themes. This addressed the

classifying codes portion of Creswell's (2004) model. Chapter 5 will address the last pieces of Creswell's (2004) model, which includes developing and assessing interpretation and representing an account of the findings through understandable data.

Organizational Context, Leadership Styles, and Apology Behaviors

Nixon

As illustrated in Table 4.1, Nixon utilized Realism (familiarity, spatial awareness, temporal awareness, present concern, human interest, concreteness, past concern, and complexity) and optimism (praise, satisfaction, inspiration, blame, hardship, and denial) most frequently in his speech. Activity (aggression, communication, motion, cognitive terms, passivity, and embellishment) was used the least. There was a high level of familiarity or friendliness, insistence on no knowing culpability in deceiving the American people, and the tenacity to encourage the listeners not to see this as a failure by diminishing the seriousness of the scandal in his speech. Nixon's apology is explicit in attempting to form a personal and warm connection with the audience. This is made abundantly clear in his closing line, which states, "To have served in this office is to have felt a very personal sense of kinship with each and every American. In leaving it, I do so with this prayer: May God's grace be with you in all the days ahead" (Nixon, 1974, 14:25). The charisma exhibited in this speech by Nixon is consistent with his Machiavellian leadership style. He leveraged his ability to appear likable to strategically avoid taking direct responsibility while highlighting his accomplishments. This could leave the impression that he was attempting to frame his exit by accentuating his successes and hoping that they would eclipse the means of the end.

In the Activity emotional tone (which was ranked as the lowest core emotional tone through Diction software), aggression, passivity, and embellishment would not have been consistent with the type of environment Nixon created. The main themes identified in Nixon's organizational context were capitulation and cohesion. The individuals within the Nixon administration were intrinsically motivated by and devoted to Nixon and illustrated a stunning lack of concern for their own self-interest. Nixon maintained this internal following by adopting a strategically likable demeanor which would engender loyalty. The literature supports Nixon's success in this area as evidenced by the extreme lengths that the individuals in his administration went to, which included public humiliation, incarceration, and sacrificing the welfare of their family members. His administration capitulated to his needs, viewing relationship maintenance with the President, and protecting the President's image as the most crucial goals, which Wilmut and Hocker (2017) describe as obliging behavior. Nixon was a strong and persuasive Machiavellian leader, his team was highly cohesive, and there was external pressure to make good decisions that would ensure the legacy and re-election of their leader. All these factors contributed to the groupthink that stimulated the administration's capitulation towards their leader.

Goodell

As illustrated in Table 4.2, Goodell utilized the emotional tones of Realism and Activity most in his short apology to Kaepernick. Goodell utilized Certainty (tenacity, leveling terms, collectives, insistence, numerical terms, ambivalence, self-reference, and variety) the least. According to Diction software, there were high levels of familiarity and human interest in the emotional tone of his statement. This was expected as a large

portion of Goodell's apology contained the names of other Black players who had protested with Kaepernick that he had met with, exhibiting Realism. The apology was authoritative (measured for by tenacity) in that he used several definitive verb forms that conveyed confidence in his tone. Interestingly, Diction software identified ambivalence in the tone of Goodell's apology. There was an inability or unwillingness to commit to the verbalization being made, which is consistent with the perceptions of the audience and the lack of certainty in the data from Diction software. It is also consistent with the passive-avoidant style of leadership exhibited by Goodell.

In the YouTube interview with Acho (2020), Goodell specifically addressed Kaepernick, stating that he wished they had listened to him earlier and would have benefitted from a conversation. This apology directly addressed the topic of concern and as mentioned, had a largely relational tone. Goodell used Kaepernick's nickname, "Kaep", while also making mention of several other Black players which is illustrated in the high activity, familiarity, and human interest scores; however, it did not acknowledge the damage to Kaepernick's career/image, failing to address the damage to Kaepernick's public image and the NFL's failure to support him through that public controversy. This is also consistent with the passive-avoidant leadership style, in that it illustrates the disconnection between the concern of the players and Goodell, who claimed to be unaware of the reason why Kaepernick was kneeling.

Goodell's apology also did not directly acknowledge the lack of procedural justice in Kaepernick's case. It instead emphasized that a conversation would have been to the benefit of the NFL. There was a subtle deflection found in this portion of the apology. Goodell initially took some responsibility for not listening sooner. This,

however, was quickly followed by a statement explaining that they were willing to have the conversation, but Kaepernick was unable to participate. This failure to directly address the problem and instead utilize ambivalent language is consistent with the passive-avoidant leadership style and organizational context outlined in this research.

The main themes identified in the NFL's organizational context were avoidance and ambivalence. The individual's working within the NFL has engaged in a pattern of issue evasion. The literature illustrates several instances where problematic practices or behaviors were brought to the attention of the league, and instead of working to remedy or address those issues, they avoided the topics and appeared to hope they would simply disappear from the news cycle or public consciousness. The ambivalence that was present in the NFL's response to every controversy, including in Kaepernick's case, is directly reflected in the tenor and content of Goodell's apology.

Wells Fargo

As illustrated in Table 4.5, Wells Fargo's apology letter utilized the emotional tones of Realism and Certainty most frequently. Activity was utilized the least by Wells Fargo. According to Diction software, there was a high level of familiarity and human interest in the apology, which was most visible in the frequency of direct address in the letter. Wells Fargo utilized the word "you" 19 times, "we" 16 times, and "us" 8 times clearly attempting to create a humanizing connection. This attempt to connect through these words illustrates a desire to appear as if they are in touch with the concerns and displeasure of their customers, accounting for the higher Realism score.

They were also emphatic in their language portraying the scandal as a thing of the past with a sense of authority that is visible in the Certainty and Insistence scores. This is

conveyed in the first line of the apology letter, which reads, “Moving forward to make things right” (Sloan, 2016, p. 83). This resoluteness continues through the rest of the apology letter, at times appearing to point to the completeness of that negative chapter, which is consistent with the high Certainty and Tenacity scores from Diction software. This is also consistent with the transactional leadership administered by Stumpf and Sloan in the importance of their control of the situation and in actively deciding when the conflict was over.

The main themes found in Wells Fargo’s organizational context are dispersion and extreme competition. There was a lack of accountability in the organizational context that was a result of the dispersion of the businesses. Each store was encouraged to run its operation as if it was an independent business, that had to meet a list of required quotas set by the main corporation. The managers within these stores utilized active management-by-expectation to enforce the main corporation’s goals. In legal proceedings, this diffusion of responsibility has been visible, as many within top management have claimed ignorance of the unethical practices that were driven by their unrealistic quotas set. This piece of organizational context notably resonates within the apology. The letter does not include a signature to indicate who exactly is making the apology statement (Sloan, 2016).

There was also a fear of retaliation within the organizational context that stimulated a compete-to-survive mentality. The bottom line of the company was held as most important, meaning a failure to meet expectations was actively persecuted and subject to corrective action, which is consistent with transactional leadership. The literature illustrates that there was no sense of psychological safety or trust among those

within the organization. Speaking up was not only undesirable and not valued, but it was also frequently punished with potentially lasting repercussions. Accepting culpability via an apology is not of much value in a structure like that and may not be received well by those within the organization. Apologies are either bypassed completely, or individuals are removed from positions of power, through firing or resignation, as an unspoken apology. As was visible in this case, the CEO of Wells Fargo resigned soon after the discovery of this scandal to communicate an apology for wrongdoing and a commitment to change without directly communicating that.

Neeleman

As illustrated in Table 4.6, Neeleman utilized optimism and certainty most frequently in his speech. The theme of activity was used the least. Neeleman's optimism is seen in the hope that the company holds for its ability to move forward and repair the damaged trust. The emotional tones of blame and denial had a lower score, according to Diction. In this apology, Neeleman avoided using language that was externally accusatory and took full responsibility for the crisis. This is consistent with the high optimism score.

The tone of certainty is visible in Neeleman's discussion of what exactly happened to create the crisis. Neeleman was detailed in this explanation and in the strategic plan moving forward, employing concrete language frequently, which is consistent with the high tenacity score. There was also a low level of ambivalence and no detected self-reference, which is consistent with the active tone of the speaker and implies a higher locus of control in Neeleman. Neeleman's (2007) desire to serve the customers is found towards the end of the letter when he states that

Nothing is more important than regaining your trust and all of us here hope you will give us the opportunity to once again welcome you onboard and provide you the positive JetBlue Experience you have come to expect from us.

This is consistent with Neeleman's use of servant leadership.

According to Diction software, there were high levels of familiarity and human interest, similar to Goodell's apology. The familiarity and human interest construct were likely the highest because of the amount of inclusive language found in the apology. The customers and their hardships were directly addressed, with the word "you" being used 16 times to describe the harm caused to the customer and the hope to regain their trust. This tone portrays equitability in power, in that Neeleman is essentially stating that JetBlue will do whatever it can to make reparations, but it is ultimately in the hands of the customer to decide when enough reparations have been made. The destruction of a traditional power hierarchy in business is consistent with Neeleman's use of servant leadership. The word "we" is used 11 times, with each use of the words pertaining to the failing of JetBlue and taking responsibility for their missteps, rather than creating a diffusion of responsibility.

Neeleman's apology has three identifiable themes; empathy, responsibility, and a desire to collaborate. The apology specifically addresses the physical and emotional distress that the incident caused, creating a tone of empathy. Neeleman attempts to address any foreseeable concern that might be raised by customers with concrete solutions and promises for reparation. Empathy is listed as essential for Greenleaf's (1996) servant leadership model.

The tone of responsibility is also present. Neeleman's (2007) letter explicitly states that

We know we failed to deliver on this promise last week. We are committed to you, our valued customers, and are taking immediate corrective steps to regain your confidence in us. We have begun putting a comprehensive plan in place to provide better and more timely information to you, more tools and resources for our crewmembers and improved procedures for handling operational difficulties.

Neeleman explicitly describes the crisis as a failure and illustrates a desire to take accountability for the inconvenience they caused the customers in a genuine and meaningful way. They provided concrete steps for repairing the harm caused to the customers with actions to strengthen the meaningfulness and sincerity of their apologies. Neeleman also signs his name on the apology letter, making it clear to customers and the general public that he is taking responsibility for the crisis and is the one making the apology.

As mentioned, the tone also conveys a desire to collaborate with the customers. Neeleman uses an equalizing tone, which eliminates any power disparities and restores power to the customers who felt disempowered in the crisis. By establishing a customer Bill of Rights, Neeleman is explicitly stating what customers are entitled to. This makes the purchase of a plane ticket seem more like a contract of service giving the customer a set list of expectations and rights, which departed from the approach of other airline companies at the time (Nance, 2007). This apology articulated that JetBlue's primary goal was to serve its customers to the best of their abilities, which is consistent with Neeleman's servant leadership style.

Watson

As illustrated in Table 4.7, Watson utilized Activity and Realism most frequently in her speech. Watson's Activity is visible in her clear communication and the active tone of voice she utilizes when conveying her desire to be a better ally by learning and doing

more for the Black community. She also specifically outlines her plans for using her platform to be a better ally by stating that “Over the coming days, I’ll be using my bio link and Twitter to share links to resources I’ve found useful for my own researching, learning, listening” (Watson, 2020). Watson’s (2020) statement received a *M* of 0 for aggression and passivity, supporting the perspective that her apology was realistic in its straightforward and assertive language without being aggressive.

Commonality (centrality, cooperation, rapport, diversity, exclusion, and liberation) was also rated relatively high. This is consistent with her transformational leadership approach, in that she highlights the strength of diversity within individuals, while also acknowledging that people need to illustrate empathy for one another by standing against injustices on the behalf of others (Watson, 2020). This is also reflected in the high familiarity score in Watson’s (2020) statement that reflects her connection to her followers. In this situation and in her past encounters, she has shown herself to be personable and relatable in her humility.

Watson’s (2020) statement has a high level of tenacity, which is consistent with her personal brand discussed earlier. As mentioned, Watson is persistent and undeterred by setbacks or judgments. Watson (2020) also had a high emotional subtone of self-reference, utilizing “I” language (including “I’m” or “I’ve”) nine times, as well as several instances of self-identifiers, such as “As a white person” (para. 2). Watson’s (2020) use of self-reference is exclusively confined to statements taking responsibility, identifying personal privileges, and discussing specific action steps that she intends to take to adequately make reparations. This resonates with the humility and charismatic characteristics utilized by transformational leaders.

According to Diction Software, the theme of Certainty was used the least.

Watson's (2020) tone, although active (illustrated in her high Activity score) in taking responsibility and in looking for the next steps toward reparations, was uncertain and lacked concreteness. In the closing portion of Watson's (2020) statement, she states "I see your anger, sadness and pain. I cannot know what this feels like for you but it doesn't mean I won't try to" (para. 4). She explicitly discusses her lack of understanding on this topic, expressing a low degree of Certainty, but promises to proceed as an active participant in attempting to create what she believes to be a more equal and just society.

Watson's (2020) statement has three identifiable themes: accountability, humility, and connectedness. The statement expresses the desire to take accountability, not only by acknowledging the lack of responsibility taken for transgressions in the past, but also by directly taking accountability for her perceived privilege. Watson (2020) explains that

As a white person, I have benefitted from this [racism]. Whilst we might feel that, as individuals, we're working hard internally to be anti-racist, we need to work harder externally to actively tackle the structural and institutional racism around us. (para. 2)

Watson (2020) continues her apology by expressing vulnerability specifically stating, "I'm still learning about the many ways I unconsciously support and uphold a system that is structurally racist" (para. 3). This statement illustrates Watson's humility, which is consistent with her personal brand and the characteristics of transformational leadership. The last theme of human connection is illustrated in her frequent reminders to use empathy when seeking to understand another's perspective, as one's lived experiences are indelibly intertwined with another's. Watson (2020) acknowledges that when one is benefitting from an advantage, someone else is being disadvantaged. This theme undergirds the others, in that she is taking accountability for the unfair advantages she

feels the system gives to some, herself included, with humility that stems from the understanding that her lived experience is just one perspective and does not provide a complete picture. This interconnectedness of an equal opposite reaction is consistent with Watson's inspirational organizational context and other humanitarian work.

Wolff

As illustrated in Table 4.10, Wolff utilized Realism and Activity most frequently in his apology. Wolff's Realism is seen in his frank address of the problem within the apology. It explicitly discussed the tangible, was delivered with immediacy, was primarily focused on addressing an immediate concern, and focused on the impact that Mercedes had on Hamilton's ability to reach a successful outcome. Wolff (2022) explicitly says "I know this is undriveable and not what we deserve to score as a result" (0:09). His statement is straightforward and blunt as he unabashedly accepts responsibility, proceeding to refer to the race as "terrible" (Wolff, 2022, 0:16). Praise and satisfaction were all emotional subtones that were absent from Wolff's brief apology, further supporting the interpretation of Wolff's emotional tone of Realism.

Activity is also visible throughout most of Wolff's apology. Wolff utilized a lot of action language explicitly stating that they would "move forward from there" and that they "would come out of this" (0:21). This is consistent with Wolff's authentic leadership style. He is an open realist who wants to focus on improvement. As mentioned before, his main priority is a forward progression for the good of his group. He is tenacious in this pursuit, accounting for the higher use of the tenacity emotional subtone. He uses vulnerability and humility as a way of establishing trust and loyalty within the

organizational context, with the hope that others will feel safe to innovate and work to the best of their ability.

Like the other cases examined in this research, Wolff scored high in the emotional subtone of familiarity. Out of the 44 words comprising his apology, he references himself twice, references Lewis twice, and references the collective three times. Wolff's fixation on creating a team dynamic where everyone feels included is visible here, as well as in the absence of the exclusive emotional subtone, which was excluded from the data because it had an *M* of 0.

Accompanying the high level of familiarity is human interest. According to Diction, Wolff focused on people and their activities in his statement. This resonates with previously discussed quotes where he describes a core part of his leadership as knowing the strengths and weaknesses of his team and attempting to leverage the strengths toward success. For example, Wolff (2022) stated "So we will move forward from there" implying that Wolff is aware of the weaknesses of his team, at that moment specifically, the car, and would use the strengths of his team to overcome the challenges (0:21). The high degree of present concern found in the emotional subtone of his apology is also visible in his verb usage. His verbs predominately focus on the immediate concern while discussing forward-looking options to resolve the immediate problem.

Wolff's statement has three identifiable themes: vulnerability, protectiveness, and emotionally heartfelt. This apology resonates with the open and vulnerable culture that Wolff established, where he separates the people from the problem to better find a solution. It was more important for him to be transparent and recognize that the problem lay with the car, not the driver. Wolff has established an organizational context where he

is open and vulnerable with his employees, which allows them to follow suit and strengthens their team cohesion. Although some of the performance issues could be attributed to Hamilton, Wolff exhibited both the heart and relationship characteristics George (2003) outlines as a necessary part of authentic leadership. Wolff was protective of his driver, recognizing that the public would likely blame Hamilton for the loss, and attempted to mitigate this response by publicly announcing the issues with the Mercedes car instead of having that conversation privately. Both the perceived intentions of his public statement, which were corroborated in his interview with Suttill et al. (2020), and the sentiments within the statement themselves appear emotional and heart driven.

Apology Styles Themes

This study aimed to examine the apology of a leader, their leadership style, and the organizational context to identify the potential relationship between them to identify language that could categorize these apology styles. As is consistent with Merriam's (1998) view of qualitative case study research, the researcher attempted to construct a reality that interacted with the construction of the interpretations of others regarding the phenomenon being studied. They then filtered and interpreted this information through the lens of their worldview (Merriam, 1998). The researcher designed a research outline consistent with Yin's (2003) five components for a successful case study.

The researcher used inductive reasoning to develop categorical themes to describe the Apology Styles exemplified in these cases. At present, there are only six Apology Styles identified from this research found in the six case studies examined. In Figure 5.1, the six Apology Styles themes are labeled as Familial Apology, Non-Committal Apology, Dismissive Apology, Collaborative Apology, Interconnected Apology, and

Protective Apology. Their connection to the specific case and leadership style utilized within that organizational context are also illustrated.

The Nixon Watergate apology and resignation speech is represented by the Familial Apology Style. The emotional tone utilized in the apology implies a desire to connect and reaffirm a relationship or, in the words of Nixon, “a sense of kinship” (Nixon, 1974, 14:25). This reflects the deeply loyal and capitulating nature of the organizational context and the Machiavellian leadership style which encourages the utilization of charisma and manipulation to appear likable, dismissing the means and focusing on the end.

The Goodell apology on behalf of the NFL to Kaepernick is represented by the Non-Committal Apology Style. The emotional tone utilized in the apology implies a desire to avoid committing to a specific stance, demonstrated primarily through ambivalent language that was tepid and vague. This reflects the avoidant and slow-to-action organizational context and the passive-avoidant leadership style in which the leader avoided becoming involved until the problem was too visible to ignore (passive management-by-expectation) and was mostly disengaged from the worker’s lived experience.

The Wells Fargo apology to customers is represented by the Dismissive Apology Style. The emotional tone utilized in the apology implies a desire to avoid appearing weak and is meant to convey certainty or finality, signaling to everyone that the scandal is over. This apology is not a conversation, as much as a directive. This reflects the highly competitive and feedback-resistant organizational context and the transactional

leadership style, which is accustomed to controlling the end goal, in this case, the end of the scandal, and does not value vulnerability.

The Neeleman apology on behalf of JetBlue to customers is represented by the Collaborative Apology Style. The emotional tone utilized in the apology implies a desire to empathize with the customer, take unequivocal responsibility for the crisis, and collaborate with the customer to repair damaged trust. The apology was almost immediate and interactive, providing the customer with a sense of power or stake in the relationship with the airline. This reflects the equality-driven, service-based organizational context and the servant leadership style in which the leader actively communicated humility and a desire to serve the affected customers immediately.

The Watson reparations statement that was portrayed as a response to performative allyship accusations in 2020 is represented by the Interconnected Apology Style. The emotional tone utilized in this statement takes accountability for the inadvertent equal opposite reaction of the system which benefits her and humbly seeks to understand the perspective of those in the out-group in order to best discover a way to adequately repair the system. The apology, although briefly delayed, was thoughtful, comprehensive, and consistent with her branding which emphasizes the responsibility that everyone has in seeking equality for those who are oppressed in any way. This reflects her use of transformational leadership through the four I's (individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation) which require her ability to see the struggle of each individual community (individual consideration), her willingness to challenge the status quo and push for change (intellectual stimulation), her charm, humility, and record of trustworthiness (idealized

influence), and her capacity to motivate her followers into intrinsically driven action (inspirational motivation).

The Wolff apology that was a response to Hamilton's loss of the 2022 Imola Grand Prix is represented by the Protective Apology Style. The emotional tone utilized in this statement takes responsibility for the issues within the race as to shield the driver and team from finger pointing and individual blame. The apology, although immediately delivered and seemingly unplanned, thoroughly established a separation between the people and the problem, in this case, Hamilton's driving ability and the car's capabilities. It was also consistent with Wolff's use of the authentic leadership style and reflects the five characteristics of purpose, values, self-discipline, relationships, and heart outlined by George (2003). He was clear in what his purpose was as the leader, was strongly identified with the values that informed his behaviors, was able to maintain focus through self-discipline in the midst of a stressful situation, had a deep connection with those he was leading, and used his heart by being sensitive to the needs of his followers. These leadership qualities are clearly seen reflected in the Ubuntu organizational context and the apology.



Figure 5.1 – Illustration of the apology styles themes identified through this research

Part 1 The Nature of the Research Problem	Chapter 1 Introduction
	Chapter 2 Literature Review
Part 2 Research Methodology and Procedures	Chapter 3 Research Methodology
Part 3 Findings	Chapter 4 Research Results and Analysis
Part 4 Conclusion	Chapter 5 Discussion
	Chapter 6 Study Examination and Conclusions

Chapter 6: Study Examination and Conclusions

Limitations of Research

The researcher made every effort to rigorously evaluate and analyze the existing literature in the field of apologies as well as meticulously collecting and scrutinizing the publicly available information on each of the cases. Despite these efforts, however, the researcher recognizes the inherent limitations of social constructivism and the case study approach. Although the case study approach is useful for acting as a precursor to more grounded theory and/or phenomenological qualitative research, it cannot provide as complete a picture as other approaches might. These studies can be difficult to replicate as they are usually case specific, dependent on the specific organizational context and interpretative lens of the researcher.

This research is also limited in the type of cases examined. The researcher specifically sought American or Western ideologically leaning organizations to mitigate the impacts of cultural differences on apologies. Demographically speaking, however, these cases also examine mostly White men all relatively close in age (Nixon was 60, Goodell was 61, Sloan was 58, Toto Wolff was 50). The only outliers are Neeleman and Watson. Neeleman was born in Brazil but was born to a White American family and was 47 at the time of the crisis. Watson is a White woman, who was 30 at the time of her remarks. Although Wolff is Austrian, he still subscribes to a Western perspective, limiting the diversity. The sample of cases had limited diversity in leadership choices and was also limited by opportunity sampling, as they were hand-selected by the researcher.

Another specific limitation of this study is that the conclusions made by the researcher are hypothetical. The conclusions have yet to be tested and affirmed in other

organizational contexts, proving generalizability. The categorical themes created remain untested on live participants. This study used exclusively archival data and publicly available documentation for its data collection, meaning the researcher did not have the benefit of interviewing live participants to better test the viability of the identified themes across contexts.

Future Areas of Study

This research was meant to act as a foundation for future studies to potentially build a theory upon. Other researchers could expand the cases examined, potentially examining apologies delivered by leaders with different leadership styles than those listed here. A Grounded Theory study could also be useful to further delve into this line of study as a potential next step. The researcher could use process-oriented questions to examine the experiences of employees within several different organizational contexts, interview the different leaders, and determine what type of apology behaviors the leader engages in. The researcher could then examine the correlations of that data improving on the generalizability and application limitation in this research.

Another option, or potentially a proceeding or simultaneous option to the qualitative study, is that a researcher could attempt to create a quantitative assessment. Currently, the landscape of apology literature lacks a quantitative assessment catered toward organizations to determine what apology behaviors a leader engages in and what that might say about the culture of the organization. This is a potential vein of study that could lead to the development of an easy-to-access assessment for leaders which could function as a tool for self-development akin to the many other leadership personality assessments.

An implication that came from the findings of this study that could be investigated further is the underlying tone of familiarity that apologies tend to use. Each of the six cases had a high level of familiarity with the emotional subtext. This might seem intuitive because leaders will often use language that emphasizes their connection to the individuals whom they are offering the apology to; however, this could be researched further for generalizability.

As mentioned, this study exclusively focused on American and Western ideologically leaning leaders and organizational contexts. This was done to mitigate unintended cultural influences and threats to accuracy that constructs like Face-Negotiation might pose to the examination of the cases. Future research can be conducted to examine Eastern ideologically leaning cultures, their leadership, and apologies. Additionally, this research could be expanded by adding a fourth research question to examine the interplay of the cultures that the organizational context exists within and connect it to the leadership and apology behaviors exhibited within the case. This potential study could incorporate the research from the GLOBE study which examines the impact of cultural and societal norms on leadership behaviors (House et al., 2014). The researcher was also limited in this study by using opportunity sampling. A researcher in the future could potentially use a different method for selecting cases or participants, such as random sampling, volunteer sampling, or stratified sampling.

Implications

This research sought to fill a gap in the landscape of apologies by not judging the delivery or efficacy of an apology and not by looking at apologetic behavior as a dichotomy of either open or closed in orientation. It instead examined apologies,

leadership style, and the leader's specific organizational context to see what, if any, correlation may exist between the three, looking at apologies through an impartial lens through a detachment to the outcome of the apology. By examining public examples of leadership apologies in America and Westernized leaning societies, their organizational context, and the leadership styles of those responsible for building the organizational context, the research did discover a tri-directional connection. Newton's principle that for every action there is an equal opposite reaction resonates with this research. It points to the interconnected nature of the organizational context, which is largely shaped by the leader, preceding the break of a scandal and the public relations apology that comes from within the organizational context.

This implies to leadership that, although frameworks for effective apologies may work within some contexts, they may not be effective in all contexts. It also speaks to the ubiquitous nature of the organizational context and preferred style of leadership. As previously stated, the apology begins long before the actual transgression occurs. As such, how this apology is delivered will likely be consistent with the previously established pattern of behavior that employees and followers exist within. If a leader would like to change the system because that system is what led to the transgression in the first place, then a good way to begin the change would be to examine how they plan on delivering the apology and shifting it to reflect the systemic change they would like to see. Leaders can act as the reset button for their organizational context. They cannot control the reactions of others or extraneous variables. They can, however, control their own reactions, responses, and behaviors. The leader can set the standard or status quo in their organization's recovery after a conflict or transgression. This research encourages

leaders to do so with a strategically made apology that can shift the tone going forward.

This research could be continued by expanding the examined cases or attempting to practically apply the findings and test generalizability.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Exemption Approval

RE: IRB Review

IRB No.: 122-2122 EXM

Project: To Apologize or Not to Apologize...What Else is in Between? A Collective Case Study with Implications for Leaders in Their Organizational Context.

Date Complete Application Received: 06/17/2022

Date Final Revision Received: N/A

Principle Investigator: Taylor Sega

Co-PI: N/A

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Mary Ann Pearson

College/Department: Leadership Institute

IRB Determination: Exempt Application **Approved** – Faculty research using secondary data samples; no minor participants; no more than minimal risk/risk appropriately mitigated; no deception utilized; acceptable consent procedures and documentation; acceptable data protection procedures. Data collection may begin, in accordance with the final submitted documents and approved protocol.

Future Correspondence: All future correspondence about this project must include all PIs, Co-PIs, and Faculty Advisors (as relevant) and reference the assigned IRB number.

Approval Information: (Expiration: Full Review Only) Approval is granted for one year from date below. If you would like to continue research activities beyond that date, you are responsible for submitting a Research Renewal Request with enough time for that request to be reviewed and approved prior to the expiration of the project. In the case of an unforeseen risk/adverse experience, please report this to the IRB immediately using the appropriate forms. Requests for a change to protocol must be submitted for IRB review and approved prior to implementation. At the completion of the project, you are to submit a Research Closure Form.

Researcher Responsibilities: The researcher is responsible for ensuring that the research is conducted in the manner outlined in the IRB application and that all reporting requirements are met. Please refer to this approval and to the IRB handbook for more information.

Date: 06/27/2022

APPENDIX B

Nixon Apology

Good evening. This is the 37th time I have spoken to you from this office, where so many decisions have been made that shaped the history of this Nation. Each time I have done so to discuss with you some matter that I believe affected the national interest.

In all the decisions I have made in my public life, I have always tried to do what was best for the Nation. Throughout the long and difficult period of Watergate, I have felt it was my duty to persevere, to make every possible effort to complete the term of office to which you elected me.

In the past few days, however, it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base in the Congress to justify continuing that effort. As long as there was such a base, I felt strongly that it was necessary to see the constitutional process through to its conclusion, that to do otherwise would be unfaithful to the spirit of that deliberately difficult process and a dangerously destabilizing precedent for the future.

But with the disappearance of that base, I now believe that the constitutional purpose has been served, and there is no longer a need for the process to be prolonged.

I would have preferred to carry through to the finish whatever the personal agony it would have involved, and my family unanimously urged me to do so. But the interest of the Nation must always come before any personal considerations.

From the discussions I have had with Congressional and other leaders, I have concluded that because of the Watergate matter I might not have the support of the Congress that I would consider necessary to back the very difficult decisions and carry out the duties of this office in the way the interests of the Nation would require.

I have never been a quitter. To leave office before my term is completed is abhorrent to every instinct in my body. But as President, I must put the interest of America first.

America needs a full-time President and a full-time Congress, particularly at this time with problems we face at home and abroad.

To continue to fight through the months ahead for my personal vindication would almost totally absorb the time and attention of both the President and the Congress in a period when our entire focus should be on the great issues of peace abroad and prosperity without inflation at home.

Therefore, I shall resign the Presidency effective at noon tomorrow. Vice President Ford will be sworn in as President at that hour in this office.

As I recall the high hopes for America with which we began this second term, I feel a great sadness that I will not be here in this office working on your behalf to achieve those hopes in the next 2 1/2 years. But in turning over direction of the Government to Vice President Ford, I know, as I told the Nation when I nominated him for that office 10 months ago, that the leadership of America will be in good hands.

In passing this office to the Vice President, I also do so with the profound sense of the weight of responsibility that will fall on his shoulders tomorrow and, therefore, of the understanding, the patience, the cooperation he will need from all Americans.

As he assumes that responsibility, he will deserve the help and the support of all of us. As we look to the future, the first essential is to begin healing the wounds of this Nation, to put the bitterness and divisions of the recent past behind us, and to rediscover those shared ideals that lie at the heart of our strength and unity as a great and as a free people.

By taking this action, I hope that I will have hastened the start of that process of healing which is so desperately needed in America.

I regret deeply any injuries that may have been done in the course of the events that led to this decision. I would say only that if some of my Judgments were wrong, and some were wrong, they were made in what I believed at the time to be the best interest of the Nation.

To those who have stood with me during these past difficult months, to my family, my friends, to many others who joined in supporting my cause because they believed it was right, I will be eternally grateful for your support.

And to those who have not felt able to give me your support, let me say I leave with no bitterness toward those who have opposed me, because all of us, in the final analysis, have been concerned with the good of the country, however our judgments might differ. So, let us all now join together in affirming that common commitment and in helping our new President succeed for the benefit of all Americans.

I shall leave this office with regret at not completing my term, but with gratitude for the privilege of serving as your President for the past 5 1/2 years. These years have been a momentous time in the history of our Nation and the world. They have been a time of achievement in which we can all be proud, achievements that represent the shared efforts of the Administration, the Congress, and the people.

But the challenges ahead are equally great, and they, too, will require the support and the efforts of the Congress and the people working in cooperation with the new Administration.

We have ended America's longest war, but in the work of securing a lasting peace in the world, the goals ahead are even more far-reaching and more difficult. We must complete

a structure of peace so that it will be said of this generation, our generation of Americans, by the people of all nations, not only that we ended one war but that we prevented future wars.

We have unlocked the doors that for a quarter of a century stood between the United States and the People's Republic of China.

We must now ensure that the one quarter of the world's people who live in the People's Republic of China will be and remain not our enemies but our friends.

In the Middle East, 100 million people in the Arab countries, many of whom have considered us their enemy for nearly 20 years, now look on us as their friends. We must continue to build on that friendship so that peace can settle at last over the Middle East and so that the cradle of civilization will not become its grave.

Together with the Soviet Union we have made the crucial breakthroughs that have begun the process of limiting nuclear arms. But we must set as our goal not just limiting but reducing and finally destroying these terrible weapons so that they cannot destroy civilization and so that the threat of nuclear war will no longer hang over the world and the people.

We have opened the new relation with the Soviet Union. We must continue to develop and expand that new relationship so that the two strongest nations of the world will live together in cooperation rather than confrontation.

Around the world, in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America, in the Middle East, there are millions of people who live in terrible poverty, even starvation. We must keep as our goal turning away from production for war and expanding production for peace so that people

everywhere on this earth can at last look forward in their children's time, if not in our own time, to having the necessities for a decent life.

Here in America, we are fortunate that most of our people have not only the blessings of liberty but also the means to live full and good and, by the world's standards, even abundant lives. We must press on, however, toward a goal of not only more and better jobs but of full opportunity for every American and of what we are striving so hard right now to achieve, prosperity without inflation.

For more than a quarter of a century in public life I have shared in the turbulent history of this era. I have fought for what I believed in. I have tried to the best of my ability to discharge those duties and meet those responsibilities that were entrusted to me.

Sometimes I have succeeded and sometimes I have failed, but always I have taken heart from what Theodore Roosevelt once said about the man in the arena, "whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again because there is not effort without error and shortcoming, but who does actually strive to do the deed, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumphs of high achievements and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly."

I pledge to you tonight that as long as I have a breath of life in my body, I shall continue in that spirit. I shall continue to work for the great causes to which I have been dedicated throughout my years as a Congressman, a Senator, a Vice President, and President, the cause of peace not just for America but among all nations, prosperity, justice, and opportunity for all of our people.

There is one cause above all to which I have been devoted and to which I shall always be devoted for as long as I live.

When I first took the oath of office as President 5 1/2 years ago, I made this sacred commitment, to “consecrate my office, my energies, and all the wisdom I can summon to the cause of peace among nations.”

I have done my very best in all the days since to be true to that pledge. As a result of these efforts, I am confident that the world is a safer place today, not only for the people of America but for the people of all nations, and that all of our children have a better chance than before of living in peace rather than dying in war.

This, more than anything, is what I hoped to achieve when I sought the Presidency. This, more than anything, is what I hope will be my legacy to you, to our country, as I leave the Presidency.

To have served in this office is to have felt a very personal sense of kinship with each and every American. In leaving it, I do so with this prayer: May God’s grace be with you in all the days ahead.

APPENDIX C

Twitter Apology

It has been a difficult time in our country, in particular, for black people in our country. First, my condolences to the families of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and all the families that have endured police brutality. We, the National Football League, condemn racism and the systematic oppression of black people. We, the National Football League, admit we were wrong for not listening to NFL players earlier and encourage all to speak out and peacefully protest. We, the National Football League, believe Black Lives Matter. I personally protest with you and want to be a part of the much needed change in this country. Without black players there would be no National Football League. And the protests around the country are emblematic of the centuries of silence, inequality, and oppression of black players, coaches, fans, and staff. We are listening, I am listening, and I will be reaching out to players who have raised their voices, and others on how we can move forward together for a better and more united NFL family.

Kaepernick Apology

Just what was going on in the communities. I didn't know what was going on in the communities and when I had the chance to sit with our players - I never had the chance to sit with Kaep. But I talked with Kenny Stills a lot. Eric Reid. Malcom Jenkins. Anquan B Boldin. So many other players that you know, some of them sacrificed a great deal. First thing I would say is I wish we had listened earlier, Kaep to what you were kneeling about and what you were trying to bring attention to. We had invited him in several times

to have the conversation to have the dialogue. I wish we had the benefit of that. We never did. We would have benefitted from that absolutely.

APPENDIX D

Wells Fargo Apology Letter

Moving forward to make things right.

We are deeply committed to serving you and your financial needs. We know we did not live up to that commitment. We want you to know that we're making things right and that we're even more dedicated to serving you and making sure you know where you stand.

There is nothing more important than for you to experience the very best from us.

That's why we've already taken actions:

Putting your interest first: we send a confirmation after you open a new consumer or small business checking, savings, or credit card account so that you know what is happening and can tell us if anything we've confirmed is different than what you expected.

Full Transparency: You can always see your eligible accounts any time when enrolled in Wells Fargo Online.

Fixing what went wrong: We have provided full refunds to customers we have already identified and we're broadening our scope of work to find customers we may have missed. If we have any doubt about whether one of your accounts was authorized, and any fees were incurred on that account, we will contact you and refund the fees.

If you have any concerns about your accounts or any aspect of your relationship with Wells Fargo, please come into a branch or call us on our dedicated hotline 247.

The trust you place in us means everything and we will work hard every day to earn it back.

APPENDIX E

JetBlue Apology Letter

Dear JetBlue Customers,

We are sorry and embarrassed. But most of all, we are deeply sorry. Last week was the worst operational week in JetBlue's seven year history. Many of you were either stranded, delayed or had flights cancelled following the severe winter ice storm in the Northeast. The storm disrupted the movement of aircraft, and, more importantly, disrupted the movement of JetBlue's pilot and inflight crewmembers who were depending on those planes to get them to the airports where they were scheduled to serve you. With the busy President's Day weekend upon us, rebooking opportunities were scarce and hold times at 1-800-JETBLUE were unusually long or not even available, further hindering our recovery efforts.

Words cannot express how truly sorry we are for the anxiety, frustration and inconvenience that you, your family, friends and colleagues experienced. This is especially saddening because JetBlue was founded on the promise of bringing humanity back to air travel, and making the experience of flying happier and easier for everyone who chooses to fly with us. We know we failed to deliver on this promise last week.

We are committed to you, our valued customers, and are taking immediate corrective steps to regain your confidence in us. We have begun putting a comprehensive plan in place to provide better and more timely information to you, more tools and resources for our crewmembers and improved procedures for handling operational difficulties. Most importantly, we have published the JetBlue Airways Customer Bill of Rights – our official commitment to you of how we will handle operational interruptions going

forward – including details of compensation. We invite you to learn more at jetblue.com/promise.

You deserved better - a lot better - from us last week and we let you down. Nothing is more important than regaining your trust and all of us here hope you will give us the opportunity to once again welcome you onboard and provide you the positive JetBlue Experience you have come to expect from us.

Sincerely,

David Neeleman

Founder and CEO

APPENDIX F

Emma Watson's Twitter Reparations Statement

There is so much racism, both in our past and present, that is not acknowledged nor accounted for. White supremacy is one of the systems of hierarchy and dominance, of exploitation and oppression, that is tightly stitched into society. As a white person, I have benefitted from this. Whilst we might feel that, as individuals, we're working hard internally to be anti-racist, we need to work harder externally to actively tackle the structural and institutional racism around us. I'm still learning about the many ways I unconsciously support and uphold a system that is structurally racist. Over the coming days, I'll be using my bio link and Twitter to share links to resources I've found useful for my own researching, learning, listening. I see your anger, sadness and pain. I cannot know what this feels like for you but it doesn't mean I won't try to.

APPENDIX G

Toto Wolff Apology Statement

Lewis Hi.

Sorry for what you have needed to drive today. I know this is undriveable and not what we deserve to score as a result. So we move on from there, but this was a terrible race...

We will come out of this.