

# American University Students' Apology Strategies:

## An Intercultural Analysis of the Effect of Gender

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### Abstract

This study aims at investigating potential gender effects in American university students' use of apologies within the framework of the two-culture theory which claims that men and women are so different that they comprise strikingly different cultures. The researchers used a 10-item questionnaire based on Sugimoto's (1997). The findings revealed that male and female respondents used the primary apology strategies of statement of remorse, accounts, compensation, and reparation. They also resorted to the use of non-apology strategies such as blaming victim and brushing off the incident as not important to exonerate themselves from blame. The findings further revealed that male and female respondents used the same primary strategies but in different frequencies. In addition, female respondents used fewer non-apology strategies than their male counterparts and more manifestations of the statement of remorse. Both similarities to and differences from Sugimoto's findings were detected.

**Key Words:** apologies, apology strategies, the two-culture theory, gender

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### Introduction and Background

This study is mainly concerned with potential gender effects in American university students' use of apology strategies. The researchers adopt the controversial and much criticized (cf., for example, Cameron, McAlister and O'Leary, 1989; Troemel-Plotz, 1991), yet partially evidenced (cf., for example, Michaud and Warner, 1997; Basow and Rubenfeld, 2003) views of the *two-culture* theory which claims that men and women exist in different cultural worlds (as opposed to the *dominance* theory which claims that men and women exist in the same cultural world in which power and status are distributed unequally). Proponents of the two-culture view claim that due to the striking differences between them, men and women belong to different 'communication cultures' (Maltz and Borker, 1982; Tannen, 1990; Gray, 1992; Schloff and Yudkin, 1993) or 'speech communities' (Wood, 2000; 2002).

According to Porter and Samovar (1985:15), intercultural communication occurs "whenever a message producer is a member of one culture and a message receiver is a member of another". They further point out that objects, events, experiences, and feelings have a particular name solely because a community of people have arbitrarily decided to so name them, and that significant differences may occur in communication patterns, habits, and traditions across cultures.

The two-culture theory has mainly focused on gender differences in 'troubles talk', intimacy, and emotion (Jefferson, 1988; Tannen, 1990). Bate and Bowker (1997: 166) claim that "caring seems to be the principal category that differentiates one sex from the other". Proponents of this theory claim that girls are taught that talk is the primary vehicle to establish and maintain intimacy and connectedness (Maltz and Borker, 1982), while boys are socialized to view talk as a mechanism for getting things done,

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accomplishing instrumental tasks, conveying information, and maintaining status and autonomy (Wood and Inman, 1993).

MacGeorge, Graves, Feng, Gillihan, and Burleson (2004:1) describe the two-culture hypothesis as one which

*maintains that gender-specific socialization of boys and girls leads to different masculine and feminine speech communities. These communities represent different cultures-people who have different ways of speaking, acting, and interpreting, as well as different values, priorities, and agendas.*

The relationship between language and gender during childhood has been widely addressed in the literature (cf., for example, Maltz and Borker, 1982; Huston, 1985; Tannen, 1990, Leaper, 1991; 1994; Swann, 1992; Maccoby, 1998; Wood, 2001) which suggests that girls are more likely than boys to use language to form and maintain connections with others (through, among others, the affiliative functions of showing support, expressing agreement, and acknowledging the contributions of others), whereas boys are more likely to use language to assert their independence, establish dominance, and achieve goals (through, among others, the assertive functions of making directive statements, criticism, and giving information).

Tannen's (1990; 1994; 1995) research suggests that men and women have different modes of communication and, thus, communication between them ought to be viewed as intercultural communication. She (1990:18) claims that

*because boys and girls grow up in what are essentially different cultures.. Talk between women and men is cross-cultural communication.*

She (1990:85) further argues that "girls are socialized as children to believe that "talk is the glue that holds relationships together" which is later reflected on their perceptions of conversations as "negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support, and to reach consensus". On the other hand, boys are taught to maintain relationships through their activities, which would later color a man's perceptions of conversations as contests 'in which he [is] either one-up or one-down'. Along the same line, Wood (2000:207) claims that

*much of the misunderstanding that plagues communication between women and men results from the fact that they are typically socialized in discrete speech communities.*

The findings of much of the research on gender differences in supportive communication have been inconsistent with the two-culture theory. In their detailed critique of Tannen (1990), Goldsmith and Fulfs (1999) concluded that virtually none of the empirical generalizations forwarded by Tannen were adequately evidenced. Similarly, Thorne (1993) critiqued Maltz and Borker's (1982) qualitative research, while Burleson (1997) and Vangelisti (1997) discussed the pitfalls in much of Wood's work (Wood, 1993; 1997; 2000).

However, in a study of 145 men and 239 women, Michaud and Warner (1997) claim to find support for Tannen's (1990) analysis of gender differences in 'troubles talk'. They presented participants with six 'troubles talk' situations for which participants were asked to rate the likelihood of using six communication strategies which correspond to those described by Tannen (1990). They found statistically significant gender differences for three of six message strategies used to provide support, for all seven emotional responses to advice, and for three of seven emotional responses to sympathy. Michaud and Warner (:537) concluded that "many statistically significant differences were found in this study, and all were in the direction predicted by Tannen's work" although they (:538) noted that "the effect sizes were very small, even for the differences that were statistically significant".

Using a sample of 58 men and 107 women, Basow and Rubinfeld (2003:186) concluded that their "results support the idea that men and women may grow up in two different communication cultures". They replicated Michaud and Warner's (1997) research and reported findings which "generally support Tannen's theory that men and women come from two different cultures of communication" (:183).

Although Basow and Rubinfeld found no gender differences in emotional responses to advice or sympathy, they did find that femininity was associated with them.

To be able to draw conclusions which pertain to the major question of the research, the researchers attempt to first identify apology strategies and cross-reference them by those presented by Sugimoto (1997). More specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions of which the second is the central focus of the research:

1. What are the apology strategies used by American male and female undergraduate students?
2. What are the potential differences in the use of apology strategies between male and female respondents?
3. Do Sugimoto's findings of American respondents' use of apology strategies hold true for this group of respondents?

This study is especially significant not only because it explores an area of intercultural pragmatics that has not been sufficiently explored but also because it, to the best of these researchers' knowledge, presents its findings within the framework of the much debated two-culture theory which introduces gender as an intercultural indicator of difference. It adds to the existing body of research and, thus, enriches the field of intercultural pragmatics. Its findings are hoped to lend verification to the findings of previous research on American English speakers' apology strategies, and to lay the foundation for future studies in the area of comparing the use of apology strategies in English and Arabic.

In her study of Japanese and American apology strategies, Sugimoto (1997) put forth the *primary strategies* which include *statement of remorse, accounts, description of damage, and reparation*; *secondary strategies* which include *compensation*, and *the promise not to repeat offense*; and *seldom used strategies* which include *explicit assessment of responsibility, contextualization, self-castigation, and gratitude*. Although they would keep others in mind, the present researchers use these strategies as the basis of their data analysis.

Sugimoto (1997) compared styles of apology of 200 American (79 male and 121 female) and 181 Japanese (82 male and 99 female) college students. Her findings were as follows:

1. More Japanese students stressed the importance of atonement.
2. The four most used strategies were *statement of remorse, accounts, description of damage, and reparation* which Japanese students used more than their American counterparts.
3. Secondary strategies include *compensation* and *promise not to repeat offense*, which were mainly used by Japanese students.
4. Japanese students offered elaborate types of *promises not to repeat offense* and were more open in their request of forgiveness.
5. Cultural differences in the use of apologies were evident in the following nuances:
  - a. Japanese students were more ready to offer (and receive) apologies.
  - b. Japanese students used more elaborate types of remorse statements. They tended to repeat words whereas American respondents used intensifiers, as shown in the following examples:

*Japanese: "Sorry, sorry, I am so sorry."*

*American: "I am terribly sorry."*

- c. American respondents tended to attribute an offense to forgetfulness or circumstances beyond their control while Japanese students admitted their fault and stressed the lack of malicious intention.
- d. Unlike Americans, Japanese students described the negative side of the situation, as shown in the following examples:

*Japanese: "Sorry we were late. We wasted a part of your spring break."*

*American: "Look; we still have all of spring break to enjoy."*

e. Japanese students strived more to "save face" while their American counterparts tended to try to keep their autonomy by not offering to help remedy the situation. For American respondents, *reparation* was considered a declaration of responsibility and future actions where the failure to do so would be a bigger offense than the first. On the other hand, Japanese offenders are not obligated to keep their promises as long as the offended realizes that the offender feels with him/her.

### **Definition of Significant Terms**

A *speech act* is an utterance that serves a function in communication such as apology, request, or greeting. An *apology* is the speech act through which the wrongdoer acknowledges guilt and seeks forgiveness for what he/she has done. A *wrongdoer* is the person who has committed the act that warrants apology and who is supposed to apologize for what he/she has done. A *victim/hearer/injured party* is the person who was harmed, whether psychologically, physically, or materially, by the act that warrants apology.

*Apology strategies* are the methods used by individuals to perform the speech act of apology such as *statement of remorse* and *reparation*. A *statement of remorse* is the strategy in which the wrongdoer shows that he/she has done something wrong. This strategy may have manifestations such as *one expression of apology*, *two expressions of apology*, and *three expressions with one intensifier*.

*Accounts* is a strategy in which the wrongdoer tells of what has happened. A *description of damage* is the strategy in which the wrongdoer describes what changes have been incurred on the object in discussion or the repercussions of a certain deed on others. *Reparation* is the strategy in which the wrongdoer tries to repair the damage he/she has incurred on others and offers words that may cause the harm done to be forgotten, while *compensation* is the strategy in which the wrongdoer offers to compensate for the physical or material damage for which he/she is apologizing. A *promise not to repeat offense* is the strategy in which the wrongdoer does his/her utmost to assure the injured party that what has taken place will not occur again in the future, whereas *explicit assessment of responsibility* is the strategy in which the wrongdoer tries to describe his/her role in what has happened and whether or not he/she was responsible. *Negative assessment of responsibility* refers to the wrongdoer's claim that another person or thing caused the injury, while *positive assessment of responsibility* refers to the wrongdoer's admission of being responsible for it.

*Contextualization* is the strategy in which the wrongdoer gives the whole context of the injury and what has happened in order to make the injured party see the whole picture, while *self-castigation* is the strategy in which the wrongdoer claims his/her responsibility for what has happened and is critical of his/her own behavior. *Gratitude* is the strategy in which the wrongdoer shows how grateful he/she is that the injured person is even giving him/her the time to speak and finding it in his/her heart to forgive, whereas *showing lack of intent on harm doing* is the strategy in which the wrongdoer tries to convince the victim he/she had no intention of harming him/her.

*Non-apology strategies* are those the wrongdoers use to avoid claiming responsibility for the injury and apologizing for it. These non-apology strategies may be manifested in *brushing off incident as unimportant* (in which the wrongdoer tries to convince the victim that the offense is getting more attention than it deserves), *avoidance of person or subject* (in which the wrongdoer tries to avoid the victim in order not to apologize, and if they happen to meet, the wrongdoer tries to avoid discussing the offense), *offending victim* (in which the wrongdoer offends the victim to attract attention away from the offense he/she has committed), and *blaming victim* (in which the wrongdoer blames the victim for the offense instead of apologizing to him/her).

### **Sample, Instrumentation, and procedures**

The population of the study consisted of all American undergraduate students at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA. The sample consisted of a randomly selected group of one hundred 17-24-year-old American male and female undergraduate students from various areas of specialization in the undergraduate program in the spring semester of the academic year 2002/2003.

The instrument is an adaptation of the questionnaire used by Sugimoto (1997) to compare the apology strategies used by American and Japanese students. Since it has already been piloted and checked for validity, the present researchers did neither. The questionnaire consists of three parts:

A short introduction of the study and instructions for answering the questions,

1. a short section aiming at collecting demographic information about the respondents, and
2. ten scenarios each of which involves a situation which requires an apology (See the Appendix).

One of the researchers personally visited classes and oversaw the data collection process. She distributed the questionnaire, offered explanations and answered questions, and collected the completed questionnaires in the course of one class session. The data were then tallied to identify any potential differences which could be attributed to gender. To discover the potential effect of gender, the researchers tallied the percentages of the apology strategies used by male and female respondents.

In order to find the apology strategies used by the sample, the researchers used two types of tables: the first to clarify the method used by the student to show his/her remorse (*viz.*, *statement of remorse*), and the second to show other apology strategies employed in each situation. The *statement of remorse* was manifested in different realizations including *one expression*, *two expressions*, *three expressions*, *one expression with one or more intensifiers* and *two expressions with one or more intensifiers*.

The researchers list the apology strategies used by the students including those which do not imply an apology. One such strategy that was not addressed in previous research, including Sugimoto's (1997) is that in which the wrongdoer exonerates him-/herself and, instead, blames the victim for what had happened.

### ***Findings and Discussion***

In this section, the researchers analyze the participants' responses to the questionnaire and calculate and tabulate the percentages of the apology strategies used by the male and female members of the sample.

#### ***Apology Strategies Used by Male Respondents***

In their attempt to respond to the situations given in the questionnaire, male respondents used the following apology strategies:

##### ***I. Statement of Remorse***

As shown in Table 1, male respondents used different manifestations of the *statement of remorse*. Over 46.% (n=233) of the situations in the questionnaire did not warrant a *statement of remorse*, and manifestations such as *three expressions of apology*, *one expression of apology and three intensifiers*, and *two expressions of apology and one intensifier* were not used.

Table 1

#### ***Numbers and Percentages of the Manifestations of the Statement of Remorse Used by Male Respondents***

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	%
Manifestation												
<i>One Expression of Apology</i>	23	20	35	25	22	19	25	20	24	27	240	48.0
<i>Two Expressions of Apology</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0.6



<b>Blaming Victim</b>	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	2	0	7	1.4
<b>Denial</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0.4
<b>Thanking</b>	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0.4
<b>Laughing the Incident off</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.2

## II. Other Apology Strategies

Table 2 shows the other apology strategies used by male respondents. These strategies are presented and discussed below from the most to the least frequent.

5. *Accounts*. In 38% of the situations (n=190), male respondents used *accounts* for all ten situations, which resulted in responses such as:

*I didn't understand what you said.*

*I forgot to give it back.*

6. *Compensation*. In 20.4% of the situations (n=102), male respondents used *compensation* in response to items 1, 2, 6, and 9, as shown in the following examples:

*The wind broke it and I will buy you a new one.*

*I broke your Walkman and will get you another for Christmas.*

7. *Reparation*. In 12.6 % of the situations (n=63), male respondents opted for *reparation* in their responses to all items except 1, 2, 5 and 6, as shown in the following examples:

*My car broke down. I will buy you a drink.*

*I will do your next assignment.*

8. *Self-Castigation*. In 3% of the situations (n=15), male respondents resorted to *self-castigation* in which the wrongdoer criticized his/her behavior in all items except 1 and 2.

*I know I am irresponsible. Thanks for waiting.*

*I can't believe I did that. I will turn it in ASAP.*

9. *Assessment of responsibility*. The respondents used this strategy in 1.6% of the situations (n=8) as follows:

- *Positive assessment of responsibility*. In only 0.2% of the situations (n=1), a male respondent expressed responsibility for the situation in item 4 where the wrongdoer had forgotten his/her classmate's homework with *It was my fault; I will explain the situation to the teacher*.
- *Negative assessment of responsibility*. In 1.4% of the situations (n=7), male respondents negated responsibility or blamed others for the deed. Responses to items 1, 4, 5, 8, and 9 elicited responses such as *It was an accident your paper got erased*.

1. *Promise not to repeat offense*. Male respondents promised not to repeat the offense in 1% of the situations (n=5). Responses to items 3, 4, 6, and 10 were as follows:

*It won't happen again.*

*I forgot. It won't happen again.*

2. *Showing lack of intent on harm doing*. In 0.8% of the situations (n=4), male respondents opted to deny their intention to harm the victim in their responses to items 3, 8, and 9.

*It's not meant to be so late.*

*I accidentally deleted your paper.*

3. *Asking victim not to be angry.* Male respondents used this strategy in 0.4% of the situations (n=2), yielding responses such as those to items 4, and 8:

*Don't hate me.*

*Please, don't kill me.*

4. *Thanking.* In 0.4% of the situations (n=2), the respondents thanked the victim in items 3 and 6, using the following sentences:

*I know I am irresponsible. Thanks for waiting.*

*Here's your CD. Thanks for letting me borrow it.*

In addition to the above-mentioned strategies, male respondents opted for the following non-apology strategies to ward off the need to apologize:

1. *Blaming victim.* In lieu of apologizing to the victim, male respondents blamed the victim for what happened in 1.4% of the situations (n=7). In their responses to items 1, 6, 7, 8, and 9, male respondents produced examples such as the following:

*It was a cheap umbrella.*

*Your Walkman was already broken.*

2. *Brushing off incident as unimportant.* In 0.6% of the situations (n=3), male respondents asked the victim to forget the incident in items 1, 8, and 9, yielding examples such as:

*Damn. That sucks. Let us forget about it.*

*No problem. These things happen.*

3. *Avoidance of subject or person.* In 0.4% of the situations (n=2), male respondents stated they would avoid the victim until he/she forgot the incident. If they happened to see him/her, they reported that they would avoid the discussion of the incident in question.
4. *Denial.* In their response to items 8, and 9, male respondents denied they had a hand in the offense in 0.4% of the responses (n=2), producing the following responses:

*There is something wrong with your pc.*

*Your Walkman was already broken.*

5. *Laughing the incident off.* In 0.2% of their responses (n=1) to item 1, a male respondent reported he would tell him [the victim] the story and laugh about it.

### ***Apology Strategies Used by Female Respondents***

In their attempt to respond to the situations given in the questionnaire, female respondents used the following apology strategies:

#### ***I. Statement of Remorse***

As shown in Table 3, the respondents used different types of the *statement of remorse* using either *one expression of apology* or more combined with *one or more intensifiers*. Some of the respondents did not think they needed to overtly express apology, which resulted in the absence of the *statement of remorse* in 33.6% of the responses (n=168).

**Numbers and Percentages of the Manifestations of the Statement of Remorse Used by Female Respondents**

Item Manifestation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	%
<i>One Expression of Apology</i>	24	13	37	27	26	34	25	16	27	36	265	53.0
<i>Two Expressions of Apology</i>	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	4	0.8
<i>Three Expressions of Apology</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.2
<i>One Expression of Apology + One Intensifier</i>	9	4	9	8	2	2	4	11	2	5	56	11.2
<i>One Expression of Apology + Two Intensifiers</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	4	0.8
<i>One Expression of Apology + Three Intensifiers</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.2
<i>Two Expressions of Apology + One Intensifier</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.2
<i>Nothing</i>	16	33	4	14	21	13	21	18	21	7	168	33.6

Female respondents used the following manifestations listed from the most to the least frequent:

6. *One expression of apology.* In 53% of the situations (n=265), female respondents used *one expression of apology* to show remorse. Expressions included *sorry, excuse me, forgive me, I apologize, my apologies, and pardon me.*
7. *One expression of apology and one intensifier.* In 11.2% of the situations (n=56), female respondents used *very sorry, so sorry, sincerely sorry, truly sorry, really sorry, extremely sorry, terribly sorry, and incredibly sorry.*
8. *One expression of apology and two intensifiers.* In 0.8% of the situations (n=4), female respondents used two intensifiers to show remorse. Examples of this include *I am so incredibly sorry, I am really really sorry, and I am so completely sorry.*
9. *Two expressions of apology.* In 0.8% of the situations (n=4), female respondents used *two expressions of apology* resulting in responses such as *sorry; forgive me.*
10. *Three expressions of apology.* In 0.2% of the situations (n=1), a female respondent used *three expressions of apology, yielding sorry; sorry; please forgive me.*
11. *One expression of apology and three intensifiers.* In 0.2% of the situations (n=1), a female respondent used *I am so, so, so sorry* to express remorse.
12. *Two expressions of apology and one intensifier.* In 0.2% of the situations (n=1), a female respondent used *I am so sorry; forgive me* to express remorse.

## **II. Other Apology Strategies**

Table 4 lists the other apology strategies used by female respondents in response to the ten questionnaire items.

Table 4

**Numbers and Percentages of the Apology Strategies Used by Female Respondents**

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	%
<b>Strategy</b>												
<i>Accounts</i>	24	11	29	6	44	19	41	4	2	21	201	40.2
<i>Reparation</i>	1	0	3	26	1	4	2	37	2	5	81	16.2
<i>Compensation</i>	41	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	0	118	23.6
<i>Promise not to Repeat Offense</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	0.8
<i>Assessment of Responsibility</i>	<i>Negative</i>	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	0.8
	<i>Positive</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Self-Castigation</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0.4
<i>Brushing off Incident as Unimportant</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0.4
<i>Offending Victim</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.2
<i>Asking Victim not to be Angry</i>	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	1.0
<i>Showing Lack of Intent on Harm Doing</i>	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1.0
<i>Blaming Victim</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0.4
<i>Denial</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0.4
<i>Thanking</i>	0	0	1	0	0	7	0	0	1	1	10	2.0
<i>Laughing the Incident off</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0.4

Female respondents used the following strategies listed from the most to the least frequent:

13. *Accounts*. In 40.2% of the situations (n=201), female respondents used *accounts* in response to all items, which resulted in the following examples:

*I totally forgot. I'll explain it to the teacher.*

*I was stuck in traffic. I hope I did not mess up our arrangement.*

14. *Compensation*. In 23.6% of the situations (n=118), female respondents used *compensation* in responses to items 1, 2, and 9, examples of which are listed below.

*I broke your umbrella and will buy you a new one.*

*Something came up and I cannot go. I will still pay for the ticket.*

15. *Reparation*. In 16.2% of the situations (n=81), in response to all items except item 2, female respondents promised to repair the injury done, which resulted in the following:

*I am an idiot. I will make it up to you.*

*I will help you rewrite the paper.*

16. *Thanking*. In 2% of the situations (n=10), female respondents thanked the victim in responses to items 6, 9, and 10, as is shown in the following examples.

*It was a great CD and I could not stop listening to it. Thanks again.*

*Thanks for your Walkman, but I have to replace it since I broke it.*

17. *Asking victim not to be angry.* Female respondents beseeched the victim not to be angry in 1% of the situations (n=5) in response to items 1, 3, 4, and 8.

*Don't be mad. I will buy you a new one, but the wind broke your umbrella. Please don't be mad. I did not do it on purpose.*

*I will help you do the thing over. Please don't hate me.*

18. *Showing lack of intent on harm doing.* In 1% of the situations (n=5), female respondents expressed their *lack of intent on harming the victim* in response to items 3 and 4.

*I did not mean to hold everybody up.*

*I did not mean to forget your homework.*

19. *Assessment of responsibility.* Female respondents only made use of the *negative assessment of responsibility*. In 0.8% of the situations (n=4) in response to items 1 and 9, female respondents denied responsibility for whatever happened.

*I feel it was not my fault, but I will buy you a new umbrella.*

*I will hide it and pretend I never had it.*

20. *Promise not to repeat offense.* In response to items 4 and 10, female respondents promised not to repeat the act for which they were apologizing in 0.8% of the situations (n=4), as shown in the following examples:

*It won't happen again.*

*I hope this won't happen again next time.*

21. *Self-Castigation.* In 0.4% of the situations (n=2), female respondents used this strategy in response to items 3 and 7.

*I am an idiot. I will make it up to you.*

*I am such an idiot I forgot to meet you.*

In addition to the above-mentioned strategies, female respondents used the following non-apology strategies:

22. *Blaming victim.* In response to items 6 and 8, female respondents blamed the victim for what happened in 0.4% of the situations (n=2) with expressions such as

*You should have reminded me of it.*

*"I'd make her think she did it herself."*

23. *Brushing off incident as unimportant.* In 0.4% of the situations (n=12), female respondents opted for asking the victim to forget the incident in all items except 1, 2, 3, and 10 on the grounds that it is not worth the attention it is getting.

*What's up? Plans are never concrete.*

*So what? Get yourself a new one.*

24. *Laughing the incident off.* In 0.4% of the responses (n=2) to items 1 and 7, female respondents laughed the injury off with accounts such as

"I'd laugh about the situation since we are both at fault."

- 25. *Denial*. In response to item 9, female respondents denied they had broken their sisters' Walkman in 0.4% of the responses (n=2).
- 26. *Offending victim*. In 0.2% of the situations (n=1), a female respondent attempted to be mean to the victim to avert his/her attention from what had happened in item 7, yielding *you stupid idiot; I told you to meet me at the Holiday Inn*.

***A Comparison of the Apology Strategies Used by Male and Female Respondents***

As shown in Tables 5 and 6, male and female respondents exhibited both similarities and differences in their use of apology strategies. The differences are discussed below.

Table 5

***Numbers and Percentages of the Manifestations of the Statement of Remorse Used by Male and Female Respondents***

Group  Manifestation	Male Respondents		Female Respondents		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<i>One Expression of Apology</i>	240	48	265	53	505	50.5
<i>Two Expressions of Apology</i>	3	0.6	4	0.8	7	0.7
<i>Three Expressions of Apology</i>	0	0	1	0.2	1	0.1
<i>One Expression of Apology + One Intensifier</i>	21	4.2	56	11.2	77	7.7
<i>One Expression of Apology + Two Intensifiers</i>	3	0.6	4	0.8	7	0.7
<i>One Expression of Apology + Three Intensifiers</i>	0	0	1	0.2	1	0.1
<i>Two Expressions of Apology + One Intensifier</i>	0	0	1	0.2	1	0.1
<i>Nothing</i>	233	46.6	168	33.6	401	40.1

Table 6

***Numbers and Percentages of the Strategies Used by Male and Female Respondents***

Group Strategy	Male Respondents		Female Respondents		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Accounts</b>	190	38	201	40.2	391	39.1
<b>Reparation</b>	63	12.6	81	16.2	144	14.4
<b>Compensation</b>	102	20.4	118	23.6	220	22
<b>Promise not to Repeat Offense</b>	5	1	4	0.8	9	0.9

Journal of Intercultural Communication, 5(2), 2005		1.4	4	0.8	11	1.13	
Assessment of Responsibility	Negative						
	Positive	1	0.2	0	0	0.1	
Self-Castigation		15	3	2	0.4	17	1.7
Avoidance of Discussion or Person		2	0.4	0	0	2	0.2
Brushing off Incident as unimportant		3	0.6	2	0.4	5	0.5
Offending Victim		0	0	1	0.2	1	0.1
Asking Victim not to be Angry		2	0.4	5	1	7	0.7
Showing Lack of Intent on Harm Doing		4	0.8	5	1	9	0.9
Blaming Victim		7	1.4	2	0.4	9	0.9
Denial		2	0.4	2	0.4	4	0.4
Thanking		2	0.4	10	2	12	1.2
Laughing the Incident off		1	0.2	2	0.4	3	0.3

The figures in Tables 5 and 6 show that male and female respondents' use of apology strategies reflected the following major differences:

27. Female respondents opted for a wider variety of manifestations of the *statement of remorse* than their male counterparts. They supplied various manifestations of the *statement of remorse*, namely *three expressions of apology, one expression of apology and three intensifiers, and two expressions of apology and one intensifier*, for 66.4% of the situations compared to 53.4% by male respondents. This reflects the notion that females apologize more overtly than males which, despite the fact that the percentage of these manifestations is relatively small (0.2% each), coincides with findings reported in previous research (cf., for example, Lakoff, 1975; Goodwin, 1980; Maltz and Borker, 1982; Cameron, 1992) which interpret these differences in terms of early childhood socialization processes.
28. All manifestations of the *statement of remorse* have been in close percentages, except for *one expression and one intensifier*.
29. The four primary strategies used by male and female respondents were *accounts, reparation, compensation, and self-castigation*. These strategies accounted for 74% of the strategies used by male respondents and 80.4% of those used by their female counterparts. This shows that female respondents tend to use more primary strategies than their male counterparts, although the difference is minimal.
30. Female respondents opted for *reparation* and *compensation* more than their male counterparts, probably due to the notion that reparation may cancel the harm done.
31. Female respondents opted for thanking more than their male counterparts, probably because thanking may make accepting the apology easier.
32. Male respondents used *assessment of responsibility* and *self-castigation* more than their female counterparts.
33. Unlike their male counterparts, none of the female respondents resorted to *avoidance of discussion or person*.
34. Female respondents used slightly fewer non-apology strategies than their male counterparts (1.8% vs. 3%) although some strategies (e.g., *blaming victim*) reflected the difference more than others.
35. Male respondents opted for not apologizing (i.e., *saying nothing*) much more than their female counterparts (compare 233 (46.6%) to 168 (33%)).

#### ***A Comparison between the Present Findings and Sugimoto's (1997)***

The four most used primary strategies in Sugimoto's study were *statement of remorse, accounts, description of damage, and reparation*. Not much unlike Sugimoto's, the most frequently used strategies

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in the present study are *statement of remorse*, *accounts*, *compensation*, and *reparation*. Furthermore,<sup>14</sup> unlike Sugimoto's respondents who did not use any secondary strategies, respondents in the present study used the secondary strategy of *compensation*, which had the frequency of a primary strategy, and that of *promise not to repeat offense*. Most importantly, Sugimoto did not discuss non-apology strategies, probably because, unlike in the present study, she did not find them in significant frequencies.

Despite these differences, the present findings are consistent with Sugimoto's in terms of the respondents' tendency to use intensifiers more than repetition. The present findings are also consistent with Sugimoto's report of the respondents' tendency to attribute the offense to forgetfulness or circumstances beyond their control and to look at the positive side of the situation.

### **Summary, Conclusions, and Implications**

Gender played an important role in the use of apology strategies which coincided with reports in previous research. Male and female respondents differed in their use of apology strategies. Female respondents' tendency to apologize more than their male counterparts was reflected in their overt use of the *statement of remorse*. Female respondents also used more manifestations of the *statement of remorse* than their male counterparts. Although both male and female respondents used the same primary strategies of *accounts*, *reparation*, *compensation*, and *self-castigation*, female respondents used them more than their male counterparts. Furthermore, female respondents used slightly fewer non-apology strategies than male respondents.

To remedy the potential 'intercultural' misunderstanding between men and women, proponents of the two-culture theory call on educators to develop programs that foster 'multicultural awareness' of stylistically different, albeit functionally equivalent, approaches to communication events (Wood, 1993).

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## *Appendix*

### *The Questionnaire*

Dear Respondent,

The researchers are conducting a study entitled **Apology Strategies of American University Students**. You are kindly requested to answer the items of this questionnaire carefully and accurately. Rest assured that the information obtained in the course of this study will be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of academic research.

Thank you.

I. General Information:

**Sex:**  Male  Female

**Major:** -----

**Nationality:** -----

II. Please respond to these questions as realistically and honestly as possible.

1. You borrowed an umbrella from your best friend, and the wind broke it beyond repair. What do you say to him/ her?

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2. You have made plans to go to a concert with your friends; you could not make it and you still owe them money for the ticket. What would you say to them?

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3. You showed up an hour late for a group trip on spring break. What do you say to the students traveling with you?

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4. You have borrowed a classmate's homework, submitted yours and failed to return his/ hers. What do you say to him/ her?

-----

5. You did not show up for a meeting due to a friend's accident. What do you say to the students who were supposed to meet with you?

6. You borrowed a CD from your roommate and did not return it for 3 weeks. What do you say to him/her?

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7. You failed to meet a friend at the hotel due to miscommunication. What do you say to him/her?

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8. You were playing with your friend's computer and erased the important paper s/he had been working on for the past two weeks. What do you say to him/ her?

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9. You borrowed your brother's/ sister's Walkman and broke it. What do you say to him/ her?

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10. You cancelled a club meeting and inconvenienced all the members of the club. What do you say to them?

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