

Study shows conservatives less likely to apologize than liberals

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Credit: Francisco Farias Jr/public domain

A team of researchers led by the University of Queensland's Matthew

Hornsey has found evidence that suggests people who are conservative are less likely to apologize than are those who are more liberal. In their paper published in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, the group describes their study and offer their results and some opinions on why there may be differences between the two groups.

Apologies have taken on a new form in the [mass media](#) age—where once they were words used by one individual to another, or perhaps a small group, today, they can be messages from well-known people wishing to maintain a certain public persona. But as Hornsey noted in a recent interview with the press, some types of people seem to apologize more than others. He had noticed that liberal politicians and other notables seemed to offer more public apologies than their conservative counterparts. Intrigued, he gathered with colleagues to conduct a study.

The first part of the study consisted of drafting a survey which they then sent to 2,130 people living in Chile, Hong Kong, Russia, Peru, Australia, China and the United States. The survey inquired about how willing [people](#) were to apologize and under what circumstances. In analyzing the results, they found that those who considered themselves conservative did, indeed, report apologizing less than those who considered themselves to be liberal. They also found that conservatives also appeared to be less influenced by an apology from another, which translated to being less likely to forgive a transgression just because someone apologized for it.

The team then conducted a second experiment, this time with 65 volunteers, 38 from India and 27 from America. Each was asked individually to imagine they had been asked to water their neighbor's lawn while the neighbor went on vacation and that they had done a poor job of it. The volunteers were asked to write down how things would go when the neighbors returned. In studying the written reports, the researchers found that those that self-identified as conservative were less

likely to apologize for not doing a better job than did those that identified as liberal.

The researchers cannot say for sure why there appeared to be differences in willingness to apologize but theorize that it might be because conservatives engage more in hierarchical thinking than do liberals, which might translate to feelings of losing power over others if they offer an apology.

More information: Matthew J. Hornsey et al. Conservatives Are More Reluctant to Give and Receive Apologies Than Liberals, *Social Psychological and Personality Science* (2017).

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