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# **Proceedings of the Academy of Managerial Communications**

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**Jo Ann and Jim Carland  
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# **BUSINESS COMMUNICATION PRACTICES THAT ENHANCE ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY CLIMATES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*As Workforce 2000's projected trends for increasing work force diversity and low unemployment continue to unfold, researchers and practitioners continue to seek methods for enhancing organizations' diversity climate. Diversity climate refers to the extent to which employee differences, whether demographic, psychological or organizational, are valued as intrinsically worthy of respect and optimized as sources of added value. To the degree that an organization's diversity climate is positive, employees', teams', and organizations' effectiveness and outcomes are likely to be enhanced. While federal and state laws, organizational policies, and organizational programs influence workplace diversity climates, the salient context for enacting and experiencing beliefs about differences is interpersonal. The purpose of this paper is to review the literature on communication practices that convey respect and optimize diversity as a source of creativity in supervisory dyads and in teams. The primary practices addressed in this paper include message framing, meeting facilitation, and Bohmian dialogue.*

# THE INFLUENCE OF POST-TRANSGRESSION BEHAVIOR: AN INTERPLAY BETWEEN ELABORATENESS OF APOLOGY AND THE MANAGERIAL DISCIPLINARY ACTION

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## ABSTRACT

*Many practitioners and scholars alike have underwritten the theory that expression of and apology may lead to less punishment. The studies and arguments presented to support this view appears to be well grounded. However, a number of researchers have argued that there are instances in which the expression of apology does not lead to less punishment. Consequently, it remains unclear under what circumstances the expression of apology is effective in reducing punishment and under what circumstances it is not. Thus, systematic research testifying to both the effectiveness of an apology and ineffectiveness of an apology on the level of punishment has been scarce. This paper attempted to fill that void.*

## INTRODUCTION

In all human relationships, when a person transgresses against a rule, offending another, he or she is likely to apologize for doing so. The apology may serve to at least partially right the wrong. It may also lower the probability of an aggressive response on the part of the person offended. In the employment relationship there are commonly a number of rules, and it is an offense, against both the abstract rule and the employer, for an employee to be guilty of a rule violation. In the typical American military-bureaucratic style work organization the expected consequence of such misconduct is punishment. It is interesting to inquire whether, to what degree, and under what circumstances, an employee's apology for such misconduct affects the probability of punishment and its severity. This is the question that this paper examines.

Although both practitioners and scholars are reluctant to admit it, workplace discipline in the U.S. is enforced in part through punishment or threat of it. Therefore, employees, managers, and scholars have strong reason to understand its determinants. In addition to other determinants, it seems worthwhile to consider the common human response of apology in different degrees and under different circumstances as a possible influencer of punishment of employees for violating workplace rules.

The following section defines some terms and then introduce the questions to be studied. It will then review the literature in the area and subsequent sections will state the problem.

## APOLOGY

Apology is the acknowledgment of blameworthiness and expression of regret for a transgression against a rule or a norm (Darby & Schlenker, 1989; Goffman, 1971; Schlenker, 1980). Such transgressions often result in injury to another. The apology may be made either to the person injured or to the person charged with enforcement of the rule that has been transgressed. The parties to the apology are the offender who makes the apology (sometimes called the perpetrator or violator) and the receiver of the apology (sometimes called the victim, discipliner, or punisher). In this thesis, the term "offender" will be used to denote the person who has committed the transgression. The term "offendee" will be used to denote the person injured or in charge of enforcing the rule that has been violated, to whom an apology might logically be directed under the circumstances. Where a workplace rule has been violated by an offender who is an employee the person offended would usually be the employee's supervisor, although, depending on the rule violated, fellow employees might also be potential apology receivers. What is special about supervisors as persons offended is that they have the authority to impose punishment on the subordinate offender.

Apologies relate to violations of social norms. They may reflect a sense of obligation on the part of the offender to make amends for the transgression against these norms. According to scholars who have studied this phenomenon, apologies perform several different functions. These include acknowledging that rules have been violated, recognizing the value of the rules, and acknowledging the interpersonal obligations involved (see Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Darby & Schlenker, 1989; Schlenker, 1980; Schlenker & Darby, 1981). Apologies may have a number of meaningful effects on the offender and the offendee, such as: (a) when the offender publicly acknowledges his or her responsibility for the violation, it may have the effect of restoring the offendee's self-esteem and social identity; (b) when the offender offers help or asks for forgiveness, it may be interpreted as expressing respect for the offendee; (c) when the offender apologizes in terms of self-disapproval, it may be taken as acknowledgement that the offender does not agree with his or her own behavior and is trying to give the impression to others that he or she is really not a bad person; and (d) when the offender subjects himself/herself to public disgrace or expresses remorse, this can be taken as a form of self-punishment that restores social justice (Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989).

Ohbuchi et al. further suggest that an apology made by an offender has three types of effects on the offendee. When the offender apologizes for his or her transgression, it influences the offendee at the cognitive level - the offendee has a more favorable impression of the offender when he or she apologizes. Second, at the emotional level - the offendee feels less unpleasant toward the offender when he or she apologizes. Third, at the behavioral level - the offendee engages in less intense aggression against the offender when he or she apologizes. The consequence of expressing apology may be a reduction in the discipline experienced by the offender.

Strategies by which both child and adult offenders attempt to exert control over how the offendee and others perceive the offender have been noted by other researchers (see Goffman, 1971; Harrell, 1979; Schlenker, 1980; Schlenker & Darby, 1981; Scott & Lyman, 1968; Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973). In addition, it has been known for some time that children exert considerable control over adult actions (Savitsky, Czyzewski, Duboard, & Kaminsky, 1975). Studies dealing with animal behavior find that an offspring's conduct may have an impact on its parents' behavior (Harper, 1971). A review of the literature dealing with both human and animal offspring

strongly suggests that an offspring's behavior acts as a stimulus that may influence parental acts, including their punitive reactions (Savitsky, et al., 1975). For humans, a part of the socialization process is to learn when to apologize and how to express remorse following a transgression (Aronfreed, 1968; Burton, Maccoby, & Allismith, 1961). Langer (1978) notes that apologies and remorse may evoke an automatic, scripted reaction as result of the socialization. Langer argues that, as socialized individuals, the apology-forgiveness sequence is so ingrained in us that the tendency to respond positively to an apology may be strong and subsequently beneficial to the user. Another way of explaining the forgiveness response is that it is based upon an innate inhibition against harming an individual who engages in self-abasement (see Wheeler, 1985). Whether the tendencies to apologize or to respond to self-abasement such as apology with leniency are learned or inherent, or both, they do appear to be commonly present in human behavior in social organizations.

The influence of apology and a show of remorse upon an offende's behavior may be subtle, and according to Nisbett and Wilson (1977), an offende who is the target of such influence may not necessarily be aware of what is affecting his or her behavior. Apologies and remorse are indeed part of a learned avoidance response (Aronfreed, 1968) and can be potentially powerful determinants of perceptions and sanctioning reactions (Dedrick, 1978). Similarly, Wood and Mitchell (1981) argue that apologies are important determinants of disciplinary actions, perhaps even more than the actual behavior of the subordinate.

It is evident from past studies that the expression of apology may lead to less punishment. The arguments presented to support this basic finding appear to be well grounded. However, according to a number of researchers such as Goffman (1971), Jones and Wortman (1973), O'Malley and Greenberg (1983), Schlenker (1980), there have been instances in which the expression of apology did not lead to less punishment. Unfortunately, the explanations of the inconsistent and even anomalous results of these studies that have been attempted by Goffman, Jones & Wortman, O'Malley & Greenberg, and by Schlenker are not theoretically based and lack the empirical support needed to make their arguments compelling. Consequently, it remains unclear under what circumstances the expression of apology is effective in reducing punishment and under what circumstances it is not.

The failure of past studies to deal convincingly with the above questions stems from an apparent lack of awareness of a fundamental limitation of these studies. This limitation is that the conditions studied have been restricted to the bipolar alternatives of "no apology" and "apology," without considering varying degrees of apology. It seems clear that one should not assume that all apologies are the same in their intensity and effects. Varying degrees of apology exist. The possibility of different degrees of apology having different effects on discipline requires examination. To be sure, the idea that an apology can be expressed in varying degrees is not new (see Schlenker & Darby, 1981). However, no one has yet examined the possible effects of varying degrees of apology (Schlenker & Darby refer to this as "elaborateness of apology") on discipline. By examining the effects of elaborateness of apology on discipline we can begin to examine more specifically under what circumstances the expression of apology is effective in reducing punishment and under what circumstances the expression of apology is not.

Two moderators that have been suggested as influencing the relationship between apology and discipline are: (1) severity of outcome of the violations committed by the offender (see Darby & Schlenker, 1982; O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983; Rosen & Jerdee, 1974; Schlenker & Darby, 1981; Schwartz, Kane, Joseph, & Tedeschi, 1978); and, (2) favorableness of reputation of the offender as

perceived by the offende (see Darby & Schlenker, 1989, Goffman, 1971; Jones & Wortman, 1973; O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983; Schlenker, 1980). Severity of outcome refers to the seriousness of the violations committed by the offender. Favorableness of reputation refers to the extent that the employee has been successful in fulfilling the role expectations associated with the position that the individual occupies in the organization, including whether those role expectations have been fulfilled through honesty and integrity. If the employee has fulfilled his or her role expectations through dishonorable acts, then the employee would not be viewed favorably by the co-workers.

### **EFFECTS OF APOLOGY ON DISCIPLINE**

As noted above, several studies have shown that expression of apology may lead to more lenient discipline and punishment (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Darby & Schlenker, 1989; Dedrick, 1978; Harrell, 1979; Harrell, 1980; O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989; Rosen & Adams, 1974; Rumsey, 1976; Savitsky, Czyzewski, Dunbord, & Kaminsky, 1975; Schwartz, Kane, Joseph, & Tedeschi, 1978; Wood & Mitchell, 1981). The Rosen and Adams 1974 study dealing with a subordinate information gatekeeper found that when the offender expressed remorse, the discipline recommended was significantly less severe than it was when the subordinates did not express remorse (Rosen & Adams, 1974). Wood and Mitchell (1981) found that apologies were significantly related to disciplinary actions taken by the supervisors. Their results confirmed that when subordinates apologized, supervisors were more lenient and less punitive (Wood & Mitchell, 1981). Ohbuchi, Kameda, and Agarie (1989) conducted a study in order to examine the effects of apologies on aggression. They found that when the offender apologized, the offende rated the offender as more sincere, more responsible, more careful, and less unpleasant than an offender who did not apologize. Further, they found that expressions of apology led to significantly less aggression by the offende toward the offender. Likewise, a study conducted by Harrell (1980) found that offenders who were remorseful were seen as more sorrowful and wanting more strongly to make reparation than those who were nonremorseful; further, less aggression was shown against the remorseful offenders than the nonremorseful offenders. Rosen and Adams (1974) found that when the offender expressed remorse, he or she was perceived as less likely to repeat the violation. In addition, the discipline received by the offender was closely correlated with the perceived probability of the offender repeating the violation; if the offende perceived that there was a lower likelihood of a future violation, the offender received less punishment than an offender who was perceived as more likely to repeat the violation.

In a study involving sentencing judgments, it was found that there were significantly lower sentences imposed under a remorseful condition than under a nonremorseful condition (Rumsey, 1976). Similarly, it has been shown that police, when dealing with juvenile offenders, were influenced by the degree of remorse shown by the offender when deciding whether to arrest the offender or to let him/her go with just a verbal warning (Piliavin & Brian, 1964).

In a series of studies dealing with children it was found that, like adults, they were sensitive to apologies (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Darby & Schlenker, 1989; Dedrick, 1978; Schwartz, Kane, Joseph, & Tedeschi, 1978). Darby and Schlenker (1989) note that offenders who were seen to suffer remorse were more likely to be seen as persons who are able to police themselves and as more dependable and cooperative social participants. Accordingly, they found children who apologized



were perceived as more sorry, more likable, and ultimately needing less punishment. It has been suggested that perhaps children as young as three are able to make a distinction between offenders who are apologetic and those who are not apologetic (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Darby & Schlenker, 1989). In a study involving children, Darby and Schlenker (1982) found that a boy who expressed remorse was perceived as less aggressive, less purposeful, less likely to repeat the action, and less deserving of punishment than a nonremorseful boy. In addition, Darby and Schlenker (1982) found that the effects of apology and remorse were more pronounced for older children, thus suggesting that as children become older they experience greater socialization and become more sensitive to effects of apologies and expressions of remorse.

The argument that expression of an apology results in less punishment appears to be well supported and widely acknowledged. The reasons why this occurs can be understood by examining two complementary explanations. The first explanation is based on a clear distinction that can be made between a weak motivation on the part of an offender and a strong motivation - as determined by the expression of apology or lack of apology (Schwartz, Kane, Joseph, and Tedeschi, 1978). Schwartz et al. (1978) suggest that an offender who expresses remorse is really demonstrating that, "he is dissatisfied with his own behavior and its effects, that the motive behind the act was transient or weak, and hence that the actor is less likely to repeat the action" (p. 293). An expression of apology and remorse is a behavioral indication not only that the offender's motive behind the action is weak or transient, but also that the offender does not like his/her own action. This makes it unlikely that the behavior will be repeated in the future. Hence, the expression of apology and remorse serves to mitigate blame and punishment. Rosen and Adams (1974) found support for this argument; an offender who did not express apology was perceived as someone who was more likely to commit the offense again. In their study, a subordinate who was caught withholding and distorting information was perceived as someone who would be less likely to repeat the infraction when he or she expressed remorse. Consequently, the recommended discipline for remorseful subordinates was significantly less than for those who were not remorseful (Rosen & Adams, 1974). Similarly, Darby and Schlenker (1982) found that a boy who expressed remorse was perceived as less likely to repeat the violation and less deserving of punishment than a nonremorseful boy. On the other hand, Sykes and Matza (1957) and Gusfield (1967) have shown that a dispassionate or unrepentant rule breaker is viewed as someone who may be more likely to repeat a crime than the offender who expresses remorse. Thus, Schwartz et al.'s (1978) concern with the future behavior of the offender appears to be well supported; if an expression of apology or remorse indicates a weak or transient motive then there is a lower probability that a similar violation will occur in the future, and there is no need to carry out the fullest degree of punishment.

The second explanation is that apology is an offender's payment for the cost incurred by the offende. It argues that the act of violation has unjustifiably taken something away from the offende - resulting in an inequitable situation. The offender has imposed a cost on the offende and now owes him or her something. So the situation is one of inequity, and in order to make it equitable again the offender must pay the cost that has been suffered. The term "cost" is used here in the broadest sense and can include both social cost, such as esteem, or material cost, such as money. Further, the offender's payments may include any associated penalties imposed on the offender. The offender's payment may be voluntarily offered or demanded by the offende and society. In this manner the offender can repair the relationship with the offende and restore justice (Walster, Walster, &

Bercheid, 1978) either by making monetary reparation (O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983) or by emotional reparation such as apology and showing remorse. By apologizing and expressing remorse, an offender may be given credit for trying to restore justice between himself or herself and the offeree. Acting as a sincere, apologetic and remorseful person demonstrates that he or she is also suffering in some way as a result of the action. Therefore, this suffering may be perceived as a payment of costs inflicted and is transferable as credit toward righting the wrong (Austin, Walster, & Utne, 1976).

This explanation is supported by findings in a study by Bramel, Taub, and Blum (1968). They found that an offender - an insulting experimenter - who was observed to be suffering was punished significantly less than an insulting experimenter who was not. These findings can be explained through equity theory; an insulting experimenter who is distressed is partially compensating the victim with his psychological discomfort and by so doing deserves less punishment. In another study, Upshaw and Romer (1976) concluded that drivers who suffered an injury in an automobile accident due to their own negligence were fined significantly less than those who did not suffer at all. Furthermore, Buss (1966) and Baron (1971) found that individuals who experienced pain and distress suffered fewer attacks by others. O'Malley and Greenberg (1983) use the terms "psychic cost" and "down payment" to describe an offender who is seen as suffering a great deal of guilt and remorse. This suffering appears to be used as a credit toward restoring justice to the offeree, and so the offender may be asked to compensate the offeree less than if he or she had not suffered (O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983). In fact, O'Malley and Greenberg (1983) found in their study that subjects agreed that offenders who had experienced remorse and guilt had suffered greater psychic cost than those who did not. Savitsky and Sim (1974) state that a remorseful offender who is behaving in a self-punitive manner may be perceived as someone who is engaging in self-imposed restitution for the offense. Such self-induced psychological distress may lead to a decrease in punishment because punishment has already occurred, removing the need to impose additional penalties from the outside. To impose additional punishment on a conscience-stricken offender might be seen as unjustified, inhumane, and cruel (Savitsky & Sim, 1974).

If the apologies and remorse are perceived to be sincere, an offeree may be obligated by social norms to conclude that the offender's suffering merits relief from sanctions. As noted above, within the framework of equity theory, this sequence of apology-forgiveness can be viewed as one way in which an offender can restore equity (Walster, Bercheid, & Walster, 1973). This equity restoring process involves an offender showing remorse and grief over what has happened to the person offeree, and in exchange the offeree acknowledges the offender's suffering by partially or completely forgiving him or her (Harrell, 1979). The offender's psychological discomfort is a payment that establishes equity. As Rosen and Adams (1974) state, the expression of remorse may lead to a restoration of trust between the offender and the offeree, whereas if the offender fails to express remorse this lack of remorse may be seen as a failure on the part of the offender to understand the seriousness of the violation. Thus, a person who fails to demonstrate self-punishment and blame may be seen as needing to be "taught a lesson" through the administration of additional punishment (Harrell, 1979).

Contrary to the effects of apology and remorsefulness, an offender who expresses pleasure in his or her offense may be subject to an increase in aggression (Savitsky, IZARD, Kotsch, & Christy, 1974). Savitsky and Sim (1974) found that those adolescent offenders who displayed emotions of

happiness or anger subsequent to their offenses were faced with increased levels of punishment. By expressing joy the offender may be viewed as someone who has taken advantage of the situation. By expressing anger, he or she may be viewed as someone who is making further demands in an already inequitable situation (Savitsky & Sim, 1974). The situation remains inequitable since an expression of joyfulness violates norms for reaction to an inequitable situation. Given the situation, the offeree may feel strongly compelled to punish the offender both for the original act of transgression and also for his or her failure to acknowledge the seriousness of the actions (Savitsky, Czyzewski, Dubord, & Kaminsky, 1975). Therefore, an increase in punishment may appear to be appropriate to establish an equitable situation.

The explanation of apology showing weak motivation for the misconduct, and the argument, based on equity theory, that apology can serve as payment of costs inflicted, are equally compelling. It is helpful to combine both arguments to more fully understand the effects of apology on discipline. I suggest that the offeree, in determining the level of punishment that the offender deserves, may evaluate both the likelihood of the violation occurring again and the offender's attempted restoration of equity from an inequitable situation. Both perceptions have been found to be highly correlated with each other (Rosen & Adams, 1974). Should they contradict each other - for example, if the offender apologizes in the face of clear evidence that he or she may engage in such violations in the future - the expression of apology may not have any effect.

Prior studies provide strong evidence of the effectiveness of apology in reducing discipline. However, as noted above, these studies have fundamental limitations. One limitation arises from the fact that conditions used have been restricted to "no apology" and "apology," without any attention to the effects of varying degrees of apology. It may be wrong to assume that all expressions of apology are the same in their effectiveness in reducing punishment. For example, Langer (1978) states that apologies and remorse evoke an automatic, scripted reaction that benefits the apologizer. Yet it is not clear that the expressions of apology necessarily lead to less punishment (see Goffman, 1971; Jones & Wortman, 1973; O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983; Schlenker, 1980).

### **ELABORATENESS OF APOLOGY AND SERIOUSNESS OF VIOLATION**

Schlenker and Darby's (1981) findings support the notion that apologies can be expressed in varying degrees of elaborateness and that these degrees of elaborateness can be ordered along a continuum, starting with the least elaborate apologies such as "pardon me," to self-castigation - a much more elaborate expression of self-blame. In their study involving social predicaments, they show that as the consequence of the violation becomes more serious, the offender's apology gradually becomes more elaborate. When the consequence of a social predicament is minimal or trivial, such as lightly bumping into someone, people tend to engage in more perfunctory forms of apology, such as saying "Pardon me" or "I'm sorry." This type of apology was seen as being the least complete. However, as the seriousness of the predicament increased, perfunctory forms of apology became less common. In a much more serious predicament, where the offender/subject knocked the offeree to the ground and hurt him or her, a much more elaborate apology tended to be given. Thus, under a serious and high responsibility predicament, the subjects were more likely to say they were sorry, express remorse, offer to help, castigate themselves, and explicitly request forgiveness. Schlenker and Darby's findings show that self-castigation was perceived by offerees to involve the most self-blame,

followed by requests for forgiveness and expressions of remorse. More elaborate apologies were seen by offendees as being more complete.

Schlenker and Darby's findings suggest that as the severity of the predicament and the offender's responsibility increase, the potential for negative repercussions to the offender becomes greater, and so more elaborate apologies are required to remedy the situation. This becomes especially salient when, given the clarity of the violation, the offender is faced with no alternative but to admit guilt and to engage in elaborate apologies in the hope that a merciful discipliner will give credit for the self-imposed suffering. And since more elaborate apology signifies greater remorse and repentance, the type and intensity of punishment would be expected to be adjusted accordingly.

Based on Schlenker and Darby's findings (1981) and equity theory, we can surmise that as the seriousness of the violation increases the offender will be required to express more elaborate apology in order to reduce the punishment. There is an "appropriate level" of apology that is dictated by the severity of the violation. How effective the apology is in reducing the level of punishment appears to be at least in part driven by the severity of the violation. It would be inappropriate, as prior studies have done, to assume that even an apology that fails to take into account the severity of the violation will lead to less punishment. If we disregard the severity of the violation, the effect of varying degrees of apology on the level of discipline administered may not be predictable.

Schlenker and Darby's findings outlined above strongly suggest that the effect of apology on discipline is moderated by the severity of the violation. However, they did not look at the effect of apology on punishment nor did they look at the effect of severity of outcome on the relationship between level of apology and level of punishment. Their examination was limited to determining an offender/subject's preference for the different levels of apology given differing levels of embarrassing situations.

It has yet to be determined how varying degrees of apology affect discipline given differing levels of violation. This would seem important since the degree of equity restoration needed may vary with the severity of outcome, thus suggesting that the offendees will demand a greater "payback" from the offender when the violation is more severe.

A possible measure of the seriousness of the violation is the severity of the outcome stemming from the violation. Generally, the more harm or damage resulting from an offense, the more severe will be the sanctions and the greater the demand for reparations (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983; Rosen & Jerdee, 1974; Schlenker & Darby, 1981; Schwartz, Kane, Joseph, & Tedeschi, 1978). O'Malley and Greenberg (1983) conducted a study in which the severity of the outcome of the violation was manipulated. In the major damage condition, an individual's negligence resulted in automobile damage amounting to \$900-\$1,000, while in the minor damage condition, the negligent behavior resulted in damage of \$30-\$40. The subjects recommended greater fines for those inflicting major damage as compared to those involved in minor damage, although the actions in both conditions were identical. The severity of harm, or the severity of outcome, resulting from identical actions had a pronounced effect on the degree of reparation demanded by the offendees.

Findings by Mitchell and Kalb (1981) suggest that a supervisor's knowing the negative outcome of a subordinate's infraction may lead to an increase in perceived probability of recurrence, an increase in perceived subordinate responsibility, and a tendency to make greater degree of internal attribution (also supported by James & White, 1983; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Walster, 1966). These findings suggest that there is a greater tendency to blame the subordinate when there is a knowledge

of a negative outcome than when there is no knowledge of the outcome. This might lead to greater punishment being directed against the subordinate. An effect of consequences on discipline is further supported by Rosen and Jerdee (1974) and Darby and Schlenker (1982). Rosen and Jerdee (1974) found that their subjects recommended a significantly greater sanction when illegal use of a company car resulted in a major accident than when it resulted in a minor one. Also, when an offender's illegal use of drugs led to lower performance, a greater sanction was recommended by their subjects than when there was satisfactory performance. The Rosen and Jerdee study also found that offenders were perceived by their subjects as being more responsible for the incident when the consequences were severe than when the consequences were mild or trivial. Furthermore, when the outcome was severe, the offense was perceived to be more unethical and more serious.

There is strong support in the literature for the proposition that severity of outcome has a significant influence on disciplinary decisions. Specifically, as the outcome of the violation becomes increasingly more severe and negative (i.e., greater harm or more damage) the discipline becomes increasingly more severe and, consequently, much greater reparation is demanded. In anticipation of this, we can expect that offenders will engage in more elaborate apologies in order to satisfy the greater "payback" demanded by offendees where the outcome is severe. There may be an appropriate level of apology for a given severity of outcome. If the level of apology expressed by the offender does not fit, i.e., is inappropriate given the severity of outcome, then the apology may not be effective in reducing punishment. There may need to be a "goodness of fit" between the level of apology expressed and the severity of outcome.

### **GOODNESS OF FIT BETWEEN ELABORATENESS OF APOLOGY AND THE SEVERITY OF OUTCOME**

According to Goffman (1971) and Schlenker (1980), those components that are contained in an apology should be tailored to fit the specific type of situation if it is to be effective. That is, "goodness of fit" is required between the severity of the violation and the elaborateness of apology expressed. A satisfactory apology is one in which the offendees perceives the apology to be adequate given the severity of the outcome.

If "goodness of fit" between the apology and the nature of the situation is lacking, then the perceived sincerity and credibility of the apology may be jeopardized. Consider a situation in which the nature of the infraction is perceived to be serious, yet the offender apologizes in a perfunctory manner such as "pardon me." The situation would continue to remain inequitable, the offending individual having not yet paid the full penalty for the cost inflicted. He or she has failed to restore justice. Even worse, if the apology is expressed nonchalantly the offendees may become angry with the apologizer. This anger may in turn translate into increased aggression and harsher punishment. An inadequate expression of apology may be defined as a weak expression of apology that is perceived by the offendees to be less than satisfactory, i.e., not sufficiently elaborate given the nature of the violation.

An excessive apology may create another type of situation in which there is a lack of "goodness of fit" between the severity of the violation and the elaborateness of apology. In such a case, the offender engages in an elaborate apology when the nature of the situation warrants only a perfunctory apology. Again there is a lack of congruence between the situation and the type of

apology expressed. According to Jones and Wortman (1973), an expression of extreme remorse may signal to the offender that the offender is trying to manipulate the situation in order to receive pardon. So an extreme emotional reaction by the offender may indicate that he or she is trying to be ingratiating rather than sincerely trying to apologize. In essence, what this is suggesting is that the offender is not really sorry, and so is likely to engage in such behavior again, especially if he or she can get away with it. Thus, when an excessive apology creates a lack of fit between the elaborateness of the apology and the severity of outcome, the sincerity and the credibility of the apology may come into question.

In addition to the "goodness of fit," the perception of sincerity and the credibility of apology may also be significantly moderated by the type of reputation held by the offender. The offender, in assessing the apology, may take the offender's reputation into consideration before deciding upon the response. The favorableness of the offender's reputation may either enhance the apology expressed, thus leading to even lesser punishment, or it could undermine the apology expressed, thus not leading to less punishment.

### **FAVORABLENESS OF REPUTATION**

"Good reputation" of an employee is defined as "effectiveness as perceived from the perspective of the individual or a specific group of individuals who are satisfied with the job behavior and activities exhibited by the employee being evaluated" (Tsui, 1984, p. 65). This definition is based on role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) and role set analysis (Merton, 1957). According to role theory, each position in the organization is bounded by a set of role expectations. These may consist of "desirable behaviors, norms, attitudes, values, or other standards of work conduct" (Tsui, 1984, p. 65). Thus, an employee with a good reputation is someone who has responded successfully to these expectations. An individual who has a good reputation will be likely to be rewarded more and to advance more quickly than other employees, thereby further enhancing his or her reputation (Tsui, 1984). Similarly, Hutson (1971) states, "a man's reputation is what is said about him. It is the overall response of people to both actor and role performance; an assessment not only of the results achieved but also of the manner in which they were achieved" (p. 79). This suggests that the construct "reputation" not only includes successful fulfillment of employee's role expectation, but also includes the manner in which employee achieved his or her role expectations. Thus, an employee with a good reputation is someone who has successfully performed his or her task through honesty and integrity.

The offender's reputation may determine whether the apology will have a negative or beneficial impact on degree of punishment (Darby & Schlenker, 1989). Thus, an offender's bad reputation may undermine the apology because the negative character of the offender is perceived as being incongruent with the apology. In contrast, an offender's good reputation may enhance the apology because the positive character of the offender is congruent with the apology. The good reputation of the offender may even save an expression of apology from being viewed as manipulative in circumstances in which it is excessive. In contrast, an offender with a "bad reputation" may attract even greater suspicion when apology is excessive. According to Jones and Wortman (1973), an excessive apology expressed by an offender who has a bad reputation may be viewed as being a manipulative and an ingratiating behavior.

An explanation for the above arguments can be made from a theoretical perspective by expanding upon and integrating both equity theory and attribution theory. These theories may provide further support for the arguments that the reputation of the offender will either enhance or undermine the offender's apology.

Equity theory can be expanded to take into consideration past exchanges between the offender and the other employees in the workplace (this may include the offeree). These past exchanges may have a bearing on how present and future exchanges are viewed. One of the ways in which we can obtain information on an offender's past exchanges is by ascertaining the offender's reputation. For example, an offender having a bad reputation indicates that he or she may have engaged in inequitable exchanges in the past. The offender has either failed to successfully fulfill the job requirements as expected and/or engaged in behaviors that resulted in inequitable relationships that have unfairly benefited the offender. This is likely to have led to negative characteristics being associated with the offender. On the other hand, an offender having a good reputation may indicate that he or she has engaged in behaviors that established either equitable relationships or relationships in which the offender gave more than he or she received. Thus, positive characteristics have become associated with the offender.

Past exchanges may have a bearing on how the apology is perceived by the offeree. An apology expressed by an offender with a bad reputation may be undermined because of an inequity that already exists due to past negative behaviors. This will make it more difficult to remedy the present transgression. In contrast, when the offender's reputation is good this may enhance the apology expressed. The past behaviors having been positive, the inequity resulting from a present transgression can be more easily rectified since there are no prior inequities added to the present one.

Based on attribution theory, one can argue that an offense committed by an individual with a bad reputation may be internally attributed. If such an offender tries to apologize, the apology is likely to be viewed as being inconsistent with past behaviors. Further, an offender with a bad reputation will be viewed as being more likely to repeat similar offenses in the future given his or her past and present deviant behaviors. In contrast, an offender with a good reputation benefits from the perception that an expression of apology is consistent with his or her reputation. This favorable perception may even mask the severity of the violation. The offeree may view the present offense as something "out of the ordinary" for the offender and thus the offender may be seen as being less likely to commit similar offenses in the future. The consistency between expression of apology and the past positive behaviors makes it much less likely that expression of apology will be viewed as being manipulative; therefore, the restoration of equity by an offender with a good reputation may be much easier than by an offender with a bad reputation.

In summary, a number of studies provide support for the assertion that expression of apology may lead to less punishment. However, these studies have been limited in their scope so that the effects of apology on discipline have been examined under only two conditions - "No Apology" and "Apology." Further, some important moderators that may significantly affect the relationship between apology and discipline have not been included. It is the intent of this study to broaden the scope of the examination to include elaborateness of apology, severity of outcome and reputation of the offender. This will let us begin to address the question of under what circumstances an expression of apology is or is not effective in reducing punishment.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As is demonstrated by the literature review, numerous efforts to understand the effects of apology on discipline have been made. Studies have found that apology may have a "payback" value that contributes to the restoration of equity, which can lead to less punishment. We can begin to address the limitations in the literature by focusing on some of those variables that appear to play an important role in determining apology's effects on discipline. The following variables are included in this study and are manipulated as follows: (1) elaborateness of apology (No Apology/Simple Apology/Elaborate Apology), (2) severity of outcome (Major/Minor), and (3) the reputation of offender (Bad Reputation/Good Reputation).

## DEFINITIONS

### Elaborateness of Apology

(a) No Apology - defined as a condition in which the offender does not engage in expression of apology.

(b) Simple Apology - defined as a condition in which the offender engages in a simple expression of apology following the transgression. The "simple condition" should fall midway between "no apology" and "elaborate apology" condition. Simple apology is measured as the offender saying, "I'm sorry, I feel badly about this" (Darby & Schlenker, 1982)

(c) Elaborate Apology - defined as a condition in which the offender engages in an expression of apology that is considered to be extreme. Along the elaborateness of apology continuum the elaborate apology is towards the "maximum" end of the continuum. Elaborate apology includes all of the following: (1) self-castigation such as "How stupid of me"; (2) expressing a desire to compensate or help out with the damages resulting from the violation such as the offender saying, "Please let me help you"; and (3) direct attempts at obtaining forgiveness from the offendeed such as the offender saying, "Please forgive me" (Schlenker & Darby, 1981).

### Severity of the Violation

Manipulation involving the severity of the violation will be based on the outcome of the violation. The terms "minor outcome" and "major outcome" are used to distinguish those outcomes that are relatively less severe (minor outcome) from those outcomes that are relatively more severe (major outcome). In this study, a "minor outcome" involves a car that is slightly scratched. The repair to the car is estimated to cost \$30-\$40; whereas, in a "major outcome" condition, the damage to the car is severe and the repair to the car is estimated to cost \$4,000-\$4,500.

### Favorableness of Reputation

Favorableness of reputation is operationalized based on a definition provided by Tsui (1984) and Hutson (1971). Tsui's definition is based on role theory which suggests that a person with a good reputation is someone who has successfully performed their set of role expectations while a person with a bad reputation is someone who has failed to perform those role expectations. In addition, Hutson (1971) suggests that the judgment about an employee's reputation also takes into account the manner in which the role performance was achieved. An employee with a good reputation achieves



his or her role expectations through honesty and integrity while an employee who has successfully achieved his or her role may nevertheless be labelled a "bad" employee because the manner in which it was accomplished was through dishonest or unethical acts. Based on Tsui's (1984) and Hutson's (1971) definitions, this study will define the employee's reputation as follows:

(a) Bad Reputation - refers to an offender who is described as someone who is a person of dishonorable character and viewed by fellow co-workers as someone who lacked honesty and integrity.

(b) Good Reputation - refers to an offender who is described as someone who is a person of fine and honorable character and viewed by fellow co-workers as someone who possessed honesty and integrity.

### **DEFINITION OF INTERACTIONS**

In addition to the three independent variables, the interaction effects of the elaborateness of the apology and the severity of the outcome are systematically manipulated to produce "goodness of fit" or lack of "goodness of fit." It was stated earlier that in order for an apology to be effective, it should be tailored to fit the severity of the transgression.

The evaluative terms "satisfactory" or "less than satisfactory" apology are used in the following definitions. Their use is based on the assumption that most people, through socialization, have acquired the skills necessary to determine the appropriateness of the apology following a transgression. Thus, it is expected that the more severe the outcome, the greater the apology that is fitting. Accordingly, an offense involving a "major outcome" is expected to require an elaborate expression of apology to be perceived as "satisfactory," while a simple expression of apology is expected to be perceived as "inadequate." In contrast, those violations involving "minor outcome" may require only a simple expression of apology to be perceived as "satisfactory," while an elaborate expression of apology may be viewed as "excessive." The definitions are as follows:

(a) Inadequate - defined as a weak expression of apology that is less than satisfactory, i.e., not sufficiently elaborate given the severity of the violation.

(b) Satisfactory - defined as either a simple or an elaborate expression of apology that is satisfactory given the severity of the violation. Here, there is a "goodness of fit" between the severity of outcome stemming from the violation and the elaborateness of the apology expressed.

(c) Excessive - defined as a strong expression of apology that is overly elaborate or "too much" given the severity of the violation.

**Table 1-1 Goodness of Fit**

	Simple Apology	Elaborate Apology
Minor Outcome	Satisfactory	Excessive
Major Outcome	Inadequate	Satisfactory

### **HYPOTHESES**

Expression of Apology. Based on literature reviewed, which showed that the expression of apology may lead to less punishment, it is hypothesized that:

H1: The more elaborate the apology, the less the punishment will be.

Seriousness of the Offense. Findings from past studies suggest that one of the ways in which we can measure the seriousness of the offense is by looking at the severity of the outcome stemming from the offense. According to equity theory and the literature reviewed, the more severe the consequence resulting from a violation, the harsher the punishment administered. Thus,

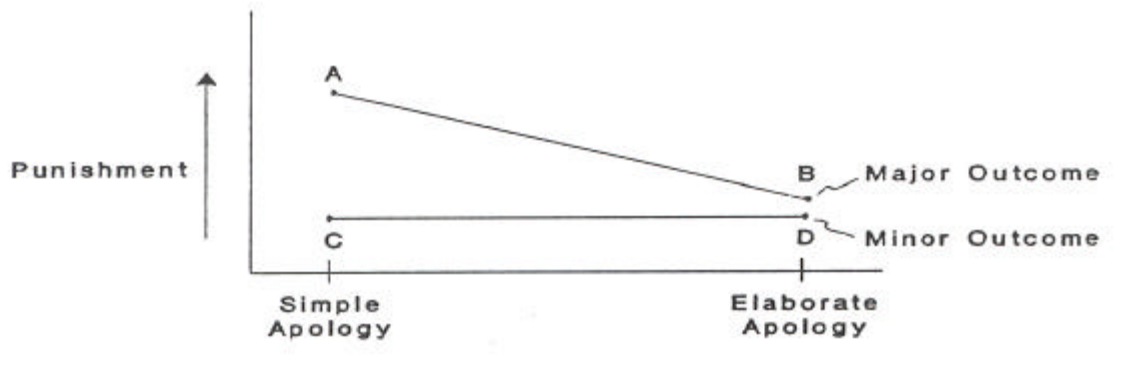
H2: The greater the severity of the outcome, the greater the punishment will be.

Offender's Reputation. According to the literature reviewed and the arguments presented, the reputation of the offender is predicted to have an impact on the level of punishment administered. An offender's good reputation will be perceived as congruent with the apology expressed. This is expected to enhance the impact of the apology expressed. In contrast, an offender's bad reputation will be viewed as incongruent with the apology expressed thus undermining the impact of the apology. Also the good reputation of the offender may inhibit punishment even in the absence of any apology. Accordingly, it is hypothesized:

H3: When the offender's reputation is favorable, the punishment will be less than when it is unfavorable.

### **ELABORATENESS OF APOLOGY AND OUTCOME**

As was argued earlier, the effectiveness of an apology is believed to be dependent upon the "goodness of fit" between the elaborateness of the apology expressed and the severity of the outcome. Once the violation has been committed the offender is portrayed as either apologizing satisfactorily, inadequately, excessively, or not at all.

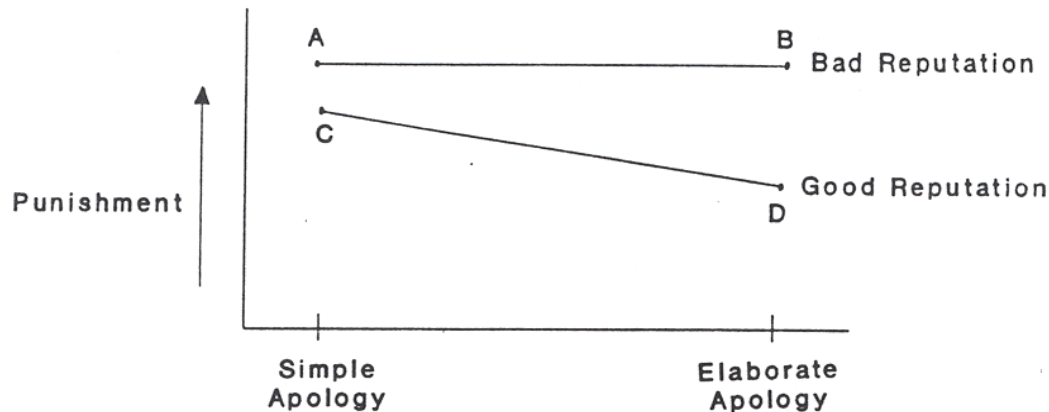
**Figure 1-1 Elaborateness of Apology and Outcome**

Based on equity theory and the literature reviewed it is predicted that those offenders who apologize "satisfactorily" and achieve "goodness of fit" will be punished less than those who apologize inadequately, or those who apologize excessively, or those who do not apologize at all. As shown in Figure 1-1, the interactions under which the "satisfactory" apologies will be achieved are: when a "simple apology" is expressed under the condition of "minor outcome" (C) and when an "elaborate apology" is expressed under the condition of "major outcome" (B). The "A" in Figure 1-1 represents an apology that is inadequate ("simple apology" is expressed under the condition of "major outcome") and "D" represents an apology that is excessive ("elaborate apology" is expressed under the condition of "minor outcome"). Under this last condition, it is expected that increased elaborateness of apology will reduce punishment less than it would in the case of a major outcome. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H4: The effects of elaborateness of apology are moderated by severity of outcome such that the difference between a simple and elaborate apology is greater when the outcome is major than when it is minor.

### ELABORATENESS OF APOLOGY AND REPUTATION

It appears from the literature that an offender's reputation may determine to what degree an apology will have an impact on the level of discipline administered. Thus, an offender's good reputation may enhance the apology because the positive character of the offender is congruent with it. In contrast, an offender's bad reputation may undermine the apology because the negative character of the offender is viewed as being incongruent with the apology.



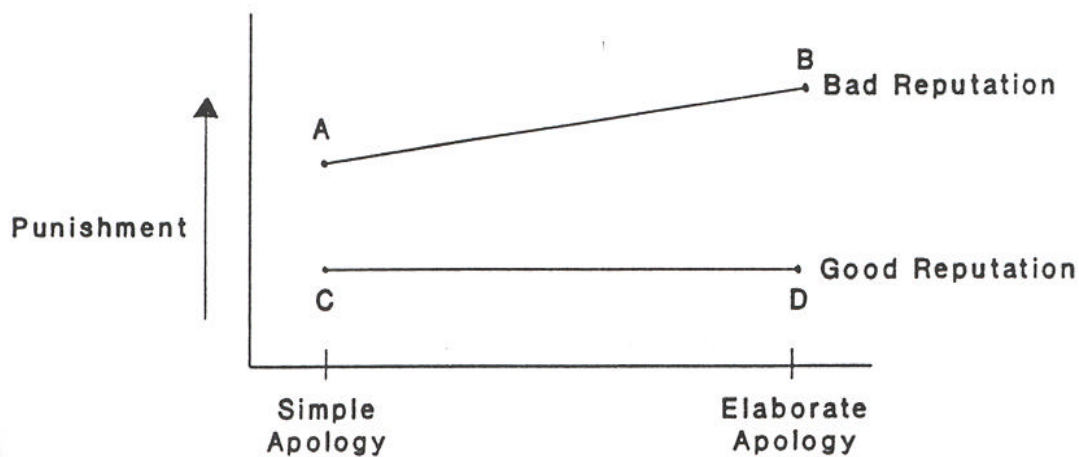
**Figure 1-2 Elaborateness of Apology and Reputation**

As shown in Figure 1-2, the impact of elaborateness of apology on punishment is less when the offender has a bad reputation than when the offender has a good reputation. Based on the above arguments it is hypothesized:

H5: The effects of elaborateness of apology on punishment are moderated by the reputation of the offender such that the difference between a simple and elaborate apology is greater when the offender has a good reputation than a bad reputation.

#### **INTERACTION OF ELABORATENESS OF APOLOGY REPUTATION AND OUTCOME**

It has been argued above that an offender's bad reputation may undermine the apology. Jones and Wortman (1973) have argued that an excessive apology expressed by an offender may be perceived as intentionally trying to manipulate the situation in order to obtain pardon. It may be perceived as an attempt to ingratiate rather than to apologize sincerely. Thus, an apology that is excessive will not only not have any "payback" value, it may exacerbate the offense. The perception that an excessive apology is an attempt to manipulate is more likely to come about and more powerful where the offender has a bad reputation. In contrast, an offender's good reputation is expected to enhance the apology expressed so that even an apology that is excessive may be saved from being viewed as manipulative.

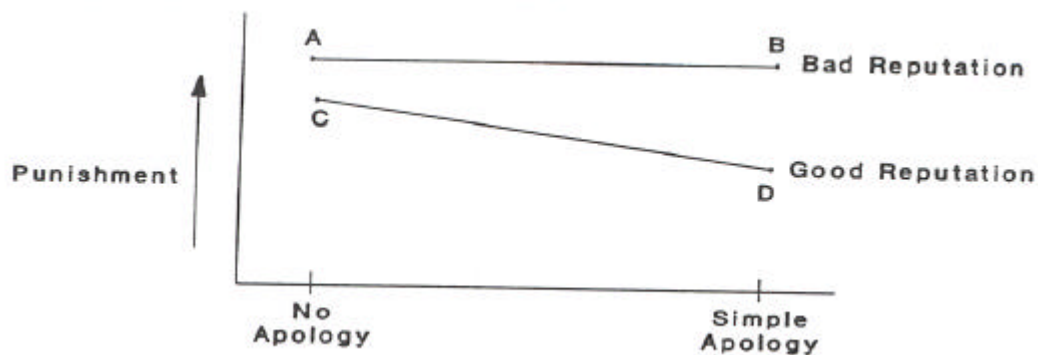


**Figure 1-3 Interaction of Apology and Reputation when the Outcome is Minor**

As shown in Figure 1-3, the interaction under which an "excessive apology" will be perceived to be manipulative is when an "elaborate apology" is expressed under the condition of "minor outcome" (B and D). Where the offender has a bad reputation, this may lead to greater punishment than a less elaborate apology. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H6: Under minor outcome condition, the negative impact of an elaborate apology is greater when the offender has a bad reputation than when the offender has a good reputation.

Although there are no prior studies dealing with inadequate apologies, it is possible to speculate on the outcome of an inadequate apology based on equity theory. It is expected that an offender with a good reputation who appears to be sorry about the violation and attempts to apologize for it, although he or she fails to do so satisfactorily, will be treated as someone who is partially aware of the responsibility for the harm done. Thus, an offender with a good reputation who apologizes less than satisfactorily will experience less punishment than an offender with a good reputation who does not apologize. This is because a partial "payback" is preferable to no "payback." In contrast, for an offender with a bad reputation a less than satisfactory apology will not result in less punishment than no apology since the expression of apology will have been undermined by the negative character of the offender. More elaborate apology may be needed to "trigger" a substantial degree of "payback" mechanism for an offender with a bad reputation. In terms of Figure 1-4, this argument is to the effect that where the outcome is major, punishment will decline little or not at all as one moves from A to B (no apology to simple apology) where the reputation is bad, but will decline substantially from C to D (no apology to simple apology) where the reputation is good.



**Figure 1-4 Interaction of Apology and Reputation when the Outcome is Major**

Based on the previous arguments, it is hypothesized that:

H7: Under major outcome condition, the positive impact of a simple apology versus no apology is greater when the offender has a good reputation than when the offender has a bad reputation.

## CONCLUSION

Many practitioners and scholars alike have underwritten the theory that expression of an apology may lead to less punishment. The studies and arguments presented to support this view appears to be well grounded. However, a number of researchers have argued that there are instances in which the expression of apology does not lead to less punishment. Consequently, it remains unclear under what circumstances the expression of apology is effective in reducing punishment and under what circumstances it is not. Thus, systematic research testifying to both the effectiveness of an apology and ineffectiveness of an apology on the level of punishment has been scarce. This paper suggested ways to fill that void.

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## **STANDARDS OF EMAIL USE AMONG EMPLOYEES OF FORTUNE 600 COMPANIES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*A survey among Fortune 500 companies provided pertinent information for collegiate instructors and their students regarding business and managerial communication practices. The study sought to answer three basic questions regarding the use of e-mail within major corporations. Do corporate e-mail uses support the relaxation of "proper English" writing rules, as evidenced in their e-mail messages? If so, what is the degree of English rule alteration? Should instructors adapt to and teach a lenient or lax style of writing for e-mail messages? To obtain answers to these questions, each Fortune 500 company providing an e-mail address on the Internet was contacted by email. Companies were asked to respond by e-mail by stating their policy on employee Internet restriction, providing the percentage of employees using e-mail on a daily basis, and to describing circumstances when e-mail messages are preferred over other message types, such as memos or telephone calls. A follow-up schedule of inquiry is planned to more clearly identify the presence of a trend or shift in standard English protocol for e-mail messaging.*

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AS PERCEIVED BY AACSB COLLEGE OF BUSINESS DEANS**

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**Edgar J. Manton, Texas A&M University-Commerce**

### **ABSTRACT**

*How important is nonverbal communication? Studies have suggested that 65 to 90 percent of our communication is transmitted nonverbally. If this is true, then colleges of business should be placing emphases on nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication consists of the following: body language, tone of voice, gestures, clothes we wear, physical appearance, space/territory and facial expressions. All of these nonverbal signals communicate a message to those around us.*

*The purpose of this study is to determine which nonverbal signals AACSB college of business deans perceive as most essential for college of business graduates.*

*A questionnaire was developed and mailed to deans of AACSB accredited colleges of business.*