

Combating Antisemitism in the Netherlands: Group Apology as an Intervention?

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Abstract

The Netherlands' history with antisemitism is complex. Active collaboration with the Nazis during the Holocaust and mistreatment of Jewish survivors after the war are issues the country still struggles to confront. Recently, official apologies have been offered for this painful past. One aim of group apologies is to promote intergroup reconciliation. However, little is known about how such apologies are received by the broader population in a country and how it may affect the public's attitudes toward the victim group. One possible outcome of a group apology is a more positive view and reduced stereotyping of the victim group among the general public. This study (N = 471) experimentally tested this idea in the context of an apology for the Dutch collaboration with the Nazis during the Holocaust. It was predicted that the apology would reduce antisemitic stereotypes by increasing perceptions that Jewish Dutch people are part of the Dutch ingroup and by reducing conflation of Jewish Dutch people with Israel and Israeli policy. Additionally, relations between antisemitic stereotypes, apology-related measures, social dominance orientation (SDO), and political ideology were explored. Findings showed that, although the means differed in the expected direction, these effects were not statistically significant, thus the hypotheses could not be confirmed. Results further showed that people higher on SDO and right-wing ideology endorsed antisemitic stereotypes more strongly, and people who endorsed antisemitic stereotypes more strongly were less in favor of apology, reparations, and Holocaust commemoration. These results are discussed in light of policy recommendations regarding intervention strategies to combat antisemitism.

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Introduction

Prejudice and hatred toward Jews have been present in the Netherlands since Jews from different parts of Europe came to Amsterdam and other Dutch cities in the 16th century. This culminated in the Dutch collaboration with the Nazis during World War II. Historians have documented the destruction of Dutch Jewry during the Holocaust, in which almost 102,000 people (approximately 75% of the Jewish population) were deported to the East and killed in

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extermination camps (e.g., De Jong, 1969; Gans, 1994; Herzberg, 1950/2025; Presser, 1965). Although a number of courageous people joined the resistance and supported Jews fleeing the country or going into hiding, this was a small minority. The most common response to the atrocities committed during those years ranged from indifference and passive bystanding, to more active, hostile bystanding (e.g., reporting Jews in hiding to the authorities) and active collaboration (e.g., joining the Dutch National Socialist Movement, the NSB).

Most of the Jewish Dutch people who did survive, traumatized and left with nothing, could not count on much support or sympathy. The cold reception and discrimination of the few Jewish survivors who returned to the Netherlands after the war have been well documented (e.g., Citroen, 1999/2021), as well as the complex relation between Jewish Dutch and non-Jewish Dutch people after the war (e.g., Gans, 1994). Unsurprisingly, many Jewish survivors emigrated to Israel or the United States in these years; they did not feel at home in the Netherlands anymore.

The Netherlands is still struggling to come to terms with this burdensome past. In recent years, a number of official apologies have been offered, such as the one by former Prime Minister Mark Rutte (2020) for the actions of the Dutch authorities during World War II, and the apology by the mayor of Amsterdam, Femke Halsema, for the municipality's support of the Nazi regime in the registration and deportation of Dutch Jews during the Holocaust (2025). In 2026, the municipality of the Dutch city of Middelburg apologized to the Jewish community for the cold reception they received after World War II and for the municipality's failure to play an active role in the restitution of expropriated property.

These official group apologies have become more frequent worldwide in the past decades and their effects have been studied in social psychology for some years, but mostly in regard to the victim group or their descendants (for an overview see Bobowik et al., 2025). The perception of victim groups is extremely important. However, in the process of intergroup reconciliation it is also quite relevant how these apologies affect others, such as the perpetrators or their descendants, and the more general population. The current study focuses on the effect of an official group apology on the general public in society. It is proposed that such an apology can reduce negative stereotypes and hostile feelings toward (descendants of) the victim group. This idea will be tested in the Dutch context. Dutch participants will read fragments from the apology offered by the mayor of Amsterdam mentioned above, or they

will read no such statement. They will then answer questions about how they think of Jewish Dutch people, as well as how they evaluate the apology and related concepts such as financial reparations and Holocaust commemoration.

Antisemitism in the Netherlands: Conflation of Identities

Although the term antisemitism was coined in the 19th century, it was not until after World War II that the scientific study of antisemitism became more systematic (Mazower, 2025). In (social) psychology, antisemitism was first studied in classic works such as those by Adorno et al. (1950), linking it to an authoritarian personality, and Allport's (1954) study on the nature of prejudice (see Bilewicz, 2022, for a review). Building on this, more recent work identified some of the key psychological antecedents of antisemitism. For example, displacement of responsibility, which may lead to *secondary antisemitism*, that is, blaming Jews for their antisemitic experiences, but also a conspiracy mentality, relative deprivation, loss of control (e.g., Bilewicz, 2022; Bilewicz et al., 2013; Kofta et al., 2020), and mortality salience (Cohen et al., 2009). Additionally, there is work on *new antisemitism*, referring to antisemitism that comes in the form of opposition to Israel or anti-Zionism (e.g., Frindte et al., 2005; Bilewicz, 2022). More recently, renewed scholarly interest in the topic arose from a global increase in antisemitism (e.g., Kressel, 2024; Rensmann, 2020; Waxman et al., 2022). Interestingly, rather than people becoming more antisemitic, this increase may reflect a loosening of social norms regarding the expression of antisemitic attitudes (Kressel, 2024; Rensmann, 2020).

Antisemitism is a complex phenomenon. Its meaning has changed over time and is highly contested (e.g., Feldman, 2018; Kressel, 2024; Mazower, 2025; Waxman et al., 2022). For example, there is disagreement among scholars about the exact definition, in particular related to the previously mentioned new antisemitism: whether and to what extent criticism of Israel and anti-Zionism is a manifestation of antisemitism (see, e.g., Eidelson, 2024). The term is also highly politicized. It is used both by right-wing and left-wing politicians to silence or attack political opponents (e.g., Bilewicz, 2022; Mazower, 2025; Rensmann, 2020; Waxman et al., 2022). This politicization and weaponization of antisemitism became even more widespread after October 7, 2023, when Hamas committed a terrible massacre in Israel after which Israel launched a devastating assault on Gaza (Mazower, 2025; Ozer et al., 2025).

Israel's response to the attack by Hamas has been labelled genocide by a number of scholars in the field (e.g., International Association of Genocide Scholars, 2025), as well as by international organizations such as the United Nations and Amnesty International. Others disagree with this characterization (Klein, 2026). Yet other scholars do not use the word "genocide" in this context, but "genocidal". The director of the Dutch Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (NIOD), for example, described Israel's assault as "genocidal violence" (Funnekotter, 2025)².

The disagreement among academics, politicians, and the wider audience about whether or not the label of genocide to describe Israel's attacks on Gaza is justified, has sparked further polarization with regard to the Israel-Palestine conflict, and relatedly, antisemitism. For every serious discussion as well as scientific work that focuses on antisemitism, it is therefore important to be very clear on how antisemitism is understood. The current study follows the definition provided by the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism: "Antisemitism is discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish institutions as Jewish)" (Jerusalem Declaration, 2021). This implies that criticizing Israel, Israeli policy, or Zionism is not, in itself, antisemitism. Such criticism can be completely legitimate and does not necessarily have anything to do with being Jewish. At the same time, antisemitism *can* underlie anti-Israel or anti-Zionist statements, which can be difficult to detect as it is often more hidden, implicit, and denied (e.g., Kressel, 2024; Waxman et al., 2022).

A more explicit form of antisemitism is the type that conflates Jews or Judaism with Israel, Israeli policy, or Zionism³. Clearly, not all Jews are Israeli, Zionist, sympathize with Israeli policy (many do not), or even feel a connection to Israel. But, after October 7, 2023, hate against Jews because they are associated with Israel, Zionism, or the Israeli army (IDF) has increased in many countries, including the Netherlands (e.g., Rijksoverheid, 2025). For example, a Dutch-Jewish journalist is threatened with statements such as: "I would keep my mouth shut if I were you, otherwise something might happen to your adorable Zionist son"

² Genocide scholar Martin Shaw indicated that Israel has both "military and genocidal intentions in Gaza" but he also emphasized the "genocidal character" of Hamas' attacks on Israeli citizens on October 7th 2023 (NIOD Film, 2024).

³ It should be noted that Zionism is in itself a complex concept, not only because it is defined and interpreted in different ways, but also because anti-Zionism "means different things to different people" (Jaspal, 2023, p. 32).

(Boswijk, 2025). A Dutch newspaper (Fuks, 2025) reported several interviews with Jewish Dutch people on this issue. One of the interviewees indicated:

My son and I no longer speak Hebrew outside the home. At school, he was confronted with antisemitism: one boy called him ‘little Jew’, another said ‘go to the gas chamber’ and a fellow student gave the Hitler salute during a conversation about Israel and Palestine. I am considering moving to the United States – something that was unthinkable five years ago. [...]. Yesterday he [my son] said something that almost made me cry: ‘Mum, I’m tired of being Jewish.’

Conflating Jews with Israel, the IDF, or Zionism, and holding them responsible for the violence in Gaza, even though they live in another country and are not involved in Israeli policy, can lead to hate speech, exclusion, and violence against Jews. This is comparable to the aftermath of 9/11, when Muslims worldwide were held responsible for the terrorist attacks and expected to constantly speak out and distance themselves from these attacks. How to intervene against this type of antisemitism rooted in conflation of identities? One potential opportunity lies in the process of intergroup reconciliation, which is relevant in the case of Jewish Dutch people, considering that this process is still ongoing. This study explores the role of an official group apology and tests whether such an apology can decrease antisemitic stereotypes because it might increase a perception of Jewish Dutch people as part of the Dutch ingroup and less as an extension of Israel or Zionism.

The Role of Group Apologies in Reducing Antisemitism

One element that has received considerable attention in the context of intergroup conflict and reconciliation is group apology⁴ and its role in (post-conflict) relations between groups. Group apologies have been offered for severe international crimes including war crimes, crimes against humanity (e.g., slavery), and genocide, but also for discrimination, oppression, and other human rights violations. Group apologies can take place between states (e.g., Japan offering an apology to China), or within a state (e.g., the Dutch king offering an

⁴ Other terms that are often used in this context are “intergroup apology,” “collective apology,” “political apology,” and “government apology.” They are not exactly the same, for example, a political apology is not necessarily group-based (although it often has an effect on the group level).

apology to descendants of the Dutch slave trade). What is the function of these types of apologies?

In general, an apology can be defined as a communication in which an offender expresses responsibility, guilt and regret or remorse for an offence to an offended party (Hornsey & Wohl, 2013). This is often (though not always) accompanied by a promise of forbearance (“It will never happen again”) and offers of repair (Hornsey & Wohl, 2013). When an apology is offered at the group level, it gets an official, formal character and reflects an “attempt to redress a severe and long-standing harm against an innocent group” (Blatz et al., 2009, p. 221).

Typically, group apologies are offered in a public ceremony by a leader or representative of the perpetrator group and are accompanied by monetary or non-monetary forms of reparation. Often, the representative offering the apology was not involved in the harmdoing themselves, which is a clear difference between group apologies and interpersonal apologies (e.g., Štambuk et al., 2022). Another important difference is that the public character of group apologies implies that it is not only the victimized group that is addressed but also members of the non-victimized majority (Blatz et al., 2009).

After World War II, there has been a strong increase in group apologies for past wrongdoings worldwide (Brooks, 1999; Hornsey & Wohl, 2013; Zoodsma & Schaafsma, 2022). One of the most well-known public gestures of remorse was offered in 1970 by then West German Chancellor Willy Brandt. During a commemoration in Warsaw, Poland, at the memorial for the Ghetto uprising, Brandt famously kneeled down to show his deep remorse on behalf of the German nation for their crimes during the Holocaust. This symbolic gesture⁵, known as the *Kniefall von Warsaw*, was powerful and an important step in the process of reconciliation after World War II (Horelt, 2012). Thus, group apologies are meant to heal past wounds, end a cycle of violence and resentment, and generally restore intergroup relations (Bobowik et al., 2025). However, not every apology is successful in reaching that goal. In fact, empirical evidence shows only limited positive effects of group apologies.

Studies on the effects of group apologies often focus on whether these apologies lead to forgiveness from the victim group or their descendants toward the perpetrator group or

⁵ Note that this gesture by Brandt can be framed and interpreted in different ways. An apology is a plausible interpretation but not necessarily the only one.

their descendants. The evidence is largely pessimistic: there is often no effect of apology on forgiveness or even a backlash in certain contexts (for overviews, see, e.g., Bobowik et al., 2025; Hornsey & Wohl, 2013; Hornsey et al., 2015). It seems to be very difficult to “do it right,” which makes sense given the serious crimes for which the apologies are offered. Factors such as perceived sincerity of the apology and keeping more long-term promises are important predictors of how successful apologies are.

As most of the research in this field is focused on the perspective of the victim group (Bobowik et al., 2025), researchers have highlighted the necessity to study all groups involved: victim group, perpetrator group, and the general public (e.g., Borinca et al., 2024; Gkinopoulos et al., 2022; Martinovic et al., 2021). A small set of studies on group apology is indeed focused on the perpetrator group (e.g., Barlow et al., 2015; Harth et al., 2011; Hornsey et al., 2017a; Giner-Sorolla et al., 2022; Kim & Park, 2019; Lastrego & Licata, 2010) or on the broader population in a country (e.g., Kitagawa & Chu, 2021; Martinovic et al., 2021). However, most of these studies focus on these groups’ evaluation of or support for the apology itself, not on the potential *effect of the apology on other outcomes* such as people’s evaluation of or prejudice toward (descendants of) the victim group. When taking the perspective of the general public, one outcome of an apology could be a more positive perception of the victim group, even if the apology does not lead to forgiveness from the victim group itself. If the apology is perceived as genuine, such as in the case of Brandt’s “Kniefall,” there might be important reconciliatory effects on the general public as well. This is possible because an apology signals that the victim group and their descendants matter, that they are respected and acknowledged, and it restores the victim group’s power (Blatz & Philpot, 2010). Importantly, when it concerns an intrastate apology - an apology toward a specific group *within* society - restoring dignity and power of the victim group also communicates that this group is an important part of that society, of the national ingroup. Applying this idea to the Dutch context, a collective symbol of responsibility and regret for past injustices, such as the apology of the Amsterdam mayor, could lead to a more pronounced perception of Jewish Dutch people as part of the Dutch national ingroup, separate from other identities (Israeli, Zionist), thereby reducing identity conflation. This, in turn, could reduce antisemitic stereotypes.

The Current Study

The current study examines the effect of an intrastate group apology on the perception of the broader population with regard to antisemitic stereotypes, via reduced identity conflation. Specifically, the following hypotheses will be tested (preregistered on the Open Science Framework (OSF; <https://osf.io/zhsfw/overview>):

Hypothesis 1: Reading an official group-apology offered to (descendants of) a victimized group in society will decrease stereotypes toward this group among the general public. Specifically, it is expected that reading an apology by a representative of the Dutch government, for the Dutch collaboration with the Nazis during the Holocaust, will decrease antisemitic stereotypes among the (Dutch) participants, as compared to reading no apology (a baseline condition).

Hypothesis 2: Reading this apology will also increase perceptions of Jewish Dutch people as being part of the Dutch ingroup, and decrease perceptions of Jewish Dutch people as identifying with and supporting Israel.

Hypothesis 3: The effect described in Hypothesis 1 will be (partially) mediated by the mechanisms described in Hypothesis 2. Thus, increased perception of Jewish Dutch people as part of the Dutch ingroup and decreased perception of Jewish Dutch people as identifying with and supporting Israel (partly) explain the effect of apology on antisemitic stereotypes.

A control condition in which the Dutch collaboration with the Nazis is described and acknowledged, but without the apology, is included. This is to check whether, if there is an effect of apology, this effect is indeed driven by the apology, or could also be the result of the description and acknowledgement of the misdeed only, which would indicate that an explicit apology would not be necessary for the effect to occur.

It is noted that a *backlash effect* may also occur, where the apology actually has the opposite effect, leading to more antisemitism. Some negative effects of apology are described in the literature (e.g., Bobowik et al., 2025), although these studies usually take the victim-perspective and not the perspective of the broader audience (but see Kim & Park, 2019). However, in the case of antisemitism, a backlash effect could potentially be the result of the previously mentioned *secondary antisemitism*. That is, the apology could increase feelings of guilt about the Holocaust. These feelings are uncomfortable and to suppress them, a justification of what has happened could lead to *more* antisemitism (see Bilewicz, 2022).

Additionally, a number of explorations will be conducted. First, correlations among main variables and participants' evaluation of the apology, financial reparations and Holocaust commemoration, as well as political ideology, ingroup identification and social dominance orientation (SDO) will be inspected. In particular, a right-wing political ideology and high SDO have been found to predict antisemitism (e.g., Bilewicz, 2022; Ozer et al., 2025), as well as less acceptance of (group) apology (e.g., Hornsey et al., 2017b; Kitagawa & Chu, 2021), so it is important to take these into account. Political ideology and SDO may also moderate potential effects of apology on antisemitic stereotypes. Apology could affect antisemitism less strongly, not at all, or even in the opposite direction (backlash effect) for people high in SDO, or far on the right/conservative end of the political spectrum. Second, if the predicted effect of apology on antisemitism is found, but no mediation of the variables mentioned under Hypothesis 2, it will be tested whether an affective measure (feeling thermometer) mediates the effect instead. Potentially, reading the apology increases positive feelings toward Jewish Dutch people which mediate an effect of apology on antisemitism.

Furthermore, it will be explored whether reading the apology affects people's general evaluation of that apology, as well as material reparations and Holocaust commemoration. For example, if reading an apology predicts a more negative attitude toward that apology, this may impact intergroup relations in the long run, even if there is no effect on antisemitism. Finally, a brief content analysis of open-ended responses to the apology will be conducted.

Method

Data were collected online via Qualtrics and Prolific. The study design, hypotheses, intended explorations, and analysis plan were preregistered on OSF: <https://osf.io/zhsfw/overview>. All materials used can be found there as well. The study received ethical approval from the local Ethics Review Board prior to data collection (#FMG-16083).

Participants

An a priori power analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) was conducted for Hypothesis 1: the expected effect of the apology manipulation on antisemitism (analysis of variance, fixed effect, omnibus, one-way), with a power estimate of .80 and an alpha error

probability of .05. Because most previous group apology studies used different (victim) samples and different outcomes than the current study, a “smallest effect size of interest” (SESOI; Ledgerwood, 2019) was specified as a small-to-medium effect ($f = 0.15$). This resulted in a recommended total sample size of 432 participants.

For Hypothesis 2, which predicted that the effect of apology on antisemitism would be mediated by inclusion of Jewish Dutch people in the Dutch ingroup and by lower perceived Jewish Dutch people’s identification with and support of Israel, the Monte Carlo Power Analysis for Indirect Effects app was used (Schoemann et al., 2017). Again, a power of .80 and alpha level of .05 were assumed, as well as small-to-medium correlations ($r = .20$) between the X, Y, and M variables (1,000 replications, 20,000 draws per replication). This resulted in a recommended total sample size of 390 participants.

Inclusion criteria were residence in the Netherlands and fluency in Dutch. Participants received £1.80 for their participation, which took approximately 10 minutes. In total, data from 487 participants were collected. Eight participants did not finish the questionnaire and another eight did not pass the attention checks, resulting in a final sample of 471 participants (41.6% female, 55.4% male, 2.5% nonbinary or other). Age ranged from 18 to 76 years ($M = 32$, $SD = 10.01$). Education level was generally high, with 45.4% of participants having obtained a bachelor’s degree and 26.5% a master’s degree or PhD.

Design and Procedure

This study employed a between-participants design with three conditions to which participants were randomly assigned: a baseline condition, in which participants did not read any text, and two apology conditions in which participants either read about the context of the apology only, or read about both the context and the apology itself.

Data were collected between November 26 and December 17, 2025. Participants were invited to take part in a study about “Judging social groups.” They received information and provided informed consent. They then either read one of the vignettes or proceeded directly to the questions (described under “*Measures*” in order of appearance). After completing the survey, participants were thanked and debriefed.

Materials

Apology Manipulation

In the baseline condition participants read no text. In the context-only condition, participants read about the reason and context of the apology. It was explained that the mayor of Amsterdam, Femke Halsema, addressed the Jewish community in Amsterdam during a commemoration in April 2025. During this event she gave a speech in which she discussed the role of the Amsterdam municipality in collaborating with the Nazis during World War II. The text ended as follows: “Halsema then went on to discuss the role of the city council during the German occupation in the registration and deportation of Amsterdam Jews.”

In the full apology condition, participants read the same text but instead of this last sentence they read the apology, namely: “When it came down to it, the Amsterdam government was neither heroic, nor determined, nor compassionate. It horribly failed its Jewish residents. On behalf of the city council, I apologize for this.” These were the actual words spoken by the mayor during the commemoration (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2025). The full text of the speech was not used as it was quite long; instead a selection containing the crucial elements of the apology (contextual information and the apology itself) was presented.

Attention and Manipulation Checks

In the two apology conditions (but not in the baseline condition) two multiple-choice attention checks assessed whether participants recalled who gave the speech and where it was given. An additional open-ended question asked participants to briefly describe what the speech was about. In addition, a four-item manipulation check assessed whether participants thought the mayor “took responsibility” for what happened, “expressed remorse,” “expressed regret,” and to what extent they thought the speech was “sincere” (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*; $\alpha = .79$). These items were selected based on the centrality of these elements in an apology and the notion that a successful apology should increase perceptions of sincerity (Bobowik et al., 2025). If a reconciliatory statement does not contain an apology (as in the context-only condition), the perceived presence of these four elements should be much lower.

Measures

Inclusion of Jewish Dutch People in the Ingroup

A four-item scale measured the extent to which participants thought that Jewish Dutch people belong to the Dutch ingroup (e.g., “Jewish Dutch people are part of the Netherlands”; 1 = *completely disagree*; 7 = *completely agree*; $\alpha = .87$). As these items were newly developed for this study, correlations with two other measures were inspected as a validity check: *common ingroup identity* of Jewish Dutch and non-Jewish Dutch people and perceived *outgroup homogeneity* of Jewish Dutch people. For common ingroup identity, three items based on Riek et al. (2010) were used (e.g., “Jewish Dutch people and non-Jewish Dutch people belong to the same group”; $\alpha = .82$). For outgroup homogeneity, three items were used (e.g., “To what extent do you think that all Jews in the Netherlands behave in the same way?”; $\alpha = .79$). All items were answered on scales from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). Correlations with inclusion of Jewish Dutch people in the ingroup were in the expected direction: positive for common ingroup identity ($r = .56, p < .001$) and negative for outgroup homogeneity ($r = -.30, p < .001$). These findings supported the validity of the ingroup inclusion measure.

Perceived Identification of Jewish Dutch People with Israelis and Support for Israel

A three-item scale based on Doosje et al. (1995) measured perceived identification of Jewish Dutch people with Israelis (e.g., “To what extent do you think Jewish Dutch people identify with Israelis?”; $\alpha = .90$). Another three-item scale measured perceived support for Israel of Jewish Dutch people (e.g., “To what extent do you think Jewish Dutch people support the Israeli army?”; $\alpha = .88$). All items were answered on scales from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).⁶

⁶ Four additional items measured perceived Dutch identification of Jewish Dutch people ($\alpha = .91$), for example: “To what extent do you think Jewish Dutch people identify with other Dutch people?” This measure was not used in the end.

Feeling Thermometer

One item asked participants to indicate how positive or negative they feel toward Jewish Dutch people. This question was answered on a slider ranging from 0 (*very negative*) to 10 (*very positive*).⁷

Antisemitic Stereotypes

The 11 statements of the Antisemitism Index (ADL, 2025), which was also used by Ozer and colleagues (2025), were used to measure this construct. These statements reflect common negative stereotypes about Jews (e.g., “Jews have too much control over global affairs” and “Jews think they are better than other people”; 1 = *probably false*; 7 = *probably true*; $\alpha = .95$).⁸

Apology Evaluation

All participants (including those in the baseline condition) read a brief explanation of the apology that was offered by the mayor of Amsterdam in April 2025. They were then asked whether they had been aware of that apology (*yes, no, not sure*) and if so, how familiar they were with its content (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *completely*). Subsequently, they indicated to what extent they considered the apology “appropriate,” “justified,” and “not necessary” (reverse-coded; 1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*; $\alpha = .89$).⁹ An open-ended question asked for participants’ opinions about the apology.

Support for Reparations

Participants were informed that, in addition to the apology, the municipality allocated funds to strengthen Jewish life in Amsterdam. Participants indicated whether they supported this, and to what extent they thought it was “appropriate,” “justified,” “important,” and “not necessary” (reverse-coded; 1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*; $\alpha = .95$). They were also asked

⁷ Another item measured people’s perception of the feelings of the average Dutch person toward Jewish Dutch people. This item was not used in the end. Note that, in the Dutch context, it is a bit less common to talk about feeling “cold” or “warm” toward a certain group (or individual) so therefore it was decided to use “negative” versus “positive” instead.

⁸ Three items from Frindte et al. (2005) to measure latent antisemitism ($\alpha = .62$) were also included, namely: “I don’t tell everyone what I think of Jews,” “I think many people don’t dare to say what they really think about Jews,” and “I find the whole subject of “Jews” somehow unpleasant.” Items were answered on a scale from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 7 (*completely agree*). These items were not used in the end.

⁹ Initially the item “sufficient” was also included in this scale. It was decided to leave this item out as this increased the reliability of the scale from $\alpha = .77$ to $\alpha = .89$.

whether they would be willing to donate to this cause themselves (1 = *certainly not*; 7 = *certainly yes*).

Commemoration of the Holocaust

Two items from Frindte et al. (2005) measured participants' opinion about Holocaust commemoration (e.g., "I think it is good that attention is being paid to commemorating what happened to Dutch Jews during the Holocaust"; 1 = *completely disagree*; 7 = *completely agree*). Because the items correlated strongly ($r = .69, p < .001$), they were combined into a single scale.

Ingroup Identification

A four-item scale from Doosje et al. (1995) measured participants' own identification with the Dutch (e.g., "I identify with other Dutch people"; 1 = *completely disagree*; 7 = *completely agree*; $\alpha = .89$).

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)

A four-item scale with slightly modified items from Pratto et al. (2013) measured SDO (e.g., "We should not strive for equality among different groups in society"; 1 = *completely disagree*; 7 = *completely agree*; $\alpha = .79$).

Political Ideology

Three items, partly based on Ozer et al. (2025), measured political ideology (e.g., "How would you describe your political views in general?"; $\alpha = .84$). Answers were given on a slider ranging from 0 (*far left/extremely liberal*) to 10 (*far right/extremely conservative*). Participants could also select: "I don't know/I'd rather not say".

Sympathy for Israel versus Palestine

Participants were asked to what extent they follow news coverage of Israel and Palestine (1 = *not at all*; 5 = *closely*), based on Kanne and Van den Koppel (2025).¹⁰ Subsequently, participants were asked whether they sympathize more with Israel or Palestine

¹⁰ This item was meant to introduce the topic and not analyzed for the current study.

in the conflict between these groups. This item was based on Leep and Pressman (2019) and answered on a slider ranging from 0 (*Israel*) to 5 (*neutral*) to 10 (*Palestine*). Participants could also select: “I don’t know/I’d rather not say”.

Demographics and Checks

Participants reported their age, gender identification, highest level of education, religion, and religious background. At the end of the questionnaire, they were asked whether they had participated seriously in the survey (*Yes/No*) and whether they had any comments.

Results

Descriptive statistics and Correlations

Mean scores, standard deviations, and correlations between the main variables are reported in Table 1.

Descriptives

On average, participants scored 2.72 on the scale measuring antisemitic stereotypes, indicating responses closer to “probably false” than to “probably true”. They scored 6.85 on the feeling thermometer, indicating more positive than negative feelings toward Jewish Dutch people. Inclusion of Jewish Dutch people in the Dutch ingroup was high ($M = 6.11$). At the same time, perceived Israeli identification of Jewish Dutch people was also rather high ($M = 4.44$). Perceived Jewish Dutch people’s support for Israel was slightly above the midpoint ($M = 3.69$).

The apology was evaluated rather positively ($M = 4.99$), and participants moderately supported material reparation ($M = 3.97$). Participants’ own willingness to donate was low ($M = 2.25$), but they were generally positive about Holocaust commemoration ($M = 5.95$). The mean score on political ideology was 3.84, indicating the sample was more left/liberal than right/conservative.

Correlations

Endorsement of antisemitic stereotypes was negatively related to the feeling thermometer ($r = -.48$), inclusion of Jewish Dutch people in the ingroup ($r = -.63$), evaluation of the apology ($r = -.40$), support for material reparation ($r = -.48$), willingness to donate ($r = -.32$), and support for Holocaust commemoration ($r = -.49$; all $ps < .001$). Thus, participants who more strongly endorsed antisemitic stereotypes felt more negative toward Jewish Dutch people, perceived them less as part of the Dutch ingroup and evaluated the apology, material reparation, and Holocaust commemoration more negatively.

Endorsement of antisemitic stereotypes was positively related to perceived Israeli identification ($r = .43$), perceived support of Israel ($r = .53$), SDO ($r = .31$), and political ideology ($r = .34$; all $ps < .001$). This indicates that participants who more strongly endorsed antisemitic stereotypes, thought that Jewish Dutch people identified more with Israel and supported Israel more. These participants also scored higher on SDO and were more right-wing. Endorsement of antisemitic stereotypes was unrelated to sympathy for Israel versus Palestine, but the latter was negatively related to the feeling thermometer ($r = -.28$, $p < .001$), meaning that people who reported more sympathy for Palestine than for Israel also reported more negative feelings toward Jewish Dutch people. In addition, both SDO ($r = -.44$, $p < .001$) and political ideology ($r = -.54$, $p < .001$) were negatively related to sympathy for Israel versus Palestine. Thus, people higher in SDO and more right-wing reported more sympathy for Israel than for Palestine. People higher in SDO and more right-wing also evaluated the apology more negatively ($r = -.39$ and $r = -.35$, respectively), were less in favor of reparation ($r = -.31$ and $r = -.32$, respectively), less inclined to donate themselves ($r = -.16$ and $r = -.21$, respectively), and less in favor of Holocaust commemoration ($r = -.37$ and $r = -.33$, respectively; all $ps < .001$).

Table 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Main Variables

Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
1. Antisemitic stereotypes	2.72 (1.40)	—												
2. Feeling thermometer	6.85 (1.84)	-.48***	—											
3. Inclusion Jewish Dutch in ingroup	6.11 (1.02)	-.63***	.53***	—										
4. Perceived Israeli identification	4.44 (1.35)	.43***	-.18***	-.29***	—									
5. Perceived support for Israel	3.69 (1.30)	.53***	-.31***	-.37***	.70***	—								
6. Apology evaluation	4.99 (1.54)	-.40***	.37***	.45***	-.08	-.18***	—							
7. Material reparation	3.97 (1.59)	-.48***	.45***	.43***	-.15**	-.23***	.61***	—						
8. Willingness to donate	2.25 (1.47)	-.32***	.35***	.24***	-.05	-.11*	.40***	.60***	—					
9. Holocaust commemoration	5.95 (1.31)	-.49***	.31***	.55***	-.09*	-.24***	.48***	.41***	.21***	—				
10. Dutch ingroup identification	5.41 (1.19)	-.13**	.23***	.15***	-.02	.00	-.01	.02	.05	.08*	—			
11. SDO	2.26 (1.18)	.31***	-.16***	-.42***	.11*	.18***	-.39***	-.31***	-.16***	-.37***	.10*	—		

12. Political ideology (left-right)	3.84 (1.97)	.34***	-.01	-.30***	.18***	.26***	-.35***	-.32***	-.21***	-.33***	.22***	.53***	—	
13. Sympathy for Israel vs. Palestine	7.01 (2.48)	.03	-.28***	.00	-.09	-.12*	.13**	-.04	-.08	.12*	-.17***	-.44***	-.54***	—

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. $N = 471$ for all variables except political ideology ($N = 460$) and sympathy for Israel vs. Palestine ($N = 433$). All variables are measured on 7-point scales, except the feeling thermometer, political ideology, and sympathy for Israel vs. Palestine; these are measured on scales from 0 to 10.

Manipulation Check

To check whether participants in the context-only versus full apology conditions noticed the difference between these conditions (absence vs. presence of an apology), a one-way ANOVA was conducted with condition (context-only vs. full apology) as independent variable and the combined measure of perceived responsibility, regret, remorse, and sincerity as dependent variable. Participants in the context-only condition scored significantly lower ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.20$) on this measure than participants in the full apology condition ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 0.86$), $F(1, 310) = 71.95$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$. This indicates that the manipulation worked as intended.

Main Findings

To test Hypothesis 1: An apology for the collaboration during the Holocaust would decrease endorsement of antisemitic stereotypes, a one-way ANOVA was performed with apology condition (baseline vs. context-only vs. full apology) as independent variable and antisemitic stereotypes as dependent variable. Descriptives are reported in Table 2. As can be seen, the mean score was somewhat higher in the baseline condition than in the two other conditions but this difference was not significant, $F(2, 468) = 1.46$, $p = .235$, $\eta^2 = .01$. Tukey's HSD post hoc tests also showed no significant differences between separate conditions (all p 's $> .05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 cannot be confirmed.

To test Hypothesis 2: The apology would increase perceptions of Jewish Dutch people as part of the Dutch ingroup and decrease perceptions of Jewish Dutch people as identifying with and supporting Israel, a MANOVA was performed (as the dependent variables were correlated) with apology condition (baseline vs. context-only vs. full apology) as independent variable and inclusion of Jewish Dutch people in the ingroup, perceived Israeli identity and perceived support for Israel as dependent variables. Although the means for all three outcomes were in the expected direction (see Table 2), there was no significant overall effect, $F(6, 934) = 1.25$, $p = .279$, $\eta^2 = .01$. The univariate tests for perceived Israeli identity and perceived support for Israel were also not significant ($p = .158$ and $p = .112$, respectively). There was, however, a univariate trend in the expected direction for inclusion of Jewish Dutch people in the ingroup, $F(2, 468) = 2.42$, $p = .09$, $\eta^2 = .01$. Tukey's HSD post hoc tests indicated that inclusion of Jewish Dutch people was slightly higher in the full apology

condition than in the baseline condition (95% CI [-.02, .51], $p = .083$). Because this effect was very small and only marginally significant, Hypothesis 2 cannot be confirmed.

Because there was no effect of the apology manipulation on antisemitic stereotypes, Hypothesis 3: a mediation of the effect of apology on antisemitic stereotypes by ingroup inclusion and perceived identification of Jewish Dutch people with Israel, was not further investigated.

Table 2

Means (Standard Deviations in Parentheses) for Antisemitic Stereotypes, Inclusion of Jewish Dutch People in the Ingroup, Perceived Israeli Identification of Jewish Dutch People, and Perceived Support for Israel among Jewish Dutch People, by Condition (Baseline, Context-Only, and Full Apology)

	Baseline	Context-only	Full apology
Antisemitic stereotypes	2.87 (1.49)	2.61 (1.33)	2.68 (1.35)
Inclusion Jewish Dutch in ingroup	5.97 (1.23) [†]	6.15 (0.96)	6.22 (0.97) [†]
Perceived Israeli identification	4.61 (1.34)	4.36 (1.35)	4.36 (1.36)
Perceived support for Israel	3.86 (1.36)	3.58 (1.27)	3.62 (1.25)

Note. [†] $p < .10$.

Explorations

It was explored whether the apology manipulation had an effect on the feeling thermometer: how negative or positive participants felt toward Jewish Dutch people. An ANOVA with apology condition (baseline vs. context-only vs. full apology) as independent variable and feeling thermometer scores as dependent variable indicated a trend in the expected direction, $F(2, 468) = 2.61$, $p = .075$, $\eta^2 = .01$. Tukey's HSD post hoc tests showed that participants in the baseline condition ($M = 6.59$, $SD = 1.75$) scored marginally lower on the feeling thermometer (i.e., more negative) than participants in the full apology condition ($M = 7.05$, $SD = 1.80$), (95% CI [-.94, .02], $p = .066$). The difference between context-only ($M = 6.90$, $SD = 1.94$) and the other conditions was nonsignificant (all $ps > .10$).

Additionally, potential effects on the apology-related measures were explored, namely: evaluation of the apology, support for material reparation, willingness to donate, and support for Holocaust commemoration. As these outcomes were correlated, a MANOVA was conducted with apology condition (baseline vs. context-only vs. full apology) as independent variable and these four outcomes as dependent variables. There was a significant overall effect, $F(8, 932) = 2.51, p = .011, \eta^2 = .02$, which was driven by a significant univariate effect on apology evaluation, $F(2, 468) = 6.19, p = .002, \eta^2 = .03$. Participants in the context-only ($M = 5.23, SD = 1.41$) and full apology conditions ($M = 5.10, SD = 1.55$) evaluated the apology more positively than participants in the baseline condition ($M = 4.65, SD = 1.61$). Tukey's HSD post hoc tests showed that this effect was significant for baseline versus context-only (95% CI [-.98, -.17], $p = .003$), and baseline versus full apology (95% CI [-.85, -.05], $p = .025$), but not for context-only versus full apology (95% CI [-.28, .53], $p = .739$). In other words, participants who first read about the reason and context of the apology, or read both this and the apology itself, later evaluated the apology more positively than participants who had not read anything about it. There were no univariate effects on support for material reparation, willingness to donate, or Holocaust commemoration (all $ps > .10$).

Open responses about the apology

Participants' open responses to the question: "What do you think of Mayor Halsema's apology?" were read and coded. In total, 460 (97.66%) of the 471 participants answered this question. Their answers were coded as positive ($n = 204; 44.35\%$), positive-ambivalent ($n = 131; 28.48\%$), negative ($n = 107; 23.26\%$), or no opinion/not sure ($n = 18; 3.91\%$). Thus, almost 73% of participants responded positively (fully positive or positive-ambivalent).

Among the positive evaluations, participants mentioned that the apology was important, appropriate, and sincere. For example, one participant wrote: "It was an important step to acknowledge that the municipality of Amsterdam was wrong and had disadvantaged Jews in the city, and to offer an apology on behalf of the municipality. I thought the apology was well worded."

Positive-ambivalent responses indicated that the apology was good but a bit late and mainly symbolic, that more concrete action should follow, or that it was not for them to judge as they were not Jewish. For example: "A good thing, but it is only a one-off gesture. In

practice, it remains to be seen whether its significance extends beyond that.” Another participant said: “I am not Jewish myself, so I am not sure whether I can accept it or not—this is entirely up to Dutch Jews. I do think it is very decent that an apology has been offered.” Some respondents in this category also questioned whether one can apologize for crimes committed by others: “I understand the idea behind it, but I always feel that you can only apologize for your own behavior or something you are responsible for. It is a nice gesture, though.”

There were also negative responses. Importantly, negative responses could mean two different things. First, some participants considered the apology “too little, too late,” insincere, merely symbolic, meaningless (“empty words”), or not helpful for Jewish Dutch people who are faced with antisemitism today. For example:

Ultimately, it is insufficient and too late. I am not a Jewish Dutch person myself, but I am aware of how incredibly uncompassionate we Dutch people have been, both before, during, and especially after the Holocaust. Jewish property was stolen and never returned, and the returning Jewish survivors of the Holocaust were looked down upon once they were back in the Netherlands. And now again: the government and municipalities of the Netherlands are cooperating in the criminalization of all kinds of ethno-religious groups, especially Muslims. We apologize for what we did decades ago, but by now embarking on a similar path, we are showing that we have in fact learned nothing.

Second, a negative response could also mean that the apology was deemed unnecessary, pointless as it makes no sense to apologize for crimes of a past generation, or it was not up to the mayor to apologize. For example: “It has been almost 85 years now, so it is time to stop making excuses, all who were responsible are dead now.” And: “It is unnecessary, she [the mayor] did not wrong anyone, and the Municipality of Amsterdam is not a person. Organizations cannot feel remorse.” Also, participants mentioned that the apology was inappropriate and poorly timed given what is happening in Gaza, for example: “Especially in this day and age, and in light of the genocide taking place in Gaza, I find it highly inappropriate.” And, even more outspoken:

Unnecessary. Every month a new Second World War film, every year seven commemorations, ten new apologies, millions more [Euros] to Amsterdam Jews as an excuse. It's being exploited, while those same victimized Jews act like Nazis when you hear their conversations at home about Palestinians. It's too hypocritical to deserve my respect.¹¹

Thus, although the quantitative results showed that the apology was generally evaluated positively, individual open-ended responses varied considerably. This will be further addressed in the General Discussion.

General Discussion

After Willy Brandt's famous Kniefall in Warsaw in 1970, official group apologies for past misdeeds have become increasingly common in the process of transitional justice and reconciliation, in which groups attempt to come to terms with a burdensome past. Such processes can take a lifetime, as is evident from the recent Dutch apologies for the country's role during the Holocaust, more than 80 years later, but also from the 2022 Dutch apology for slavery, which happened even longer ago. These types of apologies have been studied mainly from the victim group's perspective. In the current study, the effect of a group apology on the general public was the main focus. It was hypothesized that an official group apology for Dutch collaboration with the Nazis during the Holocaust would reduce antisemitic stereotypes among the Dutch. It was further expected that this effect would be mediated by increased inclusion of Jewish Dutch people in the Dutch ingroup and reduced perceptions that Jewish Dutch people identify with Israelis and support Israel.

The findings did not provide clear evidence that a group apology has this effect. Although the means on all relevant measures differed in the expected direction, and some of these differences showed a trend, none of the predicted effects reached significance. Thus, the apology did not affect antisemitic stereotypes, although it marginally increased positive feelings toward Jewish Dutch people. Possibly, the study was underpowered to detect the

¹¹ It is important to note here that the idea of "ten new apologies and millions more to Amsterdam Jews" every year does not correspond to reality.

predicted effects. However, even if a larger sample would reveal a small effect, the question is whether such a small effect would be practically meaningful as a basis for interventions aimed at reducing antisemitic stereotypes.

Although the apology did not decrease antisemitism, it also did not *increase* antisemitism. This is important to note because previous findings show backlash effects of group apology (see Bobowik et al., 2025; Kim & Park, 2019), and confrontation with the Holocaust could lead to *secondary antisemitism* (see Bilewicz, 2022). The current study did not reveal such a backlash effect. More generally, the apology was evaluated rather positively in terms of how appropriate, justified, and necessary participants found it. Additionally, participants who first read about the reason and context of the apology, or read both this and the apology itself, later evaluated the apology more positively than participants who did not read anything about it. This could be interpreted as a sign that people appreciated the words, which positively affected their evaluation of the apology. Note, however, that these findings are exploratory. They should be interpreted with caution and replicated, preferably in different contexts.

Participants also indicated that material reparations accompanying the apology and Holocaust commemoration are generally desirable. It is important, however, to consider that the sample in this study was rather left-wing and highly educated. In more right-wing samples, results would likely differ, considering the negative correlations between the apology-related measures and both political ideology and SDO. These negative correlations align with previous work (Hornsey et al., 2017b; Kitagawa & Chu, 2021), showing that people who are more right-wing and higher in SDO report less acceptance and approval of apology, as for these people, apologies may threaten the status quo of unequal power relations between groups.

Antisemitism in the Netherlands and its Correlates

This study showed some noteworthy results regarding endorsement of antisemitic stereotypes and a more affective measure (feeling thermometer) toward Jewish Dutch people. On average participants scored 2.72 on the antisemitic stereotypes scale, meaning that they rated the statements as closer to “probably false” than “probably true”. However, given the clear stereotypic and negative content of the statements, this score is still quite high. It is also

rather high considering that people may underreport their antisemitic attitudes because (a) such attitudes are socially unacceptable and/or (b) antisemitic attitudes may be unconscious or suppressed because they conflict with people's self-image as liberal and egalitarian. This could be particularly true for people with a more left-wing political orientation (i.e., aversive racism; see Waxman et al., 2022).

Endorsement of antisemitic stereotypes was positively related to right-wing political ideology and SDO, and SDO also predicted more negative attitudes toward Jewish Dutch people. This is in line with previous work and theory on antisemitism (Bilewicz, 2022; Ozer et al., 2025; Rensmann, 2020; Waxman et al., 2022). At the same time, a more right-wing political ideology and higher SDO were related to more sympathy for Israel than for Palestine. This is perhaps the result of right-wing and high SDO people, besides being prejudiced toward Jews, also being prejudiced toward Muslims, perhaps even more so than toward Jews, which could explain more sympathy for Israel than for Palestine. Interestingly, sympathy toward Israel versus Palestine was unrelated to antisemitic stereotypes, but it was negatively related to feelings toward Jewish Dutch people. That is, people who sympathized more with Palestine than with Israel indicated to feel more negatively toward Jewish Dutch people, even though they did not endorse antisemitic stereotypes more strongly. This finding is in line with Ozer et al.'s (2025) study, showing that priming participants with the war in Gaza led to more negative attitudes toward Jews, but not to more antisemitism. The finding also aligns with the examples quoted in the Introduction of Jewish Dutch people being threatened and held responsible for what is happening in Gaza. The fact that greater sympathy for Palestine than for Israel seems to co-occur with negative feelings toward Jews in another country, who are not necessarily involved in the conflict, is problematic. In the next section, strategies to address this identity conflation are discussed.

Finally, endorsement of antisemitic stereotypes was negatively related to evaluation of the apology, support for financial reparation, willingness to donate, and support for Holocaust commemoration. Conversely, the feeling thermometer was positively related to these measures. In other words, people who agreed more with antisemitic stereotypes and who felt more negatively toward Jewish Dutch people were less favorable about the apology, financial reparation, and commemoration of the Holocaust. These relations make sense. If people think more stereotypically and feel more negatively about Jewish Dutch people, it is no surprise

that they do not see the need for an apology for collaboration during the Holocaust, financial reparations, or commemoration of the Holocaust.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Group Apology as an Intervention?

It is important to stress that reducing prejudice or stereotyping of the victim group is not an explicit goal of group apology. If an apology does lead to such a reduction, it can be regarded as a beneficial side effect, embedded in the broader aim of promoting intergroup reconciliation. The current study, however, did not show such a side effect.

So how to advise policy makers who look for strategies to fight antisemitism and other types of racism? Based on the current findings, a group apology alone is definitely not enough. However, the apology itself is not the only element in the process of reconciliation. Financial reparations are often part of a group apology and, in this case, they were aimed at making Jewish Amsterdam more visible to the broader public. This is a longer-term investment which might reduce antisemitic stereotypes and increase positive affect toward Jewish Dutch people in the long run. It is therefore possible that an apology could reduce stereotypes when the full process is taken into account.

The fact that the apology was evaluated rather positively, especially by people who are more left-wing and low in SDO, is encouraging. This suggests that, even if an apology does not automatically lead to forgiveness among (descendants of) the victim group, the broader audience may still respond positively. At the same time, the open-ended responses indicated that some people were ambivalent about the apology or even negative. Some argued that it makes no sense to apologize for something that one were not personally involved in. This aligns with previous qualitative research on group apology in the aftermath of the 1991-1995 war in Croatia (Štambuk et al., 2022). In that study, participants also indicated that an apology from people who were not involved in the war does not make sense. It is therefore important that people gain a better understanding of why a group apology is offered and what it is meant to achieve. Indeed, the mayor of Amsterdam is not personally responsible for what happened during the Holocaust. But that is not the point. Willy Brandt was not personally responsible for the Holocaust either. Both acted as representatives of a group that had harmed another group in the past and, in that capacity, took responsibility and acknowledged guilt.

This responsibility and acknowledgement are therefore not personal but performed on behalf of the group. So there are important differences between an interpersonal apology and a group apology, as already noted in the Introduction. Raising awareness among a wider audience about this difference could help people better understand and appreciate group apologies.

One aspect of this study that should be noted is that the apology used was offered by a politician who is often criticized and even demonized. She is regularly dismissed as incompetent because of her left-wing political orientation and also because she is a woman. Having this particular representative offering the apology could have influenced the results. For example, participants could have evaluated the apology more negatively, as less sincere or just irrelevant because it came from her. On the other hand, the sample in this study was rather left-wing. This may have reduced the impact of this factor compared to what might be found in a more right-wing sample.

Timing also plays a role in apologies. Some of the participants in this study indicated that the timing of the apology was inappropriate considering the violence committed by Israel in Gaza. To the authors' knowledge, no work has empirically examined the effect of timing on group apologies. Future studies could address this. Additionally, not only the timing of the apology but the timing of this study may have affected the outcomes. It is not inconceivable that, had the study been conducted five years earlier, it would have yielded different results.

Some Thoughts on Preventing and Combating Antisemitism in the Netherlands

Given the correlations found in this study, it is important to focus on people with more right-wing ideologies and higher SDO when it comes to antisemitism. This is not new, but it is important to see it replicated in the Dutch context. It also clearly connects the current findings to more general work in the field of (de-)radicalization. For example, a systematic literature review shows that SDO and right-wing authoritarianism are important individual-level factors associated with violent extremism and right-wing extremism, respectively (Feddes et al., 2023). Relatedly, antisemitism is a core part of the ideology and rhetoric of many right-wing extremist groups and numerous terrorist attacks coming from these groups have antisemitic motives (Rensmann, 2020). For example, supporters of the extreme right *QAnon* movement often share hateful antisemitic messages on their channels inspired by

conspiracy myths (e.g., Ebner et al., 2022). It is no surprise that neo-Nazi or white supremacist groups are antisemitic, but it is remarkable that expressing antisemitic views and conspiracies (including Holocaust denial and relativization) have become more mainstream worldwide (e.g., Kressel, 2024; Rensmann, 2020).

Besides focusing on the (radical) right in fighting antisemitism, more needs to be done to disentangle sympathy for Palestine versus Israel from people's perception of Dutch Jews, by creating more awareness about the fact that Dutch Jews are not necessarily linked to Israel and, especially, Israeli politics. In the Netherlands, people often refer to "the Jewish community," thereby obscuring the diversity of Dutch Jews. That diversity is precisely what is so important in combating antisemitism linked to anti-Zionism. It is therefore positive that, in addition to the apology, the municipality of Amsterdam has allocated funds to promote awareness of Jewish Amsterdam. By showing that Jews have been part of Amsterdam and the Netherlands for centuries and by drawing attention to the history and culture that have become part of Amsterdam (e.g., many Yiddish words are still used in Amsterdam), Jews and Judaism are disentangled from Israel and Israeli policy.

As the apology itself may not have a direct effect on antisemitism, it would be interesting to investigate whether specific elements of the project aimed at strengthening Jewish Amsterdam (e.g., an exhibition) increase knowledge about Jewish Dutch history and reduce antisemitic stereotypes. Ideally, such effects should be measured longitudinally to assess whether they remain over time and under what circumstances they remain (or not). Work on Holocaust education offers some guidance in this direction. For example, Szilassi et al. (2026) investigated the effect of the Amsterdam Holocaust Museum educational program among Dutch youth. They found that the program increased empathy toward the victims, and empathic concern mediated the relationship between the museum program and the motivation to stand up against antisemitic bullying. Note, however, that Holocaust education often fails to reduce antisemitism and can even backfire, producing secondary antisemitism (see Rajal, 2025). It may therefore be fruitful to explore approaches that focus not primarily on the Holocaust, but on Jewish-Dutch history more broadly. Another strategy is to, instead of focusing on the negative aspects of history, such as the behavior of perpetrators and bystanders during the Holocaust, focus on people who were helping Jews in different ways. Interventions using such "moral exemplars" have proven successful in certain contexts

(Bilewicz et al., 2017). It would thus be valuable to determine whether similar interventions could reduce antisemitism in the Netherlands.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

The current findings contribute to the literature on antisemitism by providing insights into important correlates of antisemitic stereotypes and feelings, as well as in potential interventions to reduce antisemitism. The results are also relevant for research on prejudice and stereotyping more broadly, as apologies are not limited to the Holocaust, but are offered for other atrocities such as slavery, potentially impacting stereotypes and racism toward Black people. Lastly, this study adds to work on (de-)radicalization. This is not only because antisemitism is a core element of neo-Nazi and other extremist right-wing ideologies, but also because expressions of antisemitism seem to have become more accepted worldwide (Kressel, 2024; Rensmann, 2020), reflecting a general trend of radical ideas and conspiracy beliefs becoming more mainstream (Ebner, 2020). Finding ways to counter such trends, therefore, fits into broader strategies aimed at preventing radicalization and promoting deradicalization, not only among extremist groups, but also among the general public.

Even though this study did not confirm the main hypotheses, the findings are important for several reasons. First, there is almost no research on the effect of group apology on the general public in terms of stereotypes or prejudice (but see Kim & Park, 2019). And there is no research known to the author on the role of apology in the context of antisemitism. This is a shortcoming, as apologies are not only relevant for the victims, but also for other groups in society. Furthermore, this study is one of the few that investigates the effect of a real apology, which enhances ecological validity. Much work in this area uses more ‘minimal’ paradigms with invented apologies, sometimes also for invented transgressions. This, of course, has its merits but research shows that the actual wording of real apologies matters (Gkinopoulos et al., 2022; Zoodma & Schaafsma, 2022). The present study shows how a real apology for Dutch collaboration during the Holocaust is received and evaluated by a sample from the broader Dutch population.

At the same time, studying a specific apology for a specific crime in a particular context is a clear limitation. The context of this study is important as it might have affected the outcomes in specific ways. For example, responses to an apology for slavery to

Surinamese Dutch people, or for the so-called “Police actions” to Indonesian Dutch people, may differ due to different histories and intergroup relations. Thus, it is very important to conduct studies with other apologies toward other groups to examine whether and how the mechanisms in this process differ (or are the same). Factors such as the representative delivering the apology and the mode of delivery (e.g., oral vs. written, videotaped vs. live) may then also be important to consider.

Conclusion

This study investigated whether an official group apology for the Dutch collaboration during the Holocaust affected antisemitic stereotypes among the broader Dutch population. Although the apology did not decrease such stereotypes as hypothesized, there was also no backlash effect: an increase in antisemitic stereotypes. This study is important as it is one of the few focusing on the effect of a *real* apology for collaboration during the Holocaust on the general audience, and it also investigates how this apology is evaluated generally.

More work on the effect of group apologies for past misdeeds on different outcomes, taking into account different groups in society (victim, perpetrator, *and* the general audience), is needed to gain insights into factors that can reduce antisemitism and racism in general, and foster intergroup reconciliation.

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