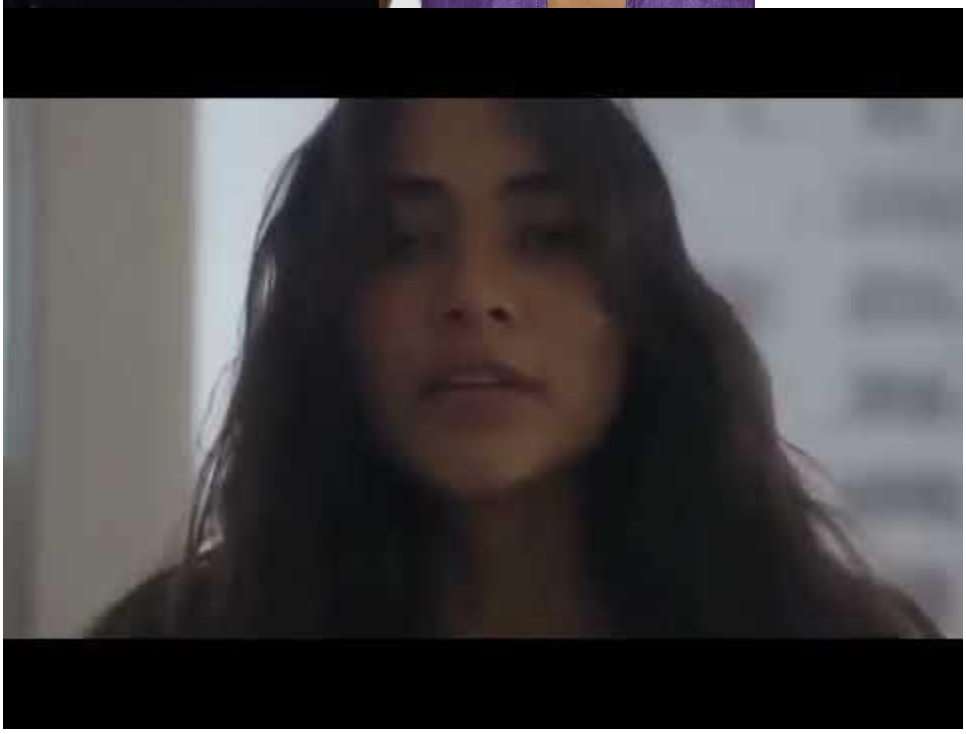
INTRODUCTION

- Apologies in our daily lives typically involve the simple phrase "I'm sorry." These words possess the power to mend broken relationships, alleviate the pain of those who have been wronged, and relieve the guilt of the offender. However, the process of apologizing often requires more than just those two words – it may involve arguments, explanations, and evasions.
- Similar to the celebrity culture surrounding traditional media stars, YouTube has witnessed the emergence of drama reporting channels that thrive on gossip and sensationalism, attracting a large number of viewers. This phenomenon has given rise to what is now known as "Cancel Culture," where audiences swiftly abandon creators amidst scandals, leading to a loss of subscribers and brand deals. Apology videos serve as an attempt by creators to soften the blow and regain the trust of their audience.
- According to Lazare, a successful apology should explicitly and publicly acknowledge the violated agreement ("What I did was wrong"), express genuine remorse ("I feel terrible for what I did"), and promise not to repeat the offense ("It will not happen again.") (Lazare, 2004:38). Communicating with humility is crucial in conveying remorse, as an apology devoid of humility may come across as an insult. Lazare emphasizes that ethical considerations and open dialogue are just as important as planning, skill, and timing when it comes to offering an apology (Hatch, 2006:254).
- Does the reception of a YouTube apology vary depending on the creator's status or socioeconomic background? How do YouTube viewers react when an apology is monetized and goes against cultural norms on the platform? What kind of criticism do minority creators face after apologizing, and what does this suggest about the unique challenges they encounter on YouTube? These are just a few avenues for further investigation that could potentially shed light on how social media audiences judge and forgive the creators they engage with daily.
- As we ponder the multitude of thoughts that such a situation would generate, it becomes clear why apology videos have become the subject of memes, often featuring irrational arguments and a distinct format. Essentially, apology videos provide YouTube creators with an opportunity to escape shame or unfounded accusations, safeguard their livelihood, and regain the trust of their viewers. Whether one perceives them as a response to rightful scrutiny of influential individuals or as a defense against baseless condemnation of dehumanized figures, there is no denying that the way these videos are produced speaks volumes about the challenges associated with YouTube stardom.

YOUTUBE APOLOGY VIDEO 1: SIENNA MAE GOMEZ

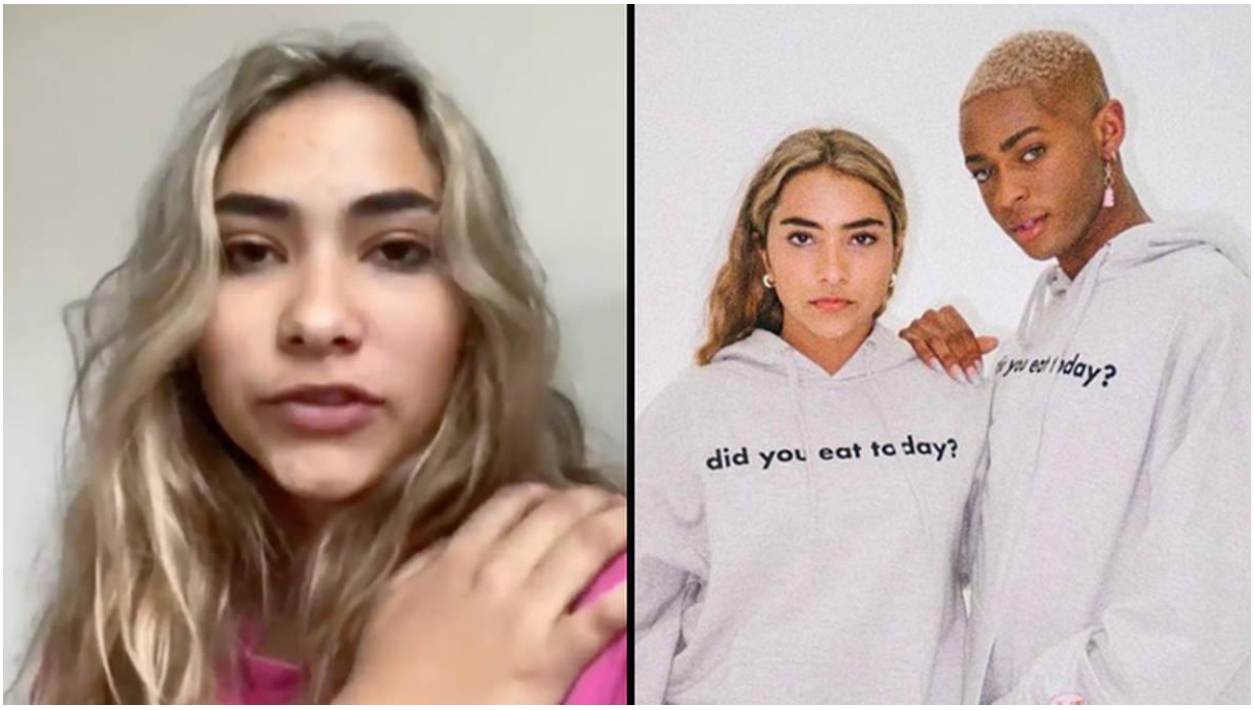




- Sienna Mae Gomez is a social media personality who gained popularity for the body-positive dance videos and duets posted to her TikTok account. Her sudden success and rapid onset of fame did not last more than 2 years. During those two

years, she joined a group of young social media content creators in the “Hype House,” and had a relationship with a young man named Jack Wright which they would address as undefined online.

- In May of 2021 one of Wright’s friends, Mason Rizzo, accused Gomez of “sexually assaulting” Wright “numerous times”. More of the situation would unfold on social media resulting in Gomez posting and deleting multiple videos addressing the situation.



- The first controversy arose when she released this merch asking viewers ‘did you eat today’ -Sienna explained that the merch meant to impact people positively. The idea behind it was to ensure that you are checking on your loved ones. Some thought the merch glorified eating disorders. Following the backlash, Sienna defended her merch on Instagram by writing, “The ‘did you eat today question’ is not meant to make fun of/ glorify EDS/ be harmful or ironic in any way. The question is hoping to encourage/ check-in with people if they ate.”
- During the controversy surrounding the merch, Sienna had also released an apology video which gave a first glimpse of her thought process - “I am young and I am still navigating this industry and obviously I will not always get it right the first time” its agreeable that young people will make mistakes and that they should be allowed to grow and learn from their mistakes to a certain extent. Moving forward, it seems like she thinks just because she is young, she should not be held responsible for her mistakes whatsoever.



- Sienna’s ex-boyfriend Jack Wright accused her of assaulting him. She then posted a YouTube video where she completely denied these allegations. In response, Jack’s friend posted a video where Sienna seems to be making out with Jack when he seems unconscious or passed out. She posts another video continuing to deny and at one point, says that, “Jack, If I abused you, why didn’t you ever tell me?” She failed to realize that sometimes victims are afraid to speak out about the trauma, playing the victim card.
- At the time, Gomez addressed the issue in a lengthy blog post and a statement provided to Insider by a spokesperson. She "vehemently denied" Wright's claims, accused him of slut-shaming her, claimed that she had been in love with him but that her actions had been misconstrued, and claimed that she had experienced online bullying as a result of his claims.
- She additionally joined a lawyer and a forensics expert on the "BFFs" podcast with Dave Portnoy to refute Wright's claims. Between all this, she takes a month off social media and then comes back to post an insane, dance apology video.



- She wore nude color bra and briefs maybe trying to look innocent, authentic, and grounded trying to fool the audience into what she is saying is the truth.
- "My purpose in this life is to create and whether that's silly TikTok dances or showing unedited photos of myself. Creating and inspiring is what fulfills me. I know that this is why God and the universe have given me this platform" - it feels like she thinks too highly of herself as if she is a revolutionary person who has changed the internet by posting unedited photos of herself - there is nothing wrong about being passionate for things you love and care about but the way she responded to the allegations of abuse is toxic. There are karate chop moves and showing off her teeth smiling and dancing with her entire soul into it which is absurd and out of context of an apology video.
- "We're all learning and growing" - According to Sienna's previous videos titled 'addressing future allegations,' she believes she has done nothing wrong so does she mean she did abuse Jack Wright and that she is learning that it was not okay to do or is she still denying all the allegations, it is not clear.
- The entire message of the song 'Young' by Sam Smith that she chose is that it is okay to make mistakes while you are young but it is not about making the mistake of abusing people, even Sam Smith would not approve of this apology video. It was not a good idea to show off her middle school level interpretive dancing skills after being accused of assault. In the lyrics of the song 'Kiss a hundred boys and not feel like I'm tied to them,' it appears to be quite toned deaf and stupid to dance to a song with lyrics talking about kissing a hundred guys when she has been accused of kissing her boyfriend when he was unconscious which is assault.
- She sounds like a perfect example of a self-obsessed influencer who can only see things through the lens of how it affects her. She believes when you are

young, you can do anything wrong that is why she chose this song. Her ideas, thought processes clearly reflect in the song in a reversed way.

- The specific dance moves, music, and gestures chosen can carry symbolic meaning. The choice of music might reflect the emotions involved, while certain movements could represent the actions or attitudes that led to the need for an apology. This symbolism can add depth to the apology and help the hurt party understand the sincerity behind it, but depending on the context and severity of the situation, using dance to apologize could be seen as minimizing the seriousness of the offense.
- The whole thing feels like a high budget much more artistic version of the ‘you are watching Disney channel’ that she and the crew spent time on, instead of Sienna sitting down and addressing the problem and apologizing for her actions. She wanted to stick out and be unique with her apology and set up an artsy project where she appears beautiful, innocent, and just wants to buy people on her side.

YOUTUBE APOLOGY VIDEO 2: BROOKE HOUTS





- Brooke Houts has around 300,000 subscribers - a lot of her new videos revolve around her new puppies and she really likes to use her Doberman puppy named ‘Prophet’ as clickbait for her channel, which is not abnormal as everyone loves cute animals. However, she accidentally uploaded raw footage to her YouTube

channel. Somebody recorded it before she had time to delete it, so when the original video having only 800 views was retweeted by Keemstar, it blew up.

- The edited version of the video which was supposed to be uploaded and is on her YouTube channel at present reveals how hyper she is, playing with the dog, rewarding this playful behavior running around with it yet behind the scenes she was punishing this dog for doing the exact same behavior. She is the one who riled it up, getting it playful and then beating it mercilessly for being playful.
- She spat on the dog and how would the dog know what being spit on means which was hurting and humiliating. There were many people on Twitter claiming or defending her behavior as right and that this is how dogs must be punished to keep them under charge. However, Brooke after her action, agreed that this was not the way to punish your dog - “Dogs do not respond well to punishment. Especially not mine. They respond best to positive reinforcement of the things they are doing right. I encourage you to discipline your pets in a healthier and kinder manner.” This sounded so hypocritic, disturbing and creepy from YouTube mode of hey guys love ya, I love my dog, oh my god to just beating it and shouting it.
- It was shocking of how she could edit the footage and the cuts and feel good about the fake happy persona she put on YouTube. Its normal to have two different personalities on social media but the absolute Jekyll and Hyde going on there was scary



- It looked as if it was a real YouTube apology video wearing no makeup on, hair in a bun and wearing a big mushy sweatshirt. All the youtubers when they are caught doing something stupid, they come out with a sub story of them being in a

dark place- everyone is in a dark place especially youtubers are depressed. She failed to mention the punching, kicking, slamming to the ground. She goes on to say she is not an animal abuser, did not spit on her dog and that she is getting professional training again bringing up that she raised her voice to the dog leaving out the other things

- The intro where she started thanking her viewers sounded patronizing and condescending to people who genuinely cared about the welfare of her animal that she beat and spit on the camera. She could redeem herself through the apology video but it was not just about animal abuse, it was more of the psychological problem she was facing - she should have invested in anger management therapy
- It did not sound genuine and taking accountability for her actions towards the dog. The fact that she mentions her volunteering at an animal welfare organization is out of context of apology. She should understand why she felt the need to abuse a helpless animal. “I have never intentionally, willfully, or maliciously hurt an animal” - it is just like in criminal court not guilty vs guilty, just because somebody is considered not guilty in a verdict does not mean they are innocent, it just means they could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that that person was guilty
- The fact that she mentioned to the audience to meet and have a genuine conversation with her if seen in public sounds pure manipulation, trying to justify her actions, and distracting them from the reality of who she is.
- Numerous individuals on social media have urged law enforcement and animal welfare organizations to intervene and take custody of the dog from Houts' care, as well as to have her YouTube channel terminated. Several prominent YouTubers have also criticized Houtz on Twitter. Infamous personality Logan Paul described her behavior as "extremely disturbing," while YouTuber Daniel Preda characterized the video as displaying "[severe mistreatment]. Additionally, Ethan Klein of h3h3 Productions went as far as to offer to purchase the dog from her at "any price.
- In her apology video, Houts attempts to manipulate viewers' emotions through a mix of sadness, regret, and remorse. By expressing genuine emotions, she aims to evoke sympathy and understanding from the audience. Her rationalizations for the mistreatment include stress, frustration, or personal issues, which can be seen as attempts to justify her actions without taking full responsibility.
- The Doberman are supposedly among the most loyal and protective breeds so this poor dog suffered a lot of psychological traumas - one moment it was running happily towards its owner who it trusted with its life then it was being punched, spat on, and kicked.
- Her statements about her family knowing her and knowing how much she loves animals and how well she treats them are weird. That they know the “real” her that she is not like this normally. Thinking about how many serial abusers, pedophiles, and serial killers can go for years deceiving people, including their own families. Some have gone for many, years getting away with their disgusting behavior without anyone knowing.

- People like her are very covert at hiding their true selves. At hiding what they do when it is just them alone with their victim of choice. Sometimes family members and friends do not truly know the monster that is hiding behind a well-designed mask. In this situation, karma was at full play. Whether she is truly a continual long-time abuser or whether it was a onetime thing, either way, this exposure of her true colors will hopefully put her in enough fear that she has some sort of humbling, self-evaluation and never does it again.

YOUTUBE APOLOGY VIDEO 3: JEFFREE STAR





- Jeffree Star is owner of a cosmetics company, has a music career and a YouTube channel that is ranked 20 out of 31 million other YouTube channels. He

has over 17 million subscribers and his channel has been viewed about 2.3 billion times.

- He has been drawing fire for his whole mess with some very well-known content creators Shane Dawson, James Charles, and Tardy Westbrook



- His apology video titled “Doing what’s right” published on July 18, 2020. In his 10 minutes 37 seconds video, he apologized to James Charles and makes several other statements
- It is ironic that the video titled “Doing what’s right” did everything wrong
- More sort of a confession video than an apology video
- The first thing that really caught attention was that he was on a huge gold covered couch and behind him looked a front entrance of a large house as if he is communicating that he is powerful, successful, and wealthy sitting in a multi-million-dollar mansion clearly flaunting some wealth while apologizing taking away from the authenticity and genuineness of the apology. It is odd that someone would not get bothered to get dressed and wear real clothes and self-reflection is something that ideally, we should all be doing relatively regularly
- He is generally a little pretentious but, in this video, it reached heights – reminding of a child trying to sound intelligent, sounds phony, fake, and completely scripted
- Jeffrey Star has been accused of being like a puppet master for a whole situation in which he took down another to Youtuber’s career or tried to which then

resulted in that Youtuber struggling with suicidality so talking about such a serious situation is glib or rude.

- Jeffree Star got involved in drama between Tati Westbrook and James Charles. He accused Charles of inappropriate behavior, causing a subscriber loss. Star promised evidence but later withdrew, posting a video distancing himself. He recently apologized to Charles without taking accountability for his own actions. Star defended his friend Shane Dawson, facing controversies.



- The situation also involves accusations of racism and derogatory behavior towards Black creators. Jeffree Star has faced criticism for making derogatory and racist statements toward Black creators like Jackie Aina and Makeup Shayla. These incidents have raised concerns about Star's history of racial insensitivity and lack of direct accountability for his past actions.
- Mentioning the lawyers entertaining it behind and he not entertaining it is a thinly veiled threat to sue all the people involved sounding pompous and not apologetic - none of the things you should be trying to convey while apologizing - there is no attitude of humanity seen
- He was trying to insinuate that he is the person with the moral high ground in the situation and that they hope I can be some positive role model for somebody
- The apology video sounded as if someone was reading a PR script and then putting their own sarcastic kind of condescending tone on it. None of what he said addressed the impact of what happened like specifically addressing the situation, he is not naming the behavior which is an important component of apology for everybody to be on the same page, everyone feels seen and heard and we can make sure everybody leaves the conversation with the same understanding

- He talked later in the video of how he started his cosmetics company even though he was ‘homeless and worked at a mall’ at one point in his life. It looks like this video is made from the position of a person who think of themselves as a leader or hero. He also talks about how he has taken time for self-reflection and he keeps on repeating and emphasizing on it throughout the entire video.
- He does not really get emotional and looks like real diversions from a typical content creator apology video format - as if he is acting out a written script, it did not seem at all that the words came from his heart and that the apology meant something.
- We see a person who has learnt that impulsive emotional reactions lead to undesirable consequences but has not learnt what content to put in an apology video to make it effective - there is more drama and materialism than a simple apology
- He looked sincere in apologizing for his personality characteristics, the tendency to react quickly is opposed to really apologizing for any specific action he has really taken
- Other things he said do not make sense as an apology as in “I know I am dramatic, crazy and outspoken but at the end of the day, that is not who I am” - I am not the person I just admitted I am?? It would have made more sense if he had instead said he is working on changing those characteristics. He is separating his tendencies from his identity for example, “Yes I did burglary but I am not a burglar”
- He said that “One should accept the problem to become the solution” - as if claiming to the audience to accept his problem and assume that it has been solved. “I am really trying to find myself again” - I do not like it, did he get lost that he must find himself again? “I am not a movie villain” - I thought maybe he would follow up saying I am a social media villain “I am taking accountability” - repeated but not really meant it, only justifying the discrepancies in his head
- Uses a familiar strategy of blaming the year 2020 - “world is falling apart, all this attention on me is not really important” using an analogy to the world of criminals, this looks like a convicted drunk driver thinking that they are going to get a later sense and arrested on the same day that a serial killer was arrested
- “I have never committed a crime and I have never been to jail” - - like the statement ‘I never lied,’ just a filler sentence and not needed because it was full on lie when, he had mentioned multiple times in various videos how he stole from Sephora
- He goes on to stick out for Shane Dawson calling him wonderful, kind, and selfless - this was the better part of the video standing by the person he calls friend - he went off track here when he said that their business ventures should inspire people, kind of self-grandizing
- He talks about how his cosmetics company value diversity which carried a good meaning , at the end he makes one of the worst mistakes of the video when he talks about some of the exciting things coming up in his cosmetics company providing a rationale for the production of this video : what his real intent was now he needs to look out for people to promote his company but he had this inevitable, inconvenient apology thing that had to be addressed first so he

thought he would combine them starting off with a weak, non-specific apology and then move to promoting his company

- looks very arrogant as if holding an attitude while apologizing
- He doesn't deserve any credit for saying he is an inclusive brand, because then he goes on to say he is always the loudest person advocating for diversity as if black beauty gurus do not exist , the gurus that have been fighting for this since the beginning like Jackie Aina, the black woman he called a gorilla - the entire video seemed like a promo for an upcoming launch while not actually apologizing for anything specific and giving an explanation it was more of a "sorry for whatever you're offended but buy my new products"
- He used Black Lives Matter to deflect the attention off him without leaving any petition or donation links and being silent for almost a month
- His facial expressions were neutral, no empathetic eyes, and more hand movements
- Verbal apologies allow for emotional connection and empathy. The tone of voice, choice of words, and expression of emotions play a crucial role in conveying genuine remorse, which cannot be conveyed through hand movements alone.
- "I have undesirable personality traits but it is okay because I admit it. Do not hold me accountable without blaming everyone else for what they have done. Forget what I have done and focus on me being an inspiration to millions as I am a hero of our time. And, oh by the way, it's important you believe I am sorry…" - he places himself as a queen on her throne about to address her subjects, his palm up, wiggling his finger at camera, clapping his hands together is equal to him saying, "don't even come for me or I will destroy you" - he's aggressive and defensive, no change in facial expression or tone of voice , no empathy for those he harmed , only disgust and disdain for them, there is No apology - it's all about him , even self-promoting , not those he hurts.
- having discrepancies between multiple words he said as in "hoping people learn from me" to "I have moments where I get fired up and I don't think things through and how my actions affect others while I'm saying and when you speak with your emotions without fully processing something, it is one of the unhealthiest things which is a very major problem of his" so he is committing mistakes but giving reasons for his mistakes as if it was not under his control at all
- These content creators routinely create crisis and controversy for the views. They orchestrate it from the get-go who will be the victim, who will be the aggressor. At the appointed hour, after the video blows up, and the views are through the roof, they do the apology and forgiveness rounds- all of them come out smelling like roses and all is forgiven until the next round.

CONCLUSION

- If someone does something that warrants an apology, it is usually either interpersonal (in which case I am not the person they need to apologize to) or some general offense (in which case the apology does not matter, their behavior after the fact does). Either way, I do not gain anything by watching the video, and regardless of whether it is sincere or not, it feels weird watching it.
- It seems weird to me that the current culture is to DEMAND apologies from public figures and content creators and celebrities the moment they do something wrong, just to judge them for how performative they are. We act like public apologies are the end-all-be-all of "accountability", when they are not (and deep down we *know* they are not, which is why we are rarely if ever satisfied with them).

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