

EU Nationals in the UK Under Pressure Due to Brexit:

Does an Apology Help?

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Abstract

Apologies play a key role in ameliorating a conflict between two groups. In relation to this, the current study assumes that the expression of emotions can enhance the outcome of an intergroup apology in terms of for instance more forgiveness and satisfaction. As there is little literature investigating in *how* and *why* these positive effects of the expression of feelings occur, this study proposed that there are three factors which mediate the relationship. That is, responsibility-taking, suffering and sincerity. Namely, a so-called “inference-based model”, introduced by Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017), is suggested. In relation to this, feeling-expressions are assumed to strengthen the extent to which the perpetrator is perceived as suffering and taking the responsibility for the wrongdoing. In turn, higher inferences of responsibility-taking, respectively suffering, are proposed to lead to more perceived sincerity. Finally, through increased inferences of sincerity, it is anticipated that more positive outcomes will follow. These assumptions were tested through an experiment within the context of Brexit. In detail, a Briton made an excuse concerning the adverse consequences of Brexit for EU nationals in the UK (i.e. Germans). There were six different conditions (i.e. apologies), containing the emotions “guilt”, “shame”, “feeling responsible”, “regret” or “very sad”, as well as an unemotional (control) apology. Finally, the results have provided proof for the proposed model. Thus, the outcomes of the current study support the suggested role of responsibility-taking, suffering and sincerity in explaining the positive relationship between feeling-expressions as part of an apology and more favorable outcomes.

Introduction

Relationships between groups are often complex and more prone to be negatively influenced by tension and conflicts than interpersonal relationships (Hewstone, Rubin & Willis, 2002). This is the case as group encounters are mostly influenced by intergroup bias, which, amongst other things, forms the basis of prejudice. That is, intergroup bias is defined as impaired perceptions, which is a consequence of belonging to a group (Hewstone et al., 2002). For instance, when acting as a group, people do not perceive themselves in terms of their individual qualities. Rather, they perceive themselves as exemplars of the whole, representing the qualities of the group (Schellhaas & Dovidio, 2016). Also, members of a group tend to characterize themselves more positively and see their own group as more valuable, which is called “ingroup favoritism” (Hewstone et al., 2002). Thus, such biases can lead to tension between groups. An example of an intergroup conflict is Brexit, which is simultaneously the context handled throughout the current study. Particularly, Brexit led and currently leads to fears and worries arising in EU nationals living in the UK, due to leaked documents that indicate numerous problems (Bienkov & Colson, 2018; European Commission, 2018; Hunt & Wheeler, 2017; Independent, 2017). In order to reduce such intergroup tensions, there are various advantageous psychological techniques that could be implemented. For instance, positive intergroup contact can improve the relationship between groups (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013), as it can lead to higher trust and empathic feelings towards each other and heighten forgiveness (Coleman, Deutsch & Marcus, 2000). Doing so, common grounds need to be accentuated to support the groups’ understanding of the true reasons for the tensions (Fisher, 1990).

Beyond such interventions for reducing intergroup tension, there are group-based apologies, which are growing in importance (Wohl, Hornsey & Philpot, 2011; Trayers, 2010). In line with this, it is important that a well-intended intergroup apology is truly effective. Thus, in order to contribute to more positive outcomes of an apology, the aim of this paper is

to examine how certain emotions can influence the acceptance and effectivity of an intergroup apology. The involvement of feelings is one of the key factors of an apology's success, as research suggests that an unemotional apology is not sufficient, for instance, because it is perceived as less satisfying and sincere compared to an emotional one (Wohl, Matheson, Branscombe & Anisman, 2013; Ebesu Hubbard, Hendrickson, Fehrenbach & Sur, 2013; Lewicki et al., 2016; Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Giner-Sorolla, Brown, Castano & Espinosa, 2008; Imhoff, Bilewicz & Erb, 2012). Specifically, the majority of researches includes findings of the effect of emotions such as guilt and shame, which are suggested to enhance an excuse (Wohl et al., 2013; Ebesu Hubbard et al., 2013; Lewicki et al., 2016; Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Giner-Sorolla et al., 2008). Consequently, during the current study it is assumed that an enhanced reaction to an apology will, in turn, lead to a more positive view of the harmed group in terms of reduced fears and worries concerning the negative consequences of a wrongdoing. The anticipations are examined in relation to Brexit, concerning negative consequences for people from the EU, especially Germany. These suggestions will be further annotated in the following paragraphs on an apology's effectiveness. Based on these insights, the study aims at answering the question: *"How can an intergroup apology, depending on the negative emotions a member of the perpetrator group expresses, contribute to a more positive response and improve the victim groups' view concerning a reduction of worries and fears?"*

Brexit

The investigations are done in relation to a political context, namely Brexit, which is the decision of the United Kingdom (UK) to leave the European Union (EU) (Hunt & Wheeler, 2017). That is, UK residents had the possibility to vote whether the UK will leave the EU or not on 23 June 2016 (European Commission, 2018). As the majority of the voting population voted "yes", Brexit will expectedly be initiated on 29 March 2019. It was chosen to focus on Brexit during this study, as it is a current major issue within politics. Specifically, due to

Brexit there are many changes occurring. Along with these changes, uncertainties, worries and fears arise with respect to the citizens. Especially EU nationals that live and/ or work in the UK, are threatened. For instance, documents from UK's home office led to EU nationals increasingly worrying about these peoples' life after Brexit (Independent, 2017), specifically whether they may continue living and/ or working in the UK the way they could before Brexit, or not. Thus, this paper is directed to EU nationals, particularly, Germans.

In fact, various information sources from the government state that EU nationals residing in the UK for longer than five years will be able to attain a so-called "settled status" (Hunt & Wheeler, 2017). Doing so, EU nationals are enabled to be treated nearly as people born in the UK, with having the same rights. Contrary, documents from the home office show that it will not be as effortless as it may seem (Independent, 2017). Besides this, also other documents demonstrate the reasons for the restlessness and anxiety in EU nationals living in the UK (Bienkov & Colson, 2018; European Commission, 2018; Hunt & Wheeler, 2017; Independent, 2017). One of these concerns is the fact that border controls regarding EU nationals are expected to be stricter than they are now (Independent, 2017). Besides this, it was revealed that after Brexit, the government will be able to deny EU nationals working and living in the UK (Independent, 2017). For instance, Home Office records suggested that due to a lack of labor shortage, admission to workspace that requires a low level of skills will be inhibited for immigrants (Independent, 2017). EU national's right to bring over their family could also be restricted (Bienkov & Colson, 2018). Especially family members that are not defined as "close" are at risk of not being allowed to join living in the UK (Independent, 2017). Moreover, there will be changes regarding EU citizens' right to be abroad. That is, EU nationals will, in contrast to people born in the UK, not be able to live and/ or work in another country for more than five years without being endangered to be taken away the "settled status" (Bienkov & Colson, 2018). Lastly, and most alarming for EU nationals in the UK is the risk of the government not being able to make a proper deal with its partners.

Consequently, a high number of EU nationals would technically not own any valid documents anymore (Bienkov & Colson, 2018), as these people would be in a grey area with a neither legal nor illegal status of residence (The Week, 2018). Thus, these ambiguities lead to great concern in people from the EU, as it is unclear which consequences this divergent residence permit will have. Also, there are great uncertainties regarding how the government would act if a no-deal scenario would truly ensue. Although, many of these points are still topic of negotiation (Independent, 2017), this information overall led to increased anxiety in EU nationals living and/ or working in the UK.

Through this information from various documents, it becomes clear that there are many aspects EU nationals in the UK are prone to worry about in relation to Brexit. Consequently, these arguments suggest that there is a need of reducing these negative feelings. In order to do so, an apology by a member of the perpetrator group (i.e. a Briton) would be a first step. Regarding this, during this experiment, an excuse is made by a Briton who apologizes for voting for Brexit in relation to the negative consequences. In order to do so in an effective way, it is valuable to discover how an apology's communication can be altered in a positive way concerning different negative emotions being expressed by a member of the perpetrator group. That is, exploring how an apology made by a Briton towards German people is most successful, with the goal of a reduced conflict.

Intergroup Apologies

An intergroup apology is a statement offered by a perpetrator to a victimized group, which is communicated as a consequence of a wrongdoing (MacLachlan, 2016). Such apologies have the goal of improving impaired intergroup relations after harm was inflicted (Wohl et al., 2013). Also, apologies are used to imply understanding of the perpetrator group concerning the wrongdoing as well as to transfer certain feelings to outline the wrongdoers' intent (Lewicki, Polin & Lount Jr., 2016). However, it has to be distinguished between good versus

bad ways of making amends. Regarding this, it is especially important to pay attention concerning apologies of poor quality, as these could lead to even more negative outcomes than making no amends at all (MacLachlan, 2016). According to MacLachlan (2016) this is the case, because a bad excuse could be interpreted as offensive. For instance, an excuse could contain arguments that lead to so-called secondary victimization (Orth, 2002), which is defined as again putting the victim at a disadvantage as well as indirectly charging the victim for a crime. Overall, these findings provide support for the assumed importance of investigating in the enhancement of apologies.

An apology's effectiveness. Several studies examined characteristics of an effective apology (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Wohl et al., 2011; Lewicki et al., 2016; MacLachlan, 2016; Liviatan & Nadler, 2006). Generally, apologies work through enhancing the chances of forgiveness through altering the victims' impression of the perpetrator in a positive direction (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006). More precisely, literature suggests that an intergroup apology can decrease worries and fears to the extent that it decreases perceptions of threat (Lind, 2003). In order to be truly effective there are several specific components that can enhance positive outcomes of an excuse. For instance, literature shows that effectiveness increases if a perpetrator explicitly refers to the misdeed and doing so, truly admits the wrongdoing towards the victimized group (MacLachlan, 2016). Moreover, research reveals that mentioning an explanation for why the act was committed contributes to the success of an apology (Lewicki et al., 2016). Finally, there are also contextual factors that can influence the effectiveness of an excuse (MacLachlan, 2016; Wohl et al., 2011; Lewicki et al., 2016), such as place and time. For instance, presenting the apology in a setting that is meaningful concerning the wrongdoing and the sufferer is to a certain extent more effective than a random setting (Wohl et al., 2011).

The Impact of Emotions. Regarding the expression of emotions, literature shows that feelings of guilt, shame, regret, sadness and responsibility can overall improve the victims'

assessment of the wrongdoers' personality (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Giner-Sorolla et al., 2008; Lewicki et al., 2016). For instance, guilt implicates a caring and emotional personality (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006) and shame induces a more respectful attitude (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2007). Concerning the reaction to, and outcomes of an apology, various researches show that an apology driven by feelings such as guilt or shame is suggested to lead to increased positive response outcomes (Wohl et al., 2013; Giner-Sorolla et al., 2008; Imhoff et al., 2012; Lewicki et al., 2016; Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Liviatan & Nadler, 2006; Ebesu Hubbard, Hendrickson, Fehrenbach & Sur, 2013). Literature also shows that especially the communication of feelings of shame and perceptions of sincerity positively influence the extent to which an apology is perceived as satisfying (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2008; Ebesu Hubbard et al., 2013). Furthermore, expressions of guilt as well as shame are shown to induce a higher perception of motivation to prevent further misbehavior, amongst other things due to higher perceptions of responsibility-taking (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Lewicki et al., 2016). Additionally, research implies that guilt increases perceptions of motivation to compensate (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Wohl et al., 2013). In turn, expressions of the will for making reparations reinforces the extent to which an apology is perceived as sincere (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Wohl et al., 2011; Lewicki et al., 2016). Moreover, compensations generally imply a motivated attitude concerning the will to make changes in favor of restoring the relationship (Lewicki et al., 2016). Besides this, Giner-Sorolla et al. (2008) found that shame more effectively reduced insult compared to guilt in relation to outgroup perpetrators providing compensation. According to the paper, this is for instance the case as feeling ashamed may have been perceived as more emotionally affecting (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2008). Besides this, findings by Lind (2003) suggests that expressions of regret favor the positive outcomes through for instance heightening the extent to which an apology is perceived as being well-intended. However, the positive effects of regret on the apology outcomes are weaker than those of for instance guilt and shame (Imhoff et al., 2012).

Responsibility-Taking. Regarding apologies, perceiving a wrongdoer as taking responsibility for the harm done is shown to positively influence the outcomes of an apology, in terms of for instance forgiveness (Lewicki et al., 2016). In line with this, several researches show that including the expression of particular feelings as part of an apology favors the extent to which a perpetrator conveys inferences of responsibility-taking (Lewicki et al., 2016; Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Imhoff et al., 2012; Wohl et al., 2013; Zebel et al., 2009). Concerning the impact of certain emotions, various researches explored that expressions of guilt, shame and regret imply that the perpetrator is conscious about being responsible for the harm (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Imhoff et al., 2012; Wohl et al., 2013). In relation to this, regret is less associated with the perception of acceptance of responsibility, especially compared to guilt (Imhoff et al., 2012). A similar connection was also found the other way around. Research suggests that guilt and regret are dependent on the extent to which a perpetrator group feels responsible for the harm (Imhoff et al., 2012; Zebel et al., 2009). However, stronger feelings of responsibility are still more positively related to feelings of guilt compared to regret, as regret does not clearly imply that the wrongdoer admits the role, he/ she played concerning certain negative consequences resulting from the perpetrator's act (Imhoff et al., 2012). Beyond this, research suggests that regret and collective guilt involve empathy (Imhoff et al., 2012; Zebel, Doosje & Spears, 2009). This is the case, to the extent that more perspective-taking regarding the other party favors feelings of regret (Imhoff et al., 2012), respectively guilt (Zebel et al., 2009). This effect occurs as responsibility-taking inferences are heightened as a consequence (Zebel et al., 2009). Conclusively, based on the literature it is clearly suggested that one crucial ingredient of an apology is accepting responsibility for the harm inflicted.

Suffering. Various researches also stress the fact that the communication of suffering can be favorable regarding the effectiveness of an apology (Kador, 2010; Tang & Gray, 2018; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008). That is, the majority of victims of a wrongdoing are proposed to

have a certain desire of seeing the perpetrator suffering to some extent (Tang & Gray, 2018). This can be accomplished through for instance punishments or apologies. Also, the paper of Kador (2010) proposed that expressing shared suffering is a requirement of a compassionate excuse (Kador, 2010). Beyond this, emotions such as guilt and being ashamed are suggested to lead to the victim perceiving both parties' statuses as more equal due to the negative emotions the violator experienced (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006), which again favors positive outcomes. In line with this, literature (Eisikovits and Harely, 2006; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008) suggests that the compensation of status is closely related to suffering. This is the case, as feeling guilty and ashamed are associated with some kind of self-punishment, which reduces the speakers' confidence. This, in turn, favors the communication of concern (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006). Finally, expressions of suffering are shown to favor perceived sincerity (Tang & Gray, 2018; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008), which is also positively related to more favorable outcomes of an apology.

Sincerity. Inferences of sincerity are not only suggested to enhance the quality of an apology. Several studies rather stress that the positive effects of the expression of emotions are exclusively present when the statement of apology is perceived as sincere (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; MacLachlan, 2016; Wohl et al., 2013; Ebesu Hubbard et al., 2013). For instance, apologies seen as sincere are perceived more genuine concerning the perpetrator regretting the harm (Wohl et al., 2013). Specifically, expressions of guilt and shame are shown to favor the extent to which an excuse is perceived as sincere (Wohl et al., 2013; Giner-Sorolla et al., 2008; Imhoff et al., 2012; Lewicki et al., 2016; Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Liviatan & Nadler, 2006; Ebesu Hubbard et al., 2013). Still, Eisikovits and Hareli (2006) suggest that the positive effect of guilt on the perception of sincerity are stronger than those of shame. In contrast, Giner-Sorolla et al. (2008) found evidence for shame having a stronger effect than guilt. So, there are uncertainties which should be considered during the investigations. Moreover, Wohl et al. (2011) suggested that regarding intergroup apologies,

this positive effect is even stronger for primary emotions, such as sadness. This is the case, as secondary emotions are perceived to be more self-related (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2008) and therefore, the impact is less positive. Beyond that, implications for sincerity being moderated by responsibility-taking were found (Wohl et al., 2013).

In conclusion, the findings above demonstrate the strong positive impact of the usage of various emotions as part of an apology. Also, literature found evidence for the fact that the communication of responsibility-taking, suffering and sincerity through emotions presumably plays a crucial role for the effectiveness of an apology. The influence of these constructs will be further analyzed through the experiment implemented throughout this paper. That is, based on the prior insights, the positive effects of an apology are suggested to be mediated by perceptions of sincerity (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2008; Ebesu Hubbard et al., 2013), which is in turn suggested to be mediated by responsibility-taking (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; MacLachlan, 2016; Liviatan & Nadler, 2006; Lewicki et al., 2016; Imhoff et al., 2012) and suffering (Kador, 2010; Tang & Gray, 2018; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008) inferences, which finally enhances the outcomes of an apology.

Investigations and Hypotheses

Original Study. The investigations are done on the basis of a previous study. Namely “*Suffering and responsibility-taking inferences explain how victim group members evaluate wrongdoers’ expressions of negative feelings*” by Giner-Sorolla, Zebel en Kamau (2017). More precisely, the aim of this study is to replicate and extend the results of the original study, which deals with the influence of various negative emotions on a victim’s interpretation of and response to an apology. That is, the paper analyzed which emotions can favor the communication of suffering and responsibility-taking in relation to misbehavior, which were proposed to mediate more positive outcomes. In relation to this, the researchers regarded it as important to include a measure of perceived sincerity, as sincerity plays an important role in

contributing to acceptance. Thus, it was proposed that responsibility-taking and suffering positively influence the imparting of sincerity which was finally proposed to justify a more affirmative response. That is, the assumption of an “inference-based model”. Succeeding the implementation of two experiments to test the hypotheses, it came forward that the majority of the assumptions were confirmed. Most importantly, the results have shown evidence for the proposed model in relation to responsibility-taking and suffering. Thus, overall, it was found that responsibility-taking and suffering can support a higher perception of sincerity, which positively influences the response.

The Need for a Follow-Up. Although the results were already revealing, there are still several reasons which demonstrate that it is valuable to carry out a follow-up study with some adjustments. The most important ones will be presented throughout the following paragraph. First, the original conflict handled, that is, one between smokers and non-smokers, can be argued to not be serious enough. Also, the problem of passive smoking is not a concrete example concerning the focus of the paper in relation to intergroup versus interpersonal apologies. Essentially, smokers and non-smokers are groups that are not separated enough. That means, the two groups can possibly have many similarities and/ or be connected. For example, there are people that once smoked but stopped or people that have close friends or relatives who smoke. This could influence the outcomes as the problem could be seen as less urgent and threatening. Besides this, within the study it is not clear enough whether the smoker apologizes for himself or on behalf of all smokers. So, with respect to the context of intergroup apologies, the conflict described is too vague. Simultaneously, the outcomes are at risk of being ambiguous concerning interpersonal versus intergroup. Therefore, the follow-up study needs to handle an apology within a new, unambiguous context, which should treat a conflict that is meaningful to both groups.

Beyond this, the original paper is, as implicated above, extended through the addition of a unique variable. That is, an improvement of the view of EU nationals towards Brexit.

More precisely, the variable is about a reduction of worries and fears in EU nationals as a consequence of the apology. Thus, the study is extended in relation to measures concerning the assumption of this further positive outcome.

Finally, there is criticism regarding the procedure of the experiment. Particularly, the manipulations of the original study were always the same, with the exception of the emotional term being replaced per condition. Although this is a valuable consideration in terms of ruling out alternative explanations, it is quite unnatural concerning reality. Based on this insight, it was decided to include emotion appraisals in the apology statement. This will presumably be beneficial, as the emotions in the six conditions can be differentiated more conceptually rich. Moreover, several researches show the important role of appraisal in emotional reactions (Roseman, Spindel & Jose, 1990; Roseman & Smith, 2001; Frijda, Kuipers & ter Schure, 1989; Moors, 2013; Lazarus, 2001; Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Scherer, 2009). Namely, individuals' emotional responses are based on evaluations and interpretations of a situation. There are several theories concerning appraisal. However, it is out of the scope to extensively discuss various theories on appraisal in detail. For instance, Roseman et al. (1990) proposed five appraisals that influence emotional reactions. Also, Lazarus (2001) differentiates between primary, that is, interpretations of the event, and secondary appraisals, that is, assessments of the resources available for coping with the event. In line with this, Lazarus (2001) suggested six appraisal objectives that influence emotion expressions. A final example is Scherer (2009), who introduced a "component-process model", proposing four appraisal intentions with particular "stimulus evaluation checks (SEC)". One essential finding is the fact that a distinction between positive versus negative emotions can be made through including appraisals of (in-)consistency concerning motives (Roseman et al., 1990). In line with this, appraisals of relevance affect whether it is attended to the event at all (Lazarus, 2001; Scherer, 2009). Moreover, there are appraisals concerning the causes of the situation (Roseman et al., 1990; Scherer, 2009; Lazarus, 2001; Frijda et al., 1989), which are suggested to make a

distinction between event-, self- and other-directed emotions, such as feeling sad versus angry versus guilty (Roseman, 1990). Finally, an often-considered example of an appraisal is power (Roseman et al., 1990; Scherer, 2009; Lazarus, 2001), which is about perceiving the self as weak versus strong. More precisely, such appraisals differentiate between emotions such as dislike versus anger and guilt versus regret (Roseman et al., 1990). In conclusion, these brief findings support the fact that it is valuable to include appraisals into the apology statement, in order to enhance the quality of the manipulation to promote the distinction of discrete emotions.

Hypotheses. Conclusively, based on the insights concerning the effectiveness and impacts of an apology, as well as the findings regarding the proposed “inference-based model” by Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017), the following hypotheses were drafted:

Hypothesis 1. The expression of any negative feeling in the apologetic statement will lead to a stronger perception of suffering (not responsibility-taking) than an unemotional apology (i.e. “I apologize.”), resulting in the recipient reacting considerably more positive to the apology.

Hypothesis 2. The expression of the emotions “regret” or “very sad” will lead to a weaker perception of responsibility-taking than the emotions “feeling responsible”, “guilt” or “shame”.

Hypothesis 3. The expression of the emotions “regret” or “feeling responsible” will lead to a weaker perception of suffering than “very sad”, “guilt” or “shame”.

Hypothesis 4a. The expression of emotions high in responsibility-taking (i.e. “feeling responsible”, “guilt”, “shame”) will lead to a stronger perception of responsibility-taking than “regret” and “very sad”, which in turn leads to a stronger perception of sincerity, and through this increased sincerity a more positive reaction will follow.

Hypothesis 4b. The expression of emotions high in suffering (i.e. “very sad”, “guilt”, “shame”) will lead to a stronger perception of suffering than “regret” and “feeling

responsible”, which in turn leads to a stronger perception of sincerity, and through this increased sincerity a more positive reaction will follow.

Hypothesis 5. There is a negative relationship between a more positive reaction and the amount of the recipients’ worries and fears in relation to Brexit, leading to more positive outcomes the lower the amount of worries and fears is.

Method

Participants

The study was conducted with 325 participants in total. The participants were recruited based on convenience. More precisely, a link to the questionnaire was distributed across people in relation to the researchers’ network. Regarding this, there were partly also students which received credits in return. 25.5 % of the respondents were male and 74.5 % female. The participants’ mean age was $M = 24.4$ ($SD = 10.47$). Regarding the nationality, only Germans were allowed to participate. Doing so, it could be comprehended whether possible differences in the results concerning the original study presumably occurred due to cultural differences.

Design

An experiment with six conditions was conducted, in which the participants were randomly assigned to the conditions. In detail, the conditions consisted of apology statements, in which each of them contained emotion appraisals and expressions of either “regret”, “sadness”, “responsible”, “guilt” or “shame”. The sixth condition was a control condition with a “non-emotional” statement. It was a between-groups design, so each participant was assigned to a different condition.

Materials and Procedure

Manipulation. The experiment was conducted online, therefore the participants needed a laptop or computer. The study was introduced through a statement containing information over Brexit as well as fears of EU nationals (see Appendix A), followed by an apology by a member of the perpetrator group (see Appendix B). During the first statement, the adverse consequences of Brexit for German people living and/ or working in the UK were pointed out to make each respondent aware of these. The text also contained a fictional quote by a German who lives in the UK, with the goal of conveying the negative consequences on a personal level. After this, the apology statement followed. In total, there were six different statements, with expressions and appraisals of five different emotions and one unemotional condition. The emotions were feeling responsible, guilt, shame, regret and very sad. The apologies always began with “One British citizen said: ...”, followed by suitable appraisals (see Appendix B) and ending with the sentence “I feel responsible/ guilty/ ashamed/ regret/ very sad about the fears and stress that Brexit brings about among German nationals in the UK.”. The unemotional statement ended with “I therefore apologize for the fears and stress that Brexit brings about among German nationals in the UK.”.

Dependent Measures. The participants received an online questionnaire, therefore there was no researcher present. The study was translated to German in advance of the experiment, in order to ensure that all participants could correctly comprehend the questions. Therefore, the respondents’ answers were not influenced by misunderstandings. In relation to this, the translation was double checked by the second supervisor, who is a native German. This was done in order to assist the prevention of mistakes and ensure that the translation truly sticks to the original. The survey consisted of 75 items, formulated as statements as well as questions. Answers were given on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from one (“not at all”) to seven (“very much”). High scores could thus be translated to a high perception of the respective measure. The content of the questionnaire for the most part corresponded with the

items of the original study by Giner Sorolla et al. (2017). However, items for assessing the fifth hypothesis were added. That is, items in relation to an improvement of view, particularly, a reduction of worries.

The survey was aimed at measuring the following constructs: *Responsibility-taking* was measured through eight items, for example: “How much does the statement show that this Briton takes on the harmful consequences of Brexit for German people living and working in the UK?”. Cronbach’s alpha was computed per scale. Regarding the measurement of inferences of responsibility-taking the scale was reliable, with the alpha value being higher than .7 ($\alpha = .807$, $M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.04$). *Suffering* was assessed through four items. An example of a question is: “How much is this Briton absorbed emotionally about the harmful consequences of Brexit for German people living and working in the UK?”. Cronbach’s alpha moreover showed that the suffering scale is reliable ($\alpha = .75$, $M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.07$). *Perceived sincerity* was evaluated by three items, for instance: “To what extent do you think that the Briton truly expresses what he feels?”. Again, the scale was reliable ($\alpha = .88$, $M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.25$). *Satisfaction and Insult* were evaluated through three items concerning satisfaction and three items for insult. One example regarding satisfaction is: “To what extent has this statement made you happy?”. Beyond this, an example for an insult item is: “To what extent has this statement made you feel frustration?”. Besides this, analyses have shown that both scales were reliable (Satisfaction: $\alpha = .85$, $M = 3.775$, $SD = 1.29$; Insult: $\alpha = .83$, $M = 2.432$, $SD = 1.36$). *Perceived Intention to Repair and Prevent Harm* was measured through six items, such as: “How much would this Briton be willing to participate in actions aimed to repair the harmful consequences of Brexit for German people living and working in the UK?”. Additionally, the scale is reliable ($\alpha = .85$, $M = 4.03$, $SD = 1.04$). *Forgiveness* was evaluated through two items. One of them was: “To what extent has this statement made you blame this Briton less for inflicting harm among German people in the UK?”. Cronbach’s alpha analysis again revealed that the scale is reliable ($\alpha = .81$, $M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.38$). The amount of *Worries*

and *Fears* was finally measured by 7 items, for example: “I feel nervous when I think about Brexit”. Finally, this scale was also reliable ($\alpha = .81$, $M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.12$).

Results

Selection of Data

The data of 50 out of 325 (15.4 %) participants was removed before analysis. Particularly, if one of the variables of the predicted model was missing (i.e. responsibility-taking, suffering, sincerity, satisfaction, insult, perceived intention to repair & prevent, forgiveness) cases were extracted. Thus, participants that did not finish the questionnaire but still filled in all the items concerning the relevant variables were included in the analyses. Consequently, 42 participants were removed due to missing data. Besides this, two participants younger than the minimum age of 18 were removed. Moreover, 6 respondents scored lower than 4 on the question concerning seriousness, which translates to the survey not being answered quite seriously. After controlling for these answers, data that indeed contained anomalous pattern of answers was deleted. That is, obviously arbitrary or extreme answers, which clearly indicated that the person did not read the questionnaire carefully, such as choosing the same answer for every question. Consequently, there were 275 participants left for analysis (female: 72.9 %; male: 27.1 %; mean age: $M = 25.7$, $SD = 12.3$). Due to the irregularities regarding participants that had to be removed, the distribution over the emotions that were expressed during the manipulation is uneven, with small differences between each condition [Guilt: 43 participants (15.6 %); Regret: 49 (17.8 %), Responsibility: 48 (17.5 %), Shame: 46 (16.7 %), Very sad: 42 (15.3 %) and Unemotional: 47 (17.1 %)].

Descriptive Statistics

Through analyzing the means and correlations a first impression of the data could be created. The outcomes were summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics with Correlations and Means per Dependent, Independent and Mediator Variables

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Responsibility-Taking	275	4.52	1.04		.32**	.37**	.44**	-.33**	.38**	.368**	.029^
2. Suffering	275	5.13	1.07			.47**	.33**	-.42**	.41**	.27**	-.12^
3. Sincerity	275	4.56	1.25				.57**	-.48**	.53**	.41**	-.01^
4. Satisfaction	274	3.78	1.29					-.32**	.49**	.49**	.17*
5. Insult	274	2.43	1.36						-.35**	-.27**	.12^
6. Intention to Repair and Prevent	274	3.97	1.06							.38**	.03^
7. Forgiveness	274	3.68	1.38								-.06^
8. Worries & Fears	275	3.35	1.13								

Notes. *($p < .05$); **($p < .001$); ^($p > .05$).

As it can be seen in the first table, differences in the means regarding each measure, can already be detected. Moreover, as it can be seen in Table 1, nearly all scales are significantly related to each other. Therefore, there is evidence for the fact that the different scales fit to each other in terms of influencing each other. Nevertheless, the exploration of the data has revealed that the scale measuring worries and fears is an outlier. This is the case, as there is only one significant connection, namely, a positive relationship between satisfaction and the outcomes on the worry scale. Thus, one can conclude that there is no relationship between worries and fears measure and the other variables.

Hypothesis 1

To test hypothesis one: “*The expression of any negative feeling in the apologetic statement will lead to a stronger perception of suffering (not responsibility-taking) than an unemotional apology, resulting in the recipient reacting considerably more positively to the apology.*”, one six-way-analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed per dependent variable. The dependent variables were responsibility-taking, suffering, sincerity, satisfaction, insult,

perceived intention to repair and prevent and forgiveness. The six conditions operated as independent variable. Therefore, seven six-way-ANOVA's were implemented in total, which were summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparison of the Mean Scores of All Expressions on All Variables

	Guilt <i>M (SD)</i>	Regret <i>M (SD)</i>	Responsible <i>M (SD)</i>	Shame <i>M (SD)</i>	Very Sad <i>M (SD)</i>	Unemotional <i>M (SD)</i>
Responsibility-Taking $F(5, 269) = 14.18,$ $p < .001$	4.95 (.93) ^{a,c}	4.05 (.86) ^b	5.29 (.62) ^c	4.29 (1.15) ^b	3.98 (1.12) ^b	4.5 (.83) ^{a,b}
Suffering $F(5, 269) = 2.87,$ $p = .015$	5.39 (1.03) ^a	5 (1.12) ^{a,b}	5.16 (.93) ^{a,b}	5.3 (1.07) ^{a,b}	5.29 (1.1) ^{a,b}	4.68 (1.08) ^b
Sincerity $F(5, 269) = .92,$ $p = .473$	4.84 (1.22)	4.41 (1.49)	4.69 (1.26)	4.36 (1.33)	4.53 (.93)	4.53 (1.19)
Satisfaction $F(5, 268) = .99,$ $p = .419$	3.91 (1.21)	3.66 (1.39)	3.81 (1.14)	4.05 (1.43)	3.5 (1.27)	3.72 (1.26)
Insult $F(5, 268) = 1.24,$ $p = .293$	2.22 (1.37)	2.71 (1.57)	2.15 (1.21)	2.59 (1.29)	2.54 (1.35)	2.38 (1.32)
Intention to Repair and Prevent $F(5, 268) = 1.49,$ $p = .192$	4.17 (.95)	3.89 (1.16)	3.99 (.93)	4.22 (1.04)	3.88 (1.1)	3.71 (1.13)
Forgiveness $F(5, 268) = 1.13,$ $p = .345$	3.76 (1.52)	3.38 (1.46)	3.95 (1.29)	3.86 (1.52)	3.55 (1.34)	3.59 (1.13)

Notes. Means with different subscripts significantly differ from each other ($p < .05$); means with the same subscript do not differ significantly ($p > .05$).

As expected, the results have revealed a significant effect of the conditions on the mean score of inferences of suffering ($F(5, 269) = 2.87, p = .015$). In line with the first hypothesis, post hoc analyses using the Bonferroni correction further demonstrated that the participants scored significantly lower on the unemotional condition compared to guilt (see Table 2, Subscripts). Regarding the other emotional conditions, there is no significant difference between these mean scores and the mean score of the unemotional condition on perceived suffering (see Table 2). Therefore, the assumption of an emotional apology leading to more suffering is only slightly supported, that is, regarding feelings of guilt.

As it can be seen in table 1, also the mean scores concerning inferences of responsibility-taking differ significantly ($F(5, 269) = 14.18, p = .000$). Unexpectedly, post hoc tests have revealed that the mean score of the emotional condition “responsible” is significantly higher compared to the unemotional statement. But, as anticipated, Bonferroni correction did not point to any significant differences among the responsibility-taking scores of guilt, regret, shame and/ or very sad compared to the unemotional apology. Contrary to the first hypothesis, none of the effects on the remaining variables is significant (Sincerity: $F(5, 269) = .92, p = .473$; Satisfaction: $F(5, 268) = .99, p = .419$; Insult: $F(5, 268) = 1.24, p = .293$; Perceived intention to repair and prevent: $F(5, 268) = 1.49, p = .192$; Forgiveness: $F(5, 268) = 1.13, p = .345$).

Hypothesis 2 and 3

In order to test the second hypothesis: *“The expression of the emotions “regret” or “very sad” will lead to a weaker perception of responsibility-taking than the emotions “responsible”, “guilty” or “ashamed”.*”, as well as the third hypothesis: *“The expression of the emotions “regret” or “responsible” will lead to a weaker perception of suffering than “very sad”, “guilty” or “ashamed”.*”, two five-way-ANOVA’s were carried out with SPSS. Responsibility-taking, respectively suffering operated as dependent variable and the

emotional conditions guilt, regret, responsible, shame and very sad as independent variable.

The results of these analyses were summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Mean Scores on Inferences of Responsibility-Taking and Suffering per Emotional Condition

	Guilt <i>M (SD)</i>	Regret <i>M (SD)</i>	Responsible <i>M (SD)</i>	Shame <i>M (SD)</i>	Very Sad <i>M (SD)</i>
Inferences of Responsibility-Taking	4.95 (.93) ^a	4.05 (.86) ^b	5.29 (.62) ^a	4.29 (1.15) ^b	3.98 (1.12) ^b
Inferences of Suffering	5.39 (1.03) ^a	5 (1.12) ^a	5.16 (.93) ^a	5.3 (1.07) ^a	5.29 (1.1) ^a

Notes. Means with different subscripts significantly differ from each other ($p < .05$); means with the same subscript do not differ significantly ($p > .05$).

There are indeed significant differences between the mean scores of the five emotional expressions regarding inferences of responsibility-taking ($F(4, 223) = 16.99, p < .001$). Bonferroni post hoc tests were applied (see Table 3, Subscripts), which, as hypothesized, revealed that participants in the conditions regret and very sad reported significantly less responsibility-taking than guilt and responsible. In line with this, the analysis revealed that regret and very sad do not differ from each other. Contrary to the second hypothesis, shame significantly differed from guilt and responsible, but not from regret and very sad. Therefore, hypothesis two is only confirmed partly.

Regarding hypothesis three, the mean scores of the emotional conditions do unexpectedly not differ significantly regarding inferences of suffering ($F(4, 223) = .99, p = .41$). Contrary to the expectations, post hoc tests did also not reveal any significant differences between each emotional condition. Therefore, the results have shown no support for the confirmation of the third hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4

In order to find evidence for hypothesis 4a: *“The expression of emotions high in responsibility-taking (i.e. “feeling responsible”, “guilt”, “shame”) will lead to a stronger perception of responsibility-taking than “regret” and “very sad”, which in turn leads to a stronger perception of sincerity, and through this increased sincerity a more positive reaction will follow.”* and 4b: *“The expression of emotions high in suffering (i.e. “very sad”, “guilt”, “shame”) will lead to a stronger perception of suffering than “regret” and “feeling responsible”, which in turn leads to a stronger perception of sincerity, and through this increased sincerity a more positive reaction will follow.”*, mediation analyses were carried out. The analyses were done with Hayes’ PROCESS application (v.3.2) for SPSS, using Model 6 with 3 Mediators. The independent variables were coded newly. Regarding hypothesis 4a, a contrast variable concerning feeling expressions high in responsibility-taking (i.e. guilt, feeling responsible, shame), coded +1, versus emotions low in responsibility-taking (i.e. regret, very sad), coded -1 operated as the independent variable. Concerning the analyses for testing hypothesis 4b, a different independent variable was coded. That is, a contrast variable regarding expressions that are expected to convey high (coded +1; i.e. guilt, shame, very sad) versus low (coded -1; i.e. regret, feeling responsible) inferences of suffering. Each of the response outcomes (i.e. satisfaction, insult, perceived intention to repair and prevent, forgiveness) operated as dependent variable. Therefore, there were eight analyses in total, four per independent variable. The three mediator variables were the same for all analyses, that is, inferences of responsibility-taking, suffering and sincerity. Moreover, as some of the emotions within the contrast variables were overlapping (e.g. guilt is coded +1 for the responsibility-taking *and* suffering contrast), covariates were added. More precisely, the suffering contrast operated as covariate concerning the analyses for hypothesis 4a and vice versa. The results of these analyses were summarized in Table 4 for responsibility-taking expressions (Hypothesis 4a) and Table 5 for suffering expressions (Hypothesis 4b).

Table 4

Regression Coefficients and Confidence Intervals for All Outcome Variables for Expressions

Low (-1) Versus High (1) in Responsibility-Taking, with expressions low vs high in suffering as a covariate.

	Path A: Sincerity→Outcome <i>CI low; B; CI high</i>	Path B: RT→Outcome <i>CI low; B; CI high</i>	Path C: Suffering→Outcome <i>CI low; B; CI high</i>	Path D: RT Cond.→Outcome <i>CI low; B; CI high</i>	Predicted indirect effect <i>CI low; B; CI high</i>
Satisfaction	.37; .49; .62	.19; .34; .49	-.19; -.04; .11	-.18; -.03; .13	.03; .07; .11
Insult	-.44; -.29; -.16	-.31; -.15; .002	-.56; -.39; -.23	-.22; -.04; .13	-.08; -.04; -.01
Intention to Repair & Prevent	.2; .31; .41	.07; .19; .31	.06; .18; .31	-.1; -.01; .12	.02; .04; .07
Forgiveness	.19; .35; .51	.15; .34; .52	-.12; .06; .24	-.17; .02; .21	.02; .05; .09

Notes. 95 % *CI* with lower (low) and upper (high) bound presented. *B* = (Unstandardized) Regression coefficient. RT = Responsibility-taking. Predicted indirect effect = Condition (Low vs High Responsibility-taking Expression) → Responsibility-taking → Sincerity → Outcome. Significant effects are presented in bold.

Responsibility-Taking Contrast. In line with the proposed model, emotional expressions high in responsibility-taking are firstly shown to be a significant predictor of inferences of responsibility-taking ($B = .45$, $t(224) = 6.63$, $p < .001$), but not suffering ($B = -.09$, $t(223) = -1.22$, $p = .22$). In accordance with hypothesis 4a, the analyses also pointed to the finding that inferences of responsibility-taking ($B = .31$, $t(222) = 4.06$, $p < .001$) and suffering ($B = .51$, $t(222) = 7.06$, $p < .001$) significantly predict inferences of sincerity. As anticipated, the outcomes of the analysis have revealed that inferences of sincerity in turn significantly predict more positive response outcomes (see Table 4, Path A). These predicted outcomes were satisfaction ($B = .49$, $t(221) = 7.81$, $p < .001$), less insult ($B = -.29$, $t(221) = -4.14$, $p < .001$), perceived intention to repair and prevent ($B = .31$, $t(221) = 5.78$, $p < .001$) and forgiveness ($B = .35$, $t(221) = 4.52$, $p < .001$). Thus, these results are also in line with the hypothesis. Besides this, the corresponding predicted indirect effect (see Table 4) is significant for all response outcomes, which further supports hypothesis 4a.

Table 5

Regression Coefficients and Confidence Intervals for All Outcome Variables for Expressions

Low (-1) Versus High (1) in Suffering, with expressions low vs high in responsibility-taking as a covariate.

	Path A: Sincerity→Outcome <i>CI low; B; CI high</i>	Path B: RT→Outcome <i>CI low; B; CI high</i>	Path C: Suffering→Outcome <i>CI low; B; CI high</i>	Path D: RT Cond.→Outcome <i>CI low; B; CI high</i>	Predicted indirect effect <i>CI low; B; CI high</i>
Satisfaction	.37; .49; .62	.19; .34; .49	-.19; -.04; .1	-.04; .09; .24	.01; .05; .09
Insult	-.44; -.29; -.16	-.33; -.16; .002	-.56; -.39; -.23	-.12; .05; .21	-.04; -.02; -.004
Intention to Repair & Prevent	.2; .31; .41	.07; .19; .31	.06; .18; .31	-.04; .08; .19	.007; .03; .06
Forgiveness	.2; .35; .51	.15; .34; .52	-.12; .06; .24	-.11; .06; .24	.007; .03; .07

Notes. 95 % *CI* with lower (low) and upper (high) bound presented. *B* = (Unstandardized) Regression coefficient. Significant effects are presented in bold. Predicted indirect effect = Condition (Low vs High Suffering expression) → Suffering → Sincerity → Outcome.

Suffering Contrast. First, the expressions high in suffering are, as expected, a significant predictor of inferences of suffering ($B = .18$, $t(223) = 2.63$, $p = .009$). Contrary to the assumptions, also responsibility-taking ($B = -.22$, $t(224) = -3.25$, $p = .001$) is shown to be significantly predicted by high suffering conditions. Besides this, the analyses have revealed that inferences of responsibility-taking ($B = .31$, $t(222) = 4.06$, $p < .001$) as well as inferences of suffering ($B = .51$, $t(222) = 7.06$, $p < .001$) significantly predict sincerity, which is in line with hypothesis 4b. As proposed by the hypothesis, sincerity was in turn found to be a significant predictor of satisfaction ($B = .49$, $t(221) = 7.8$, $p < .001$), less insult ($B = -.29$, $t(221) = -4.14$, $p < .001$), perceived intention to repair and prevent ($B = .31$, $t(221) = 5.78$, $p < .001$) and forgiveness ($B = .35$, $t(221) = 4.52$, $p < .001$). Finally, the results have as anticipated shown that the predicted indirect effect is significant for all response outcomes (see Table 5).

Conclusively, these results have confirmed the assumptions regarding hypothesis 4a and 4b. Altogether, the different feeling expressions indeed significantly predict inferences of

responsibility-taking and suffering, which consequently significantly predict inferences of sincerity. These inferences of sincerity are in turn a significant predictor of the positive response outcomes satisfaction, insult, perceived intention to repair and prevent and forgiveness.

Hypothesis 5

Pearson correlation analysis was performed between all outcome variables and the worry scale for testing the fifth hypothesis: *“There is a negative relationship between a more positive reaction and the amount of the recipients’ worries and fears in relation to Brexit, leading to more positive outcomes the lower the amount of worries and fears is.”*. The results of this analysis were summarized in Table 6.

Table 6
Pearson Correlations between the Worry-Scale and the Positive Outcome Variables

	Satisfaction <i>r (p)</i>	Insult <i>r (p)</i>	Repair & Prevent <i>r (p)</i>	Forgiveness <i>r (p)</i>	Total <i>r (p)</i>
Worry	.17 (.004)	-.12 (.057)	.03 (.61)	-.06 (.31)	-.003 (.96)

Notes. Significant ($p \leq .05$) correlations are presented in bold. Insult scale was rescaled for analysis. Total = Mean of all outcome variables.

Unexpectedly, the results have revealed that there is only one significant correlation (see Table 6). That is, between worry and satisfaction ($r(272) = .17, p = .004$). The two variables correlated slightly positive, which is contradictory to the fifth hypothesis. Thus, the results have unexpectedly shown that a higher score on worries and fears is positively related to a higher score on satisfaction. Besides this, the analysis did not point to any other significant correlations. Therefore, these outcomes have overall not proven the assumption of a significant negative relationship between positive response outcomes and less feelings of worry in the sample population.

Conclusion and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how different negative emotions being expressed as part of an intergroup apology can positively influence the outcomes in terms of satisfaction, less insult, perceived intention to repair and prevent, and forgiveness from the view of the recipient. The research was done in relation to the context of Brexit, as its adverse consequences for EU nationals (i.e. Germans) living and/ or working in the UK have led, and are currently further leading, to tensions between British and German people. Reasons for this conflict include the fact that the majority of Britons voted in favor of Brexit (European Commission, 2018). In turn, the consequences of this decision are clearly leading to various negative consequences for Germans that live/ work in the UK (Bienkov & Colson, 2018; European Commission, 2018; Hunt & Wheeler, 2017; Independent, 2017; The Week, 2018), such as the disapproval of work permission (Independent, 2017).

The current study explored how the success of an intergroup apology by a member of the perpetrator group (i.e. a Briton) can be enhanced, through improving the reaction of German people reading the statement. Specifically, it was investigated to what extent the five emotions “guilt”, “regret”, “feeling responsible”, “shame” and/ or “very sad” affect an apology’s effectiveness compared to an unemotional apology. In line with this, it was proposed that the outcomes can be explained by inferences of responsibility-taking, suffering and sincerity. In detail, the communication of emotions that favor the extent to which the Briton is regarded as feeling responsible for the consequences of Brexit was expected to positively influence the response of German people receiving the apology. Also, the extent to

which the Briton is perceived as suffering, depending on the feeling-expression, was assumed to explain more positive reactions. In turn, if the Briton conveys more suffering, respectively responsibility-taking, the apology was suggested to be perceived as more sincere. Altogether, these three factors were anticipated to reveal how the expression of different feelings influences the extent to which a German is more inclined to, for instance, forgive a Briton concerning the negative consequences of their vote. Beyond this, it was examined whether more positive response outcomes lead to a reduction of worries and fears of German people towards Brexit. Overall, the results have indeed revealed evidence for a meaningful part of the anticipations. Nevertheless, there are also contradictory findings.

The most important findings include those of the tests for the proposed model. Particularly, the results reveal various evidence for the suggested role of responsibility-taking, suffering and sincerity in exploring how the expression of different emotions within an apology can positively influence the reaction of the recipient. The outcomes have first shown that different negative emotions expressed as part of an apology indeed significantly predict inferences of responsibility-taking and suffering. As expected, the insights have further shown that inferences of both (responsibility-taking and suffering) positively influence perceptions of sincerity. Perceiving the apology as sincere is in turn positively related to the response outcomes. Specifically, the amount of recipient satisfaction, insult, perceived intention to repair and prevent, as well as forgiveness are predicted by inferences of sincerity. In sum, the anticipated “inference-based model” by Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017) is supported by the insights of the current research. Moreover, the current findings are also in line with the

outcomes of several other previous researches. For instance, much literature likewise stresses the important role of transferring responsibility-taking in an effective apology (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; MacLachlan, 2016; Liviatan & Nadler, 2006; Lewicki et al., 2016; Imhoff et al., 2012). Also, the effect of responsibility-taking as a mediator is supported by other prior research (Wohl et al., 2013). Thus, inferences of responsibility-taking clearly play an important role as a component of an effective apology. Besides this, also the role of suffering in favoring positive response outcomes of an apology was already pointed out by several prior studies (Kador, 2010; Tang & Gray, 2018; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008). Particularly, the fact that an apology is more effective if the victim perceives that the wrongdoer is suffering to a certain extent (Tang & Gray, 2018). Moreover, previous papers also support the fact that inferences of suffering are a positive predictor of sincerity (Tang & Gray, 2018; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008, Giner-Sorolla et al., 2017). Consequently, the outcomes of this study serve as verification of these prior insights. In line with this, the results furthermore point to the importance of inferences of sincerity in explaining how the expression of emotions as part of an apology lead to more positive outcomes. In line with this, also other literature (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; MacLachlan, 2016; Wohl et al., 2013; Hubbard et al., 2013, Giner-Sorolla et al., 2017) found similar effects of perceived sincerity on, for instance, forgiveness. Finally, the “inference-based model” proposed during the current study extends these findings. This is the case, as the current outcomes broaden the insights in the proposed role of responsibility-taking, suffering and sincerity regarding the influence of different emotions within an apology. Particularly, the expected model, which was newly introduced by Giner-Sorolla et

al. (2017), is replicated. Consequently, the current study provides further proof for the present finding that an apology's response outcomes are dependent on the emotions expressed, to the extent that particular emotions transfer different levels of inferences of responsibility-taking, suffering and sincerity, leading to more or less positive outcomes.

Besides these findings there are also other anticipations that are confirmed, respectively refuted by the current outcomes. That is, regarding perceived responsibility-taking, the proposed positive influence of nearly all feeling-expressions is not significant compared to the unemotional apology, which is in line with the assumptions of the first hypothesis. Only respondents who received an apology containing feelings of responsibility perceived significantly more responsibility-taking compared to an unemotional apology, although it was proposed that this will not be the case. A potential explanation is the fact that the condition consisted of an apology that explicitly contained feeling responsible with matching appraisals (One British citizen said: "Britain has caused these negative consequences Brexit has for German people who live and work here. It is because of our decision that these consequences are happening. *I feel responsible* for the fears and stress that Brexit brings about among German nationals in the UK."). Therefore, it is likely that participants associate the statement with inferences of responsibility-taking in the first place, which in turn leads to perceiving the wrongdoer as taking more responsibility compared to the unemotional apology. As expected, the recipient also perceives the perpetrator as taking significantly less responsibility when regret and very sad are expressed compared to guilt and feeling responsible (Hypothesis 2). Thus, the extent to which a recipient perceives a

perpetrator as taking responsibility is significantly higher when the apology contains feelings of responsibility or guilt, but not shame. Therefore, these insights are for the most part in line with evidence of other studies. For instance, Imhoff et al. (2012) have already pointed out that the relationship between guilt and responsibility-taking is more positive than the relationship between regret and responsibility taking. Unexpectedly, the current study was nearly unable to find evidence for the fact that the emotional expressions communicate higher perceptions of suffering compared to the unemotional statement. Only expressions of guilt are proven to convey significantly more suffering compared to an unemotional apology. In contrast, several researches stress the role of, for instance, shame in connection to the communication of suffering, which cannot be fully supported by the outcomes of the current study. Another striking discrepancy between this study and the investigations by Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017) is the fact that there is no evidence for the assumption that an emotional apology overall leads to enhanced outcomes in terms of for instance less insult. This is also incongruent concerning the findings of several other studies about the positive effect of emotion expressions on for instance satisfaction and forgiveness (Wohl et al., 2013; Hubbard, Hendrickson, Fehrenbach & Sur, 2013; Lewicki et al., 2016; Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Giner-Sorolla et al., 2008; Imhoff et al., 2012). A possible reason for these observations could be the fact that the analyses regarding the unemotional versus all emotional expressions differed in relation to the original study. More precisely, the direct effects of each feeling expression on the outcome variables were not analyzed during the investigations of Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017). That is, the researchers created a new variable which formed the mean score of all feeling expressions

per outcome variable. Therefore, possible differences between a particular emotion versus the unemotional expression were not considered at all. Concerning the results, this means that the current insights could also extend the findings about the effects of different emotions on the outcomes of an apology. This is the case, as it is possible that Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017) would have found similar results but did not control for it. Nevertheless, further support would be required in order to be able to draw a conclusion based on such outcomes.

As indicated above, the results of the current study show that the expression of shame does not significantly differ compared to regret and very sad in terms of responsibility-taking inferences. Thus, the results of the current study do support the second hypothesis only partly. In contrast, also various other researches (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Lewicki et al., 2016; Giner-Sorolla et al., 2017) have already found proof for guilt *and shame* leading to higher perceptions of responsibility-taking compared to emotions such as very sad and regret. An alternative explanation for this contradictory observation is the fact that, during the apology statement, the Briton expresses that Britain in general is immoral/ unjust (see Appendix B, Shame). Thus, the wrongdoer does not explicitly refer to himself as taking the blame for the consequences of voting for Brexit. Therefore, the Briton was probably perceived as denying his role concerning the adverse consequences of Brexit for Germans in the UK. These observations could in turn have led to these contradictory findings in comparison to the paper by Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017).

Another finding contrary to the expectations is the fact that the anticipated differences between the feelings very sad, guilt and shame (high suffering) versus regret and responsible

(low suffering) in relation to inferences of suffering are not supported by the results of the current study (Hypothesis 3). This is also not in line with the results of other prior researches (Eisikovits and Harely, 2006; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008; Giner-Sorolla et al., 2017). A possible reason for this contradictory finding is the fact that post hoc tests are sensitive to a large number of factor levels. Thus, through making use of Bonferroni correction, conceivable differences are possibly ruled out by SPSS. Moreover, the fact that the current experiment handled a German sample population could account for different outcomes. This is the case, as Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017) handled a Dutch sample. Although, during the translation process it was attended to stick to the original questionnaire as close as possible, the risk of differences in the perceptions because of language as well as general cultural dissimilarities cannot be eliminated.

The results concerning the last hypothesis show that there is almost no evidence for the fact that a reduction of worries and fears is related to higher positive outcomes of the apology. In fact, the analyses have shown that there is no negative relationship between the score on the worry-scale and the response outcomes, although prior research assumes that an intergroup apology can decrease worries and fears through decreasing awareness concerning threatening circumstances (Lind, 2003) (in this case, the negative consequences of Brexit). Strikingly and contrary to the assumptions, there is even a slightly *positive* correlation, namely, between worry and satisfaction. A possible explanation for this observation might be the fact that most participants tended to *not* perceive Brexit as a threat anyways. This is implicated by the fact that during the exploration of the data, as it came forward that most

participants (nearly 90%) specified the amount of worries experienced as moderately low (a score of 4 or lower). Consequently, people with high scores on the outcome variables probably perceive worries as equal bad/ not bad at all as people who score low on the outcomes. So, in relation to the findings, it is conceivable that the majority of participants did not extensively deal with the problem of Brexit before filling in the questionnaire. Thus, many respondents were probably not aware of the serious negative consequences Brexit can have for themselves and/ or other Germans. Consequently, it is likely that people's score on worries and fears was influenced by the exposition of the problem as part of the manipulation, which possibly led to the respondents experiencing fear. Therefore, it is conceivable that these outcomes can be explained by the fact that the negative effect of the exposition to the negative consequences of Brexit for people from Germany might be higher than the positive effect of an emotional apology. This in turn leads to a correlation in the opposite direction than expected.

Finally, the research question: *"How can an intergroup apology, depending on the negative emotions a member of the perpetrator group expresses, contribute to a more positive response and improve the victim groups' view concerning a reduction of worries and fears?"* can be answered through combining all findings. That is, the current study was able to find further evidence for the fact that an apology can lead to a more positive response through the communication of negative emotions. This is the case, as the emotions expressed as part of an apology are shown to be positively related to inferences of responsibility-taking and/ or suffering. In turn, perceptions of responsibility-taking and suffering lead to increased

perceived sincerity. Subsequently, more perceived sincerity leads to a more positive response in terms of satisfaction, less insult, perceived intention to repair and prevent, and forgiveness. Thus, the study provides proof for the fact that an intergroup apology containing expressions of emotions works because the outcomes are mediated by responsibility-taking, suffering and sincerity, which depend on the feelings being expressed. Regarding the assumption that a more positive reaction will lead to reduced worries and fears, no evidence could be found. Consequently, the last part of the question remains unanswered.

In conclusion, the most relevant findings regarding the experiment of Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017) were replicated, which underlines the scientific relevance of the insights. That is, the outcomes of the current study support the suggested importance of not only considering the direct effect of certain emotions on an apology. Rather, it is a more complex process, involving responsibility-taking, suffering and sincerity inferences, which in turn regulate the positive influence of each emotion.

Strengths and Limitations

Strong points of the current research include the manipulation, as appraisals are included in the apology statement. Compared to the “original” (replicated) study by Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017), the manipulation is more realistic, which enhances the quality of the responses. Regarding the apologies, appraisals are communicated through for instance a “bad character” regarding shame or “injustice/ immorality” regarding guilt (Roseman et al., 1990). These appraisals enhance the extent to which the conditions can be distinguished compared to the

one-sentence manipulation in the experiment of Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017). Moreover, concerning the length of the statement, the apologies of the current study are closer to reality. This is the case, as a person in real-life would likely not make an excuse that consists of only one sentence and does not contain any additional explanations. In line with this, several researches further support the importance of including more information in an effective apology (Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Wohl et al., 2011; Lewicki et al., 2016; MacLachlan, 2016). For instance, including some sort of reasoning (Lewicki et al., 2016) or expressing a will to make amends, which is suggested to increase inferences of sincerity (Wohl et al., 2011).

Moreover, the proposed “inference-based model” of Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017) was replicated which enhances the validity of the outcomes regarding hypothesis four. Generally, the findings are strongly supported, as there is much proof regarding previous researches concerning the influence of the different factors on the outcome of an apology (Wohl et al., 2013; Giner-Sorolla et al., 2008; Imhoff et al., 2012; Lewicki et al., 2016; Eisikovits & Hareli, 2006; Liviatan & Nadler, 2006; Hubbard, Hendrickson, Fehrenbach & Sur, 2013; Zebel, Doosje & Spears, 2009). Therefore, one can conclude that the results in accordance with the assumed mediation model are highly evidence-based. This enhances the scientific relevance of these outcomes to the extent that the current study can operate as further proof for the prior findings.

Besides these strengths, there are also some limitations that need to be taken into consideration. First, one should bear in mind that this study is based on a prior experiment,

carried out by Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017). Therefore, the questionnaire of this study was originally written in English, as the majority of the questions was copied from the “original” experiment. This is the case, because the aim of the first four hypotheses of this paper was to replicate the results of the study by Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017). But, as the context of the current study is different, the questions were altered in relation to Brexit. Moreover, another researcher carried out the same study with a Dutch sample population (and hypothesis 5 differing). Thus, due to the cooperation with these researchers, the questionnaire, as well as the manipulations had to be formulated in English. Due to the strict translation process, some of the questions and expressions within the manipulations are formulated in a slightly unnatural manner concerning German people. This is the case, as the choice of words has to be congruent regarding the original questionnaire, to make sure that the different studies measure the same constructs. As a consequence, people might react differently compared to usual German language/ choice of words. This is for example the case, as it is likely that after unnatural circumstances during the survey, also more unnatural reactions will follow. For instance, the results in relation to the expression of shame are differing from the study by Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017) as well as from evidence of other prior research. Therefore, it is likely that another factor which influences the results is present. In turn, the fact that the manipulation and apology expressions may seem unnatural concerning German participants may be one of the reasons concerning some of the contradictory outcomes of the current study. One could also try to alter the manipulations with the goal of making it sound more natural, but this would negatively affect the extent to which the results can be compared in

terms of standardization. Consequently, especially regarding the manipulations, it would probably have been better to formulate the statements straightforwardly in German.

Additionally, more than two-thirds of the participants were females. This observation is presumably a consequence of differences between accessibility concerning female versus male participants concerning the options of the researcher. Moreover, as the survey was publicly accessible without controlling for an even distribution of the genders, the willingness of women to participate probably also played a role. As a consequence, 72.9 % of the participants were women. Therefore, the results are hardly generalizable to the German population. That is, in Germany, 49.3 % of the population are women and 50.7 % are men (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018). Consequently, the response data is not representative, as the share of women is much higher than in real-life. Thus, in terms of generalization it would have been better to ensure that the proportion of men and women is closer to reality. The impact of the problem is further demonstrated by researches that show that there are differences in men versus women regarding dealing with and reacting to apologies, for instance in terms of forgiveness (Thomas, White & Sutton, 2008; Conejero, Etxebarria & Montero, 2013). Additionally, there are differences across the genders concerning the sensitivity to offensive behavior (Schumann & Ross, 2010). For instance, the paper of Thomas et al. (2008) suggests that women are more likely to forgive a wrongdoing when the perpetrator conveys responsibility-taking through the apology. This effect was not found for men. As a consequence, such findings imply that the proportion of men and women within the

sample probably have negatively influenced the results concerning generalizability and validity. Therefore, it would have been useful to take these insights into consideration.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Work

The outcomes of the experiment have shown that the effect of an apology in terms of the response can differ depending on the expression of different emotions. This implicates that the content of an apology plays an important role regarding its effectiveness. Consequently, especially regarding for instance politically relevant apologies, such as Brexit, it is valuable to thoroughly reconsider the influence of certain things that are said during an apology. For instance, if a perpetrator wants to convey responsibility-taking, the outcomes of the current study have proven that guilt and feeling responsible should be communicated. Also, within economic issues findings about the effectiveness of an apology can be valuable. This is the case, as especially big companies are dependent on customers and their attitude towards the company, as it can influence purchase behavior. An example is the “Emission Scandal” in relation to Volkswagen (Zeit Online, 2015). That is, the company scammed millions of people regarding the CO₂ emissions of their cars. In order to gain back trust after such an incident, it is meaningful to make sure that an apology by a representor of the company is truly effective in terms of the response outcomes. In turn, insights about for instance the “inference-based model” are a valuable contribution to such careful considerations.

A recommendation for future work would be to revise the analysis of the fifth hypothesis. In particular, it is recommended to investigate in the differences between the conditions

regarding feelings of worry and fear. That is, instead of analyzing whether there is a correlation between the total scores on each response outcome and the amount of worry, a follow-up analysis should rather compute the correlations using the means of each condition separately. Doing so, it can be examined whether there is a possible significant effect on the outcome variables regarding one particular feeling expression. Also, as the mean score of the control condition was included in the original computations, a possible negative effect of this expression can be ruled out.

Moreover, the current study was partly unable to replicate the results of the study by Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017) due to several reasons. Especially regarding hypothesis one and three, the current results were partly different. Thus, no further proof is provided. Therefore, recommended for the future would be to revise these hypotheses again. Regarding the first hypothesis, it would be valuable to repeat the analyses as well the way they were done during the current study, as the way they were done during the study of Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017). That is, comparing the effect of all emotion expressions in sum to an unemotional excuse, as well as the effect of each particular feeling versus the unemotional apology separately. Doing so, it can be checked whether the results are similar to the current study concerning the individual differences compared to the unemotional statements. If this is not the case, it can still be explored whether the overall difference between emotional versus unemotional is significant to find further support for the findings of Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017). In relation to hypothesis three, it is suggested to repeat the analyses using the same methods as during the study of Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017). Doing so, it can again be checked whether the current

results are impaired by for instance bias. In turn, there is a chance of finding further support for the anticipations concerning the third hypotheses. Thus, the aim should be to find further support for the relationship between the different emotions expressed as part of an apology and inferences of suffering. Consequently, it can be explored whether the current results were negatively influenced by other factors, which led to the current outcomes, or, if another study could find further contradictions. Concerning both of these analyses, it is also recommended to control for possible alternative explanations of the contradictory findings of the current study. Particularly, heightening the power of the outcomes through increasing the sample size, as well as controlling for a considerable equal distribution of the genders. Doing so, one can explore whether some of the findings are further refuted or if this study was for instance biased, which led to different results compared to Giner-Sorolla et al. (2017).

All in all, the findings of the current study are valuable in relation to real-life. That is, one can implement the knowledge about the factors that influence the effectiveness of an apology (i.e. the communication of different emotions with respect to inferences of responsibility-taking, suffering and sincerity) when making an excuse towards a victim. Especially regarding urgent and/ or serious conflicts, such as an intergroup conflict between two opposing parties, it is important that an excuse aiming at ameliorating the situation is truly successful. Consequently, adverse feelings of the disadvantaged group towards the perpetrator are likely reduced through an effective apology. This can for instance lead to the victim being more inclined to listen to new approaches for finding a solution, through a more positive basic attitude towards the perpetrator. Also, as apologies containing certain emotions

are shown to favor inferences of sincerity in relation to the wrongdoer, the chances of gaining back a sense of trust are higher compared to an unemotional apology. Thus, negotiations can be done more effectively, as, for instance, possible proposals for restoring the relationship are presumably perceived as less hostile. Therefore, further discussions concerning the source of the conflict are probably more effective. Consequently, the parties can think of further solutions for solving the conflict completely, without being impaired by negative emotions (e.g. rage) towards the other group. These effects on the relationship between the groups are valuable, as it is likely that a serious conflict cannot be completely solved by an intergroup apology alone. Rather, an apology can be an important first step in restoring harmony.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Manipulation: Text About the Serious Consequences of Brexit

On June 23rd 2016, a British referendum took place to gauge support for the potential departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union. This has led to a 51.9% majority vote in favor of departure and therefore the UK will leave and separate itself from the EU in March 2019.

The result of the UK departure from the EU, also called 'Brexit', is that many rights and rules will come to change in the UK. However, for one particular group of citizens in particular, namely EU nationals such as German people living and/or working in the UK, the prospect of Brexit causes a great amount of uncertainty and stress. That is, the change of rules might directly impact on their rights to reside in the UK. For example, after Brexit the right of German people in the UK to move freely between member states will be replaced with the obligation to earn settled-status in the UK - if they want to remain living and working there. Also, German people's right to bring over family members to the UK could potentially be diminished or even cancelled after Brexit.

A recent quote of a German woman in UK media, that is, the online journal "The Independent", is described below to give a better understanding of the problematic situation:

"I was totally shocked by the outcome of the referendum. I wasn't crying, I was wailing. I felt really suicidal. It was totally catastrophic." She later added "After living my adult life here – it takes away your bearings and everything you know, everything you take for granted, including how you relate to other people. And this is the Britain that's been my home and that I've known for 30 years. I mean, the British abroad have also experienced a lot of uncertainty about pensions and other issues, but I don't think they've met such a hostile reception from their respective governments"

- Maïke Bohn, a German citizen living in the UK.

In short, the vulnerability that German nationals have come to experience thus far as a result of Brexit leads them to go through feelings of severe worry and fear, as well as feeling very unwelcome in the UK.

Appendix B

Manipulation: Different Emotion Conditions

A German research agency has recently interviewed British people who voted in favor of Brexit to examine how they feel about the fears and worries Dutch [German] people experience who live and/ or work in the UK.

Feeling responsible condition:

One British citizen said:

“Britain has caused these negative consequences Brexit has for German people who live and work here. It is because of our decision that these consequences are happening. I feel responsible for the fears and stress that Brexit brings about among Dutch nationals in the UK.”

Guilt condition:

One British citizen said:

“I consider the negative consequences Brexit has for German people who live and work here as a bad thing Britain did. I think these consequences are very unjust and immoral. I feel guilty about the fears and stress that Brexit brings about among German nationals in the UK.”

Shame condition:

One British citizen said:

“I consider the negative consequences Brexit has for German people who live and work here as showing the bad character of Britain in general. I think these consequences show that many British people are unjust and immoral. I feel ashamed about the fears and stress that Brexit brings about among German nationals in the UK.”

Regret condition:

One British citizen said:

“I often wonder what could have been done differently to prevent the negative consequences Brexit has for German people who live and work here. I wish this would not have happened. I regret the fears and stress that Brexit brings about among German nationals in the UK.”

Very sad condition:

One British citizen said:

It feels like a loss when I think about the negative consequences Brexit has for German people living and/ or working here. It is very tragic that these circumstances have been brought about. I feel very sad about the fears and stress that Brexit brings about among German nationals in the UK.”

Control/ Unemotional:

One British citizen said:

I consider it important to say sorry for the negative consequences Brexit has for German people who live and work here. This is something to offer apologies for. I therefore apologize for the fears and stress that Brexit brings about among German nationals in the UK."