
Can an apology prove useful for reducing the doubts of EU-nationals after Brexit?

Dino Bašić

Universiteit Twente, Enschede, 25 februari, 2019

Supervised by Dr. Sven Zebel and Jiska Jonas-van Dijk, MSc

Behavioral, management and social sciences: Psychology

ABSTRACT:

This study aimed to replicate and expand upon the work of Giner-Sorolla et al. (forthcoming) with several alterations. The main aim was to investigate a model where expressed emotions in a group-based apology incline the victim to draw inferences about suffering and responsibility taking by the perpetrator, which on their turn led the victim to draw inferences about perceived sincerity of the apology. Higher perceived sincerity was expected to lead to more positive reactions. To test the model, the context of Brexit was used which has caused harm among EU nationals in the UK. Dutch citizens were given apologetic expressions uttered by Britons where emotion terms were varied alongside appraisals. Results showed partial support for the model but not the expected differences between the emotional expressions. No associations were found between perceived humanness of the perpetrator and evaluative responses. Further research is recommended to verify these findings.

Introduction

On 23rd June 2016, the majority of the British electorate has made an appearance to vote for the referendum regarding the choice to either remain member of or to leave the European Union. This has resulted in a 51.9% majority vote in favour of abandonment and therefore on the 23rd of March 2019, the UK will separate itself from the European Union ("EU Referendum Results", 2016; Hunt & Wheeler, 2019). A result of the disconnection of the United Kingdom from the European Union, which will be referred to as 'Brexit', is that for many parties involved, a multitude of rules will come to change. One of those affected parties are European Union citizens, or EU nationals, that live or work in the UK. When looking at the big picture, the UK government seems committed to protecting and maintaining the rights of 3.6 million EU nationals residing in the UK (Hunt & Wheeler, 2019; Collins, 2018). However, focussing on the more nuanced aspects of the Brexit plan, indications exist that this is not entirely true as well as a difficult commitment to guarantee.

Although a thorough analysis of the exact rules and rights for EU nationals regarding Brexit lies outside the scope of this article, what can concisely be asserted is that the government does in fact seem to discriminate between certain groups of EU nationals regarding the rights that will or will not be granted and may even be restricted (Watts, 2017; Bienkov & Colson, 2018). For example, after Brexit the right of EU nationals to move freely between member states will be replaced with the right, or need, to earn settled-status in the UK, which is not the same as citizenship and which could be taken away from these EU citizens if they leave the UK for 5 years or more (Bienkov & Colson, 2018). Another example is that EU nationals currently have the right to bring over family members that may stay and live with them. After Brexit, this right could potentially be removed or diminished (Bienkov & Colson, 2018). Moreover, the process of determining settled-status for many EU nationals involves the need for many EU nationals to apply as well as individual cases that can become very complex and therefore difficult to resolve (Migration Observatory, 2018). In sum, it is apparent that EU nationals in the UK are a vulnerable group of citizens that face uncertainty in relation to their rights and status after Brexit. As a result of this, many EU nationals experience worry, indignation, frustration and feel unwelcomed, sometimes to the point of leaving the UK (bulman, 2017; Tapper, 2018; Obordo, 2017). The adverse effects that the EU nationals experience with regard to Brexit could damage the relationship between EU citizens and the UK, in ways that could negatively affect the social, economic, cultural and political affiliations between the UK and Europe. For these reasons, it is important and urgent that

steps are taken that could mitigate the problematic situation for the involved parties.

Considering that, despite the mentioned problems, Brexit is a scenario that is most likely to happen, and taking into account that the votes were indeed a conscious decision made by the majority of the UK electorate, one possibility that might prove effective is a group-based apology. The act of apologising can be viewed as a moral duty after a misdeed, however, an apology may also improve relations between parties which deems it not only a moral duty but also a deed that can be practically useful (Wohl, Hornsey & Philpot, 2011).

A definition of group-based apology mentioned by Wenzel et al. (2017) is that it encompasses ‘*...at a minimum, a communication or gesture by offenders through which they take responsibility for having committed a wrong and signal remorse for their actions*’ (p.75). On the other hand, Wohl, Hornsey and Philpot (2011) describe a slightly more extensive and prescriptive definition in which they describe a group-based apology as ‘*an explicit expression of collective guilt. In doing so, the perpetrator should acknowledge the human dignity of the victimized group and the fact that this dignity was disregarded in the past. The perpetrator group should outline the mutually understood account of history that squarely places collective guilt on the shoulders of perpetrator groups*’ (p.92). Apparently, a group-based apology can take many forms and can comprise a variety of actions or elements that the perpetrator group sees fit. However, at its core a group-based apology seems to require at minimum the acknowledgement of responsibility for the event as well as the expression of remorse towards the offended party.

In recent years the number of public group-based apologies has exponentially grown and as a result, these have also become increasingly expected in intergroup conflicts (Wenzel, Anvari, de Vel-Palumbo & Bury, 2017; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008; Wohl, Hornsey & Philpot, 2011). Much of the research that has emerged and attempted to investigate group-based apologies has shown mixed results with regard to the specific effects of these apologies, especially with regard to forgiveness (Hornsey & Wohl, 2013). However, research thus far does also point to a rather inviting array of beneficial effects that may be realised as result of a group-based apology. To name a few of these potential effects: increased forgiveness (Wohl, Hornsey & Bennett, 2012, retrieved from Steele & Blatz, 2014), increased possibility of reconciliation and peace (Wenzel, Anvari, de Vel-Palumbo & Bury, 2017), decreased desire for revenge (Giner-Sorolla, Castano, Espinosa, & Brown, 2008, retrieved from Steele & Blatz, 2014) heightened perception of remorse (Philpot & Hornsey, 2008), heightened satisfaction (Philpot & Hornsey, 2008), heightened positive perception of the transgression-group (Blatz, Day & Schryer, 2014, retrieved from Steele & Blatz, 2014) and increased

optimism for improved intergroup relations (Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman, retrieved from Steele & Blatz, 2014). Looking back at the context of Brexit, many of these beneficial effects of a group-based apology could perhaps come into play and could alleviate the tensions that EU nationals and the UK electorate experience as a result of the inflicted injustice. On its own turn, this could at last restore harmony between both parties and resolve the intergroup conflict.

To get a better understanding of the potential effects and benefits of group-based apologies, it is important to have insight into the ways that group-based apologies are perceived by victimised groups and which elements can help to promote a positive reception. After all, the victims play a significant role in the final progress of the involved parties as an apology intends to change their attitudes which in turn should lead to a better climate for further development of a positive relationship.

One area of research that is relatively novel is that surrounding the question of what group-based apologies specifically communicate to an intended audience. Giner-Sorolla, Zebel and Kamau (forthcoming) have attempted to fill this gap with their research on inferences that victims draw from emotions expressed in a given apology. Their findings hold that the expression of negative emotions in an apology should communicate two things to the victim to be perceived sincere: the experienced internal psychological suffering of the perpetrator as well as the potential acceptance of responsibility for wrongdoing. First, they explain that a person with a healthy consciousness will anticipate that carrying out an immoral act will lead to internal psychological suffering. This suffering is unpleasant and therefore inhibits the individual from carrying out the immoral act. Expression of this moral suffering shows the victim not only the capacity of that moral suffering, but also that it is safer to initiate cooperation with the perpetrator, because the likelihood of repeated wrongdoing will be smaller. Secondly, the authors add that it is not enough to express suffering because this is a condition that can, in a given conflict-scenario, also be attributed to observers as opposed to exclusively the perpetrator(s). Perhaps expressing only suffering might therefore come across as being insincere towards a victim. Thus, more is needed to connect the immoral deed and resulting emotions with the perpetrator. Therefore, the perpetrator must also accept responsibility for the act, as this is in fact a condition exclusively attributable to him or her. By accepting responsibility of the act, the perpetrator admits that he is the wrongdoer, not someone else, and that he must deal with the wrongdoing that he has committed.

Finally, Giner-Sorolla and colleagues add that the suffering and acceptance of responsibility in sum work to influence inferences about the perceived sincerity of the

perpetrator. To summarize, the authors combine these elements in a model where expressed emotions in an apology incline the victim to draw inferences about the suffering and responsibility taking by the perpetrator, which on their turn led the victim to draw inferences about the perceived sincerity of the apology. It is assumed that an apology which is taken as sincere will lead to more positive evaluative judgements of the apology, such as increased forgiveness, satisfaction and decreased insult. A visual representation of this model can be seen in figure 1.

In order to test this model, Giner-Sorolla and colleagues have used and manipulated several emotional terms within apologetic statements to measure the degree to which each emotion was linked with perceived suffering and perceived responsibility inferences. Moreover, the emotional terms that were used were expected to be high or low on either suffering or responsibility-taking. Five emotion terms were used in total. One term used was expected to be high in suffering but low in responsibility: very sad. Two terms used were expected to be high on both dimensions due to their self-conscious and emotional nature, according to Giner-sorolla and colleagues: guilty and ashamed. One term used was expected to be low on both dimensions due to low involvement of the self nor strong feelings: regret. Finally, one term was used expected to be high in responsibility-taking but low in suffering: ‘I feel responsible’.

The present study aims to replicate the findings of Giner-Sorolla and colleagues, but with a few alterations and additions. Firstly, the context of the research by Giner-Sorolla and colleagues encircles the harm that smokers inflict upon non-smokers. This research will instead regard the scenario of Brexit, which can be deemed as a context more appropriate for an apology for a few reasons. The harm inflicted upon non-smokers by smokers may be perceived as an act that is not very intentional and also spread across time, due to slow and continuous development of health issues. Therefore, this context might not be entirely appropriate for an apology. Brexit, however, is more tangible and direct because it involves changes of rules that will target determined groups of people, a result that is directly tied to the majority vote of the British electorate to leave the European Union. For these reasons, the latter context seems to be more appropriate for an apology. Within this context, Dutch citizens from the Netherlands are considered the victimized group and will be the group to be analysed. British citizens will be considered as the perpetrator group and will issue an apology for the negative consequences that Dutch EU nationals experience as a result of their vote to leave the European Union.

Secondly, the present study will address another particular limitation of the research conducted by Giner-Sorolla and colleagues which is the usage and manipulation of merely emotional words as the independent variables. This falls short of communication in real life because intuitively, it is to be expected that a perpetrator would not only apologize for the deed but also explain how they evaluate or interpret the deed, which would make the apologetic expression more sincere, complete and meaningful. Therefore, in this research the concept of appraisals will be added to the manipulations as to make them more holistic as well as more representative and true to real life. In short, an appraisal is the interpretation of an event. Appraisal theory comprises the view that it is the appraisal of events, and not events themselves, that decide whether a person will come to experience an emotion, and which emotion in particular (Roseman, Spindel & Jose, 1990). As mentioned by Roseman, Spindel and Jose (1990) this means that individuals can in fact experience different emotions with regard to the same event, depending on their appraisal, as well as the fact that individuals can experience the same emotions with regard to different events as long as their appraisals of the events coincide.

An example of an appraisal will follow to clarify the matter. Imagine thinking through an important job interview that you have recently done. If your interpretation of the job interview is positive, and you assume that the chance of obtaining the job is high, the emotions that you may experience as a result are joy or relief. If you think it did not go so well and interpret the interview as negative with a low likelihood of getting the job, emotions you may experience are distress or sadness. Thus, the interpretation of the event is the appraisal which causes the experience of certain emotions. Moreover, in both situations the very same job interview may have taken place, however, a differing interpretation of the same job interview may lead to different emotions. Now, if one were to apologize for a deed, a mere apology might suffice to satisfy the victim. However, explaining the interpretation of the deed to the victim could make the apology more wholesome and meaningful, and could also create greater understandability of the perpetrators experienced emotions from the perspective of the victim. In accordance with these arguments, the concept of appraisals will be added to the manipulations.

Finally, an addition to the present research will be the measurement of perceived humanness of the perpetrator group by the victim group. In their research on the success and failure of group-based apologies, Wohl, Hornsey & Bennett (2012) have found that one reason for potentially reduced effectiveness of a group apology can lie in perceived inhumanization among the victim group. Inhumanization is the tendency of ingroup

members to believe that outgroup members are less able to experience complex, human emotions than ingroup members (Leyens 2009, retrieved from Wohl, Hornsey & Bennett. 2012). A distinction is hereby made between these “human” kind of emotions such as shame and guilt, referred to as secondary emotions, and primary emotions which one can more commonly find in animals as well, such as anger and fear. Wohl and Colleagues (2012) have found that it is indeed important that the victim group perceives the humanness in the perpetrator group for forgiveness to be possible. For these reasons, an outcome variable that will be measured is perceived humanness so to see whether high or low perceived humanness could be correlated with forgiveness or any other variable.

The present study involves three aims, two of which are a replication of the research of Giner-Sorolla and colleagues (forthcoming). The first aim is to test whether the five determined emotional words induce the inferences about suffering and responsibility taking as expected within the victims. The second aim is to test the aforementioned model and whether it can hold up in the context of Brexit, as opposed to the smokers context. Within the model, it is expected that the expressed emotion in an apology induces inferences about suffering and responsibility taking of the perpetrator, which independently influence the perceived sincerity of the apology. Sincerity on its own turn influences evaluative judgements of the apology. These evaluative judgements are forgiveness, satisfaction and insult. The final aim is to see whether perceived humanness of the perpetrator from the perspective of the victim is correlated with the evaluations of the apology. As most of this study will revolve around the replication of the study by Giner-Sorolla and colleagues, the hypotheses of this study will also mostly remain the same:

1. Expressing any of the five emotion-terms (very sad, guilty, ashamed, regret, ‘I feel responsible’) versus a non-emotional apology will lead to stronger suffering (but not responsibility-taking) inferences and somewhat more favourable evaluative responses to the statement.
2. Expressing ‘regret’ or ‘very sad’ should lead to weaker inferences of responsibility-taking than ‘responsible’, ‘guilty’ or ‘ashamed’.

3. Expressing 'regret' or 'responsible' should lead to weaker inferences of suffering than 'very sad', 'guilty' or 'ashamed'.

4. Stronger inferences of responsibility-taking and suffering will explain why participants perceive one negative feeling expression as more sincere than another, which in turn explains more favourable evaluative responses.

5. Weaker inferences regarding humanness of the perpetrator will lead to less positive evaluations of an apology statement.

To test the aforementioned model along with the hypotheses, the discussed scenario of Brexit will be used. A Briton who has voted in favour of Brexit will express an apology for the harm that Brexit has inflicted upon Dutch EU nationals in the UK. This apology will be given to Dutch citizens who will be asked questions about their perceptions of the apology.

Method

Design. The design of this study was a six-condition factorial design, in accordance with the five emotional statements combined with the appraisals, and a sixth non-emotional apology control condition. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of six different expressions: non-emotional apology (control), responsible, guilt, shame, regret or sadness (see Appendix A).

Participants. A total of 305 participants from the Netherlands with the Dutch nationality have been recruited to participate in the online survey. Before the analyses have been conducted, a total of 149 participants have been left out of the dataset. The majority of these participants have been left out because they have filled in less than 90% of the survey ($N=143$). The decision to leave out these cases regards the protection of validity within the research. Additionally, 4 participants had been left out because they did not have the Dutch nationality. Finally, 2 more participants were removed because they were underaged. Out of the final sample ($N=156$), 59.2% was male, age $M = 33$; $SD = 16.73$.

Procedure and materials. The questionnaire began with several items regarding the nationality of the participant. Then, seven items measured the strength of identification that

the participant feels with others of their own nationality. Hereafter, the text was introduced to the participants to inform them about the Brexit scenario. This text explained Brexit and how its consequences negatively impact on many EU nationals, specifically Dutch EU nationals, that work or live in the UK. It additionally showed a quote of a Dutch woman that explained her severe distress and negative feelings she experienced as a result of Brexit. With this text, a context with many negative consequences for Dutch EU nationals in the UK as a result of Brexit has been established which sets the tone for a scenario that requires an apology. The full text can be found in Appendix A.

After the text has been portrayed, one of six apologetic statements has been randomly assigned to the participant. Each of these statements is tied to one of five aforementioned emotion terms (responsible, guilt, shame, regret, very sad) or a non-emotional condition. All six statements can be found in Appendix B.

Every apology that was portrayed has been paired with an appraisal that was fitting to the statement. For example, if the statement was the regret statement, then an interpretation of the situation that would lead to that emotion was created and combined with the statement. After an appraisal was expressed, the Dutch emotion term appropriate to the condition went in the [specific feeling expression] space: either “betreur” (‘regret’), “Ik ben erg verdrietig” (‘very sad’), “Ik voel me verantwoordelijk” (‘responsible’), “Ik voel me schuldig” (‘guilty’), “Ik schaam me” (‘ashamed’), or the indifference term “Ik voel me onverschillig”. To give an example, the regret statement was *"I often wonder what we could have done differently to prevent the negative consequences of Brexit for Dutch people living and working here. I wish that this had not happened. I regret the fears and stress that Brexit causes among Dutch citizens in the UK."* The first and second lines of the statement relate to the interpretation or assessment of the event, which leads to the person experiencing regret. The last line forms the expression of regret for the negative consequences that are caused.

Following the statement, the key measures of the experiment were assessed on seven-point Likert scales ranging from one to seven and anchored with “not at all” and “very much,”.

It is important to note that since most of this research is a replication of the study by Giner-Sorolla and colleagues, many of the questions are identical. The scales that are an addition are perceived harm inflicted by the UK, perceived typicality, perceived humanness, worries and fears.

Responsibility-taking. Eight items measured the Briton's perceived acceptance of responsibility, two of them reversed ("How much does the statement show that this Briton ...takes responsibility for the harmful consequences of their decision for Dutch EU nationals?" and "... admits that he causes harm to Dutch EU nationals with his vote?") ($\alpha = .745$, $M = 4.78$, $SD = .95$).

Suffering. Four items measured the Briton's perceived suffering, two of them reversed (e.g. "How much does this statement indicate that the Briton ...suffers emotionally when thinking about the harm caused among Dutch EU nationals?" and "...appears unaffected when he thinks about the harmful consequences of his deed for Dutch EU nationals?" [reverse coded]) ($\alpha = .711$, $M = 4.89$, $SD = 1.11$).

Perceived sincerity. Three items inquired about the perceived sincerity of the Briton's expression, one of them reversed (e.g. "To what extent do you think this Briton is sincere / honest?") ($\alpha = .855$, $M = 4.78$, $SD = 1.26$).

Satisfaction and insult. Three items assessed satisfaction with the statements (e.g. "After you read that the Briton [expression description, e.g. 'felt very sad about the harmful consequences of their deed for Dutch EU nationals'], to what extent did you feel satisfied / pleased / happy?"). ($\alpha = .855$, $M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.37$). Three additional items assessed the insult taken from the statements (e.g. "did you feel insulted / irritated / frustrated? ") ($\alpha = .815$, $M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.36$).

Perceived intention to repair and prevent harm. The Briton's perceived intention to make amends was assessed through six items (e.g. "To what extent would this Briton be inclined to offer his apologies for the harmful consequences of his deed?"; "How much would this Briton be willing to prevent other Britons from making decisions that presumably cause harm to Dutch EU nationals living in the UK?") ($\alpha = .838$, $M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.09$).

Forgiveness. Two items assessed participants' inclination to forgive the Briton ("To what extent were you willing to forgive this Briton for causing harm with his deed?" and "To what extent did this reduce the blame that you ascribed to the Briton for causing damage among Dutch EU nationals?") ($\alpha = .818$, $M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.50$).

Perceived harm inflicted by the UK: Seven items assessed the perceived harm that Britons have inflicted upon Dutch citizens (e.g. "To what extent do you think that Brexit has caused harm to Dutch EU nationals living and working in the UK?") ($\alpha = .740$, $M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.02$).

Perceived typicality: Two items assessed to what degree the Brit was perceived to be

a typical Brit (e.g. “To what extent do you think this is a typical Briton?”) ($\alpha=.765$, $M=3.69$, $SD = 1.29$).

Perceived humanness: Ten items measured to what degree the Brit was associated with characteristics more or less tied to either humans or animals (e.g. animal, person, citizen, wild) ($\alpha=.848$, $M=5.73$, $SD = .84$).

Worries: Four items measured to what extent the participant agrees with statements that regard worries about Brexit (e.g. “My concerns about Brexit are overwhelming”) ($\alpha=.764$, $M=3.12$, $SD=1.39$).

Fears: Three items assessed to what extent the participant agrees with statements that regard experiences of fear when thinking about Brexit (e.g. “I feel nervous when I think about Brexit”) ($\alpha=.874$, $M=2.93$, $SD=1.55$).

Results

Hypothesis 1: Expressing any of the five emotion-terms (very sad, guilty, ashamed, regret, ‘I feel responsible’) versus a non-emotional apology will lead to stronger suffering (but not responsibility-taking) inferences and somewhat more favourable evaluative responses to the statement.

In the same way as mentioned in the paper of Giner-Sorolla and colleagues (forthcoming) a variable was created where the 5 emotional statements have been recoded into +1 and the no emotion control condition was recoded to -1 in order to compare the two groups. These recoded variables have been put into a univariate analysis of variance. Against the expectations, no significant differences in inferences of suffering and responsibility combined with no differences in evaluative responses have emerged between the non-emotional apology and the emotional apology conditions (see Table 3). This means that the apologies with the emotional words did unexpectedly not communicate more suffering to the participants. These findings also indicate that the participants did not prefer the apologies that were emotional as opposed to the apology that was not emotional with respect to any of the evaluative outcome variables in this study. Hypothesis 1 was therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 2: Expressing ‘regret’ or ‘very sad’ should lead to weaker inferences of responsibility-taking than ‘responsible’, ‘guilty’ or ‘ashamed’.

A one-way ANOVA was once again used to test whether there were at all differences in inferences of responsibility taking between all of the apology conditions. The ANOVA showed that there were significant differences in inferences of responsibility taking between the conditions $F(5,150) = 3.16, p = .01$. To test where the differences specifically lie between the conditions, a Tukey post hoc test was used. The results show that the apologies with the expressions 'regret', and 'very sad' did not significantly differ with regard to the inferences of responsibility-taking in comparisons with the apologies that contained the expressions 'responsible', 'guilty' or 'ashamed'. There was, however, a significant difference in perceived responsibility-taking between the shame condition and the responsibility-taking condition, $p = .04$, mean difference (responsibility – shame) = .74. This means that participants do not infer greater responsibility taking in the hypothesized conditions, however, they do unexpectedly infer greater responsibility taking in the responsibility condition in comparison with the shame condition.

Hypothesis 3: Expressing 'regret' or 'responsible' should lead to weaker inferences of suffering than 'very sad', 'guilty' or 'ashamed'.

A one-way ANOVA showed no significant differences in inferences of suffering between all 6 conditions, $F(5,150) = 1.87, p = .10$. This means that participants did not infer more or less suffering in one condition over the other with regard to all six conditions and therefore hypothesis 3 is rejected.

Hypothesis 4: Stronger inferences of responsibility-taking and suffering will explain why participants perceive one negative feeling expression as more sincere than another, which in turn explains more favourable evaluative responses.

Two contrast variables were made in order to test the multiple mediation model, where it was expected that conditions high in suffering and responsibility lead to greater perceived sincerity and more positive evaluations through inferences of suffering and responsibility-taking. One contrast variable was made where the conditions expected to be high on responsibility-taking were scored 1, those being responsible, guilty and ashamed, and the conditions expected to be low on responsibility-taking were scored -1, those being regret and very sad. The same was done with regard to suffering where expectedly high suffering conditions, which are guilty, ashamed and very sad, were coded 1 and the conditions expected

to be low in suffering, which are responsible and regret, were coded -1. When either of the two contrasts were used, the other specific one was put as a covariate since both the contrasts contain conditions that share high or low levels of either suffering or responsibility-taking. These variables were used in a Multiple Mediation Analysis with the PROCESS model by Hayes (Hayes, 2013). The model that was used for the mediation analysis was model 6.

Figure 2 shows the most important results of the analysis with regard to the contrast variable with conditions coded low and high in responsibility-taking. First of all, the conditions high in responsibility-taking unexpectedly did not predict greater responsibility-taking inferences. However, these conditions did predict significantly lower suffering inferences, meaning that participants deemed the apologetic statements that were high on responsibility-taking as less indicative of suffering than the other conditions. Then, suffering inferences significantly predicted inferences of sincerity, unlike responsibility inferences, however, which was not expected. Next, the perceived sincerity significantly predicted satisfaction, insult (negatively), as well as forgiveness. However, the total indirect effect of X on Y was not significantly different from zero, therefore any relationship between X and Y does not seem to be mediated by the mediators.

Figure 3 shows the most important results of the analysis but now with regard to the contrast variable with conditions coded either low or high on suffering. The conditions high in suffering predicted suffering inferences as well as responsibility-taking inferences, the latter finding being unexpected. Then, suffering but not responsibility-taking inferences significantly predicted perceived sincerity of the statement. Finally, perceived sincerity significantly predicted satisfaction, insult, and forgiveness. Once again, the total indirect effect of X on Y was not significantly different from zero and thus, the proposed mediators do not significantly effectuate mediation for any relationship between X and Y.

Hypothesis 5: Weaker inferences of humanness will lead to less positive evaluations of an apology statement.

A Pearson correlation was used to investigate any associations between the outcome variables (See Table 2). No significant associations were found, therefore the hypothesis that weaker inferences of humanness will lead to less positive evaluations of an apology statement is rejected.

Discussion

Against the expectations, many of the presumptions found in the hypotheses have not been met in the results. First of all, it is rather unclear why participants have not inferred more suffering in the emotional statements as opposed to the unemotional statement. The first and foremost implication that seems to arise from this is that participants have inferred meaning from either the emotional statements or from the unemotional statement in a way that is not found in or in line with the original study of Giner-Sorolla et al. (forthcoming). Since this contrast comes down to 5 emotional statements as opposed to a single unemotional control condition, it seems more likely that the meaning inferred has been unexpected on the side of the unemotional-control statement. However, since the statement does not contain any expression of emotions, it is hard to explain this particular finding.

Second of all, it is also strange that participants did not at all seem to prefer the emotional apologetic statements over the non-emotional one. These findings are not in accordance with previous research (Giner-Sorolla et al., (forthcoming); Hareli & Eisikovits, 2006) and thus far seem to point out that the unemotional statement has come across as rather positive, more so than expected. The two words that set apart this statement from the emotional ones at face value seem to be 'sorry' and 'apologize' which are not found in the other statements. These words may come across as a more explicit form of apology than the other words that are uttered in the emotional statements. Perhaps the words 'sorry' and 'apologize' have more traditionally been uttered in apologies and therefore these words may be more expected and more easily interpreted from the perspective of victims. This could lead to not only a smaller decrease in positive evaluations that are expected to arise from the lack of emotional terms, but also to stronger inferences of suffering. Even though the unemotional statement does not include any emotions, the words 'sorry' and 'apologize' may have induced inferences of emotions within the victims in one way or another.

Thereafter, another unexpected finding was that participants did not infer more responsibility-taking from 'responsible', 'guilty' or 'ashamed' as opposed to 'regret' and very 'sad'. In the case of the regret statement, a part of it that seems to be high on responsibility is 'I often wonder what we could have done differently' as it specifically indicates that the person includes him or herself amongst others regarding the burden of different possible action that could have happened. Again, this is something that is up to interpretation. Such finding does not seem apparent for the very sad statement, leaving that rather unclear with regard to why it was not perceived as significantly less high on responsibility-taking. Finally,

an unexpected finding of hypothesis 2 was that the shame statement led to significantly smaller inferences of responsibility than the responsibility statement. A possible reason for this could be that within the shame expression, the Briton seemed to avoid taking responsibility, something that does not seem to happen in the responsibility statement. "I think that the negative consequences that Brexit has for Dutch people living and working here show that *Britain* has a bad character in general. I think that these consequences show that many *British* people are unjust and immoral..."~ (shame statement). "Great Britain has caused the negative consequences that Brexit has for Dutch people who live and work here. It is because of *our* decision that these consequences exist."~ (responsible statement).

Furthermore, the findings of hypothesis 3 reflect an extension of the findings on hypothesis 1, namely that participants did not infer more or less suffering between any of the conditions. Since this is something that covers all statements, it is very hard to discern why this may have occurred.

The lack of mediation found in hypothesis 4 may stem from the irregularities found in all the other hypothesis and in the results in general, which would make it difficult for a possible mediation to happen. It is hard to assume a mediation effect would occur when most other aspects of the model are not found as expected within the results. However, certain aspects of the model are replicated and are in line with expectations as well as previous research (Ohtsubo et al., 2012), such as the finding that suffering inferences predicted perceived sincerity and the finding that perceived sincerity predicted satisfaction, insult (negatively) and forgiveness. Therefore, with regard to the model proposed by Giner-Sorolla et al. (forthcoming), partial support is found.

Finally, the results indicated that the inferences of participants regarding the humanness of the perpetrator did not lead them to view an apology more or less positively. Apparently, the participants did not seem to make a distinction with regard to emotions that Britons could experience. One explanation for this could be that Dutch citizens did not see the Britons so much as an outgroup but perhaps rather as an ingroup. This could be explained by the fact that British and Dutch citizens do not differ so much in cultural characteristics and share the European identity, therefore rendering any sort of filter for capacity to experience complex emotions as less impactful.

There are a few changes that would have been made if this research was to be conducted once again. First of all, it is assumed that a sizeable reason for failure to obtain significant differences across the conditions is a sample size that is not sufficient. Therefore, it is recommended that this study be replicated but with a larger sample size to further verify the

results.

Second of all, the particular scenario of Brexit can be viewed as one that is relatively nation-bound in the sense that it pertains to tensions that exist in forms and amounts that are very likely not to be felt or experienced equally in countries around the world. Therefore, one might assume that it be a wise practice to measure such variability in the participants in order to, for example, measure whether the participants that belong to a certain nation feel more or less strongly about issues that regard such a context. It may be that Dutch citizens do not feel very strongly at all about Brexit and are therefore less sharp to pick up certain nuances. This is something that has not particularly been measured but that should have been measured.

Furthermore, it must be noted that the addition of appraisals in this study could be an important factor for the given irregularities in the results. The appraisals have been added to make the statements more true to real life, however, they also add an additional layer of variability to each statement which could have mixed up the interpretations. Further investigation in how to balance these pros and cons, and how to optimally implement appraisals in emotional apologetic expressions is also recommended.

Finally, a suggestion would be to inform participants within the introductory part of the survey that no effort is made to measure political orientation and that it does not intend to judge the political orientation of the participants. This may prevent participants from thinking that the survey endeavors to measure this which could lead to biased answers.

As pointed out, group-based apologies are on the rise for the last few years and such apologies have come to be expected. Many merits can arise from a group-based apology which could make for a big difference in large scale conflicts. Therefore, it is apparent that persistence for investigation of group-based apologies remains strong. In this particular study, partial support is found for the proposed model and hypotheses, therefore, it is recommended that more research is carried out to further investigate the current results.

References

- Bienkov, A., & Colson, T. (2018). All the rights EU citizens in the UK are set to lose after Brexit. Retrieved from <https://www.businessinsider.nl/all-the-rights-eu-citizens-in-the-uk-are-set-to-lose-after-brexit-2018-6/?international=true&r=UK>
- Bulman, M. (2017). EU nationals say they're 'on the verge of losing everything' as Home Office immigration plans are leaked. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/eu-nationals-uk-immigration-plans-workers-europe-home-office-ban-union-a7932806.html>
- Collins, J. (2018). Theresa May Promises To Protect Rights Of EU Citizens In UK In Face Of No Deal Brexit. Retrieved from <https://rightsinfo.org/no-deal-rights/>
- EU Referendum Results. (2016). Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/politics/eu_referendum/results
- Matthew J. Hornsey & Michael J. A. Wohl (2013) We are sorry: Intergroup apologies and their tenuous link with intergroup forgiveness, *European Review of Social Psychology*, 24:1, 1-31, DOI: 10.1080/10463283.2013.822206
- Hareli, S., & Eisikovits, Z. (2006). The role of communicating social emotions accompanying apologies in forgiveness. *Motivation and Emotion*, 30(3), 189-197.
- Hunt, A., & Wheeler, B. (2019). Brexit: All you need to know about the UK leaving the EU. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-32810887>
- Kirchhoff, J., & Čehajić-Clancy, S. (2014). Intergroup apologies: Does it matter what they say? Experimental analyses. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 20(4), 430.
- Obordo, R. (2017). 'Brexit was the tipping point': EU nationals on why they left the UK. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/dec/07/brexit-tipping-point-eu-nationals-left-uk>
- Ohtsubo, Y., Watanabe, E., Kim, J., Kulas, J. T., Muluk, H., Nazar, G., ... & Zhang, J. (2012). Are costly apologies universally perceived as being sincere? A test of the costly

- apology-perceived sincerity relationship in seven countries. *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, 10(4), 187-204.
- Philpot, C.R., & Hornsey, M. (2008). What Happens When Groups Say Sorry: The Effect of Intergroup Apologies on Their Recipients. *Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34(4), 474-487. doi: 10.1177/0146167207311283
- Roseman, I. J., Spindel, M. S., & Jose, P. E. (1990). Appraisals of emotion-eliciting events: Testing a theory of discrete emotions. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 59(5), 899.
- Steele, R. R., & Blatz, C. W. (2014). Faith in the just behavior of the government: Intergroup apologies and apology elaboration. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 2(1), 268-288.
- Tapper, J. (2018). EU nationals fear Brexit will tear carers from their families. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jun/17/europeans-caring-for-british-relatives-fear-brexit-expulsion-settled-status-delay-home-office>
- Unsettled Status? Which EU Citizens are at Risk of Failing to Secure their Rights after Brexit? - Migration Observatory. (2018). Retrieved from <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/reports/unsettled-status-which-eu-citizens-are-at-risk-of-failing-to-secure-their-rights-after-brexit/>
- Watts, J. (2017). Brexit: Low-skilled EU migrants to be targeted by Government, leaked documents reveal. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-latest-immigration-eu-low-skill-migrants-target-numbers-leaked-documents-a7931341.html>
- Wenzel, M., Anvari, F., de Vel-Palumbo, M., & Bury, S. (2017). Collective apology, hope, and forgiveness. *Journal Of Experimental Social Psychology*, 72, 75-87. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2017.05.003
- Wohl, M. J., Hornsey, M. J., & Bennett, S. H. (2012). Why group apologies succeed and fail: Intergroup forgiveness and the role of primary and secondary emotions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(2), 306.

Wohl, M. J., Hornsey, M. J., & Philpot, C. R. (2011). A critical review of official public apologies: Aims, pitfalls, and a staircase model of effectiveness. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 5(1), 70-100.

Table 1. Means of each outcome variable for every condition.

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Responsibility taking	Responsible	27	5.12	1.12
	Guilt	24	5.09	.86
	Shame	30	4.38	.85
	Regret	24	4.73	.95
	Very sad	29	4.47	.83
	Control/unemotional	22	4.93	.89
	Total	156	4.77	.95
Suffering	Responsible	27	4.53	1.20
	Guilt	24	5.21	.87
	Shame	30	4.75	1.16
	Regret	24	4.77	1.18
	Very sad	29	5.28	.98
	Control/unemotional	22	4.89	1.14
	Total	156	4.90	1.11
Satisfaction	Responsible	27	2.91	1.41
	Guilt	24	3.31	1.28
	Shame	30	3.44	1.18
	Regret	24	3.76	1.65
	Very sad	29	3.14	1.34
	Control/unemotional	22	3,03	1.35
	Total	156	3,21	1.36
Humanness	Responsible	27	5.94	.82
	Guilt	24	5.49	1.06
	Shame	30	5.72	.81
	Regret	24	5.86	.81
	Very sad	29	5.66	.78
	Control/unemotional	22	5.76	.68
	Total	156	5.74	.83
Insult	Responsible	27	2.78	1.57
	Guilt	24	2.50	1.13
	Shame	30	2.73	1.28
	Regret	24	2.72	1.49
	Very sad	29	3.06	1.44
	Control/unemotional	22	2.44	1.11
	Total	156	2.72	1.35
Forgiveness	Responsible	27	3.41	1.61
	Guilt	24	4.10	1.55
	Shame	30	3.62	1.46
	Regret	24	3.92	1.67

	Very sad	29	3.79	1.24
	Control/unemotional	22	3.77	1.49
	Total	156	3.76	1.49
Sincerity	Responsible	27	4.46	1.47
	Guilt	24	4.97	1.27
	Shame	30	5.13	1.24
	Regret	24	4.86	1.47
	Very sad	29	4.64	1.09
	Control/unemotional	22	4.65	.95
	Total	156	4.79	1.26

Table 2. Correlations between all outcome variables

	Responsibility taking	Suffering	Satisfaction	Insult	Forgiveness	Sincerity	Humanness
Responsibility taking	-	.254**	.265**	-.276**	.182*	.268**	.133
Suffering	.254**	-	.341**	-.176*	.367**	.474**	.208**
Satisfaction	.265**	.341**	-	-.219**	.588**	.430**	.121
Insult	-.276**	-.176*	-.219**	-	-.156	-.325**	-.359**
Forgiveness	.182*	.367**	.588**	-.156	-	.351**	.139
Sincerity	.268**	.474**	.430**	-.325**	.351**	-	.256**
Humanness	.133	.208**	.121	-.359	.139	.256**	-

Note. ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table 3.

Dutch citizens' responses to a Britton's apology versus (the mean of) all feeling expressions about the negative consequences of Brexit.

	Apology	All feeling expressions	$F(1, 156)$	η^2
	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Responsibility-taking inferences	4.93 (0.89)	4.74 (.96)	.73	.01
Suffering inferences	4.89 (1.14)	4.90 (1.11)	.01	.00
Satisfaction	3.03 (1.35)	3.23 (1.36)	.42	.00
Insult	2.44 (1.11)	2.77 (1.38)	1.13	.01
Forgiveness	3.77 (1.49)	3.75 (1.5)	.003	.00
Perceived sincerity	4.65 (.95)	4.81 (1.31)	.31	.00
Perceived humanness	5.76 (.68)	5.73 (.86)	.02	.00

Note. * $p < .05$

Figure 1.

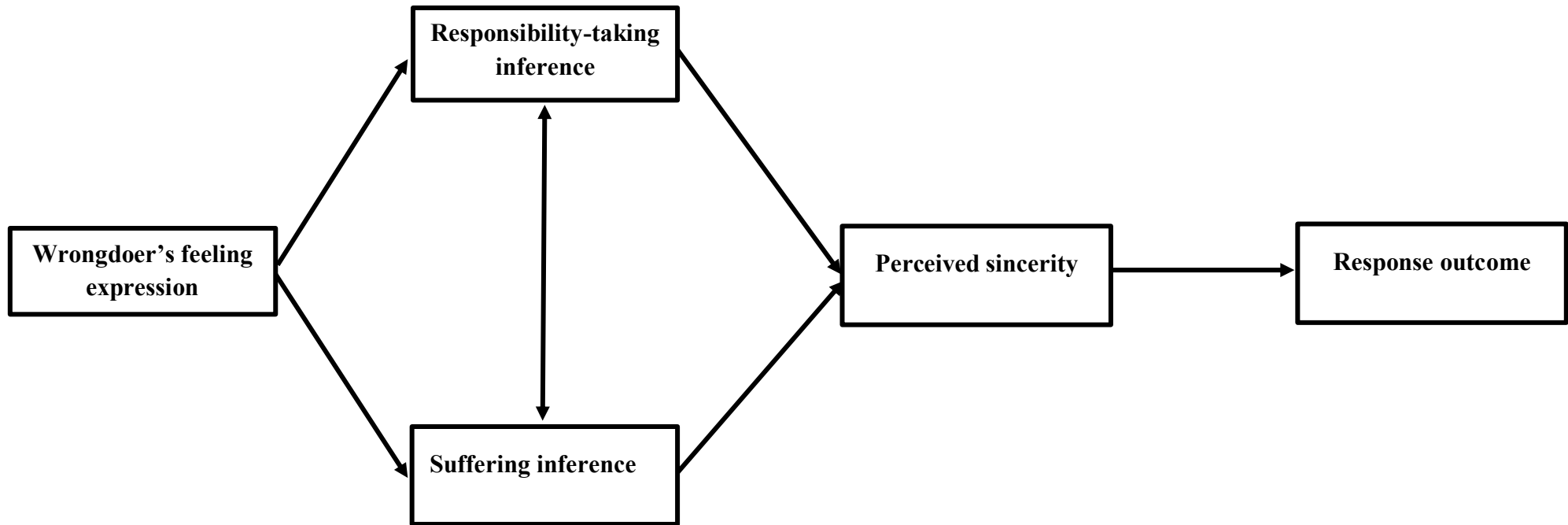
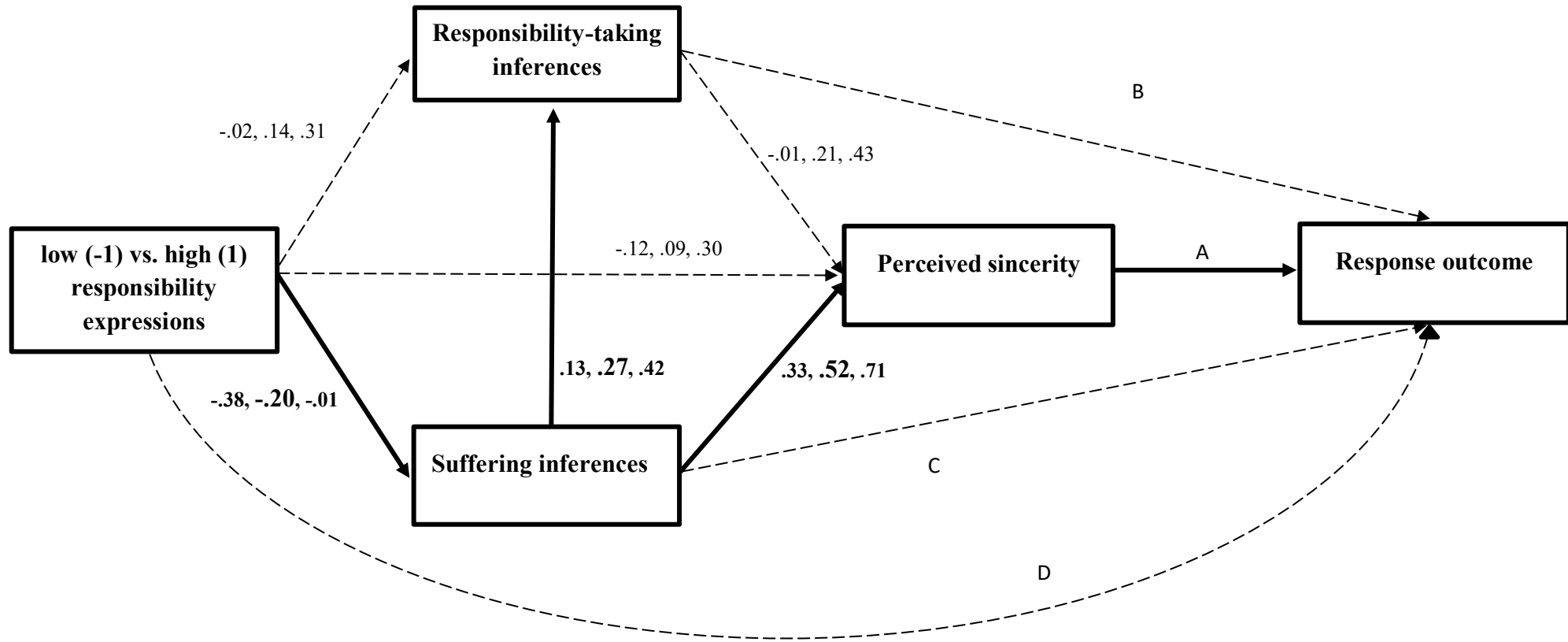


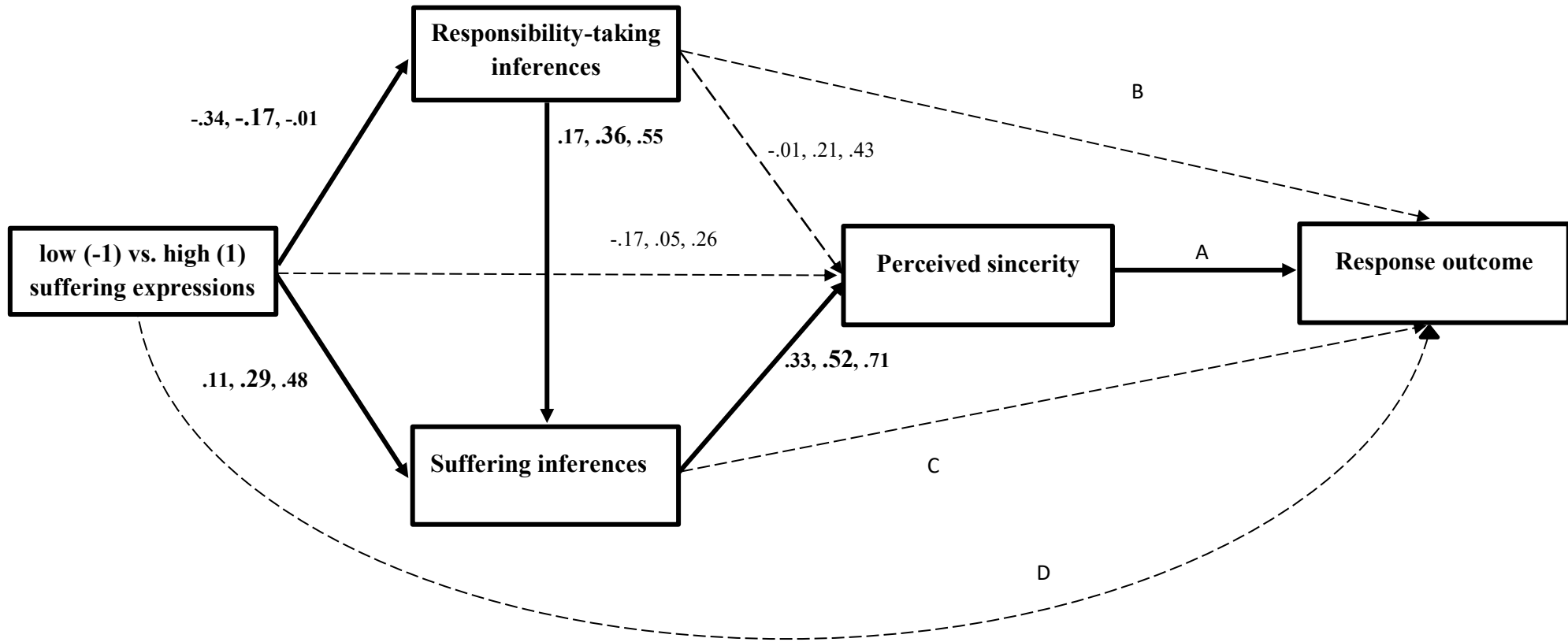
Figure 2.



	Path A	Path B	Path C	Path D	Total indirect effect of X on Y
Response outcomes	CI low, B, CI high	CI low, B, CI high	CI low, B, CI high	CI low, B, CI high	CI low, B, CI high
Satisfaction	.16, .34, .53	-.04, .20, .45	-.11, .12, .35	-.27, -.05, .18	-.09, .03, .16
Insult	-.46, -.26, -.07	-.58, -.33, -.08	-.28, -.04, .20	-.30, -.06, .17	-.18, -.05, .06
Forgiveness	.02, .23, .44	-.17, .10, .38	.04, .30, .56	-.32, -.07, .18	-.14, -.02, .11

Note. Beta coefficients shown in bold are significantly different from zero. CI are 95%, expressed as lower and higher bounds on either side of the coefficient.

Figure 3.



	Path A	Path B	Path C	Path D	Total indirect effect of X on Y
Response outcomes	CI low, B, CI high	CI low, B, CI high	CI low, B, CI high	CI low, B, CI high	CI low, B, CI high
Satisfaction	.16, .34, .53	-.04, .20, .45	-.11, .12, .35	-.18, .05, .28	-.11, .04, .18
Insult	-.46, -.26, -.07	-.58, -.33, -.08	-.28, -.04, .20	-.23, .01, .25	-.13, .01, .14
Forgiveness	.02, .23, .44	-.17, .10, .38	.04, .30, .56	-.25, .02, .28	-.06, .08, .23

Note. Beta coefficients shown in bold are significantly different from zero. CI are 95%, expressed as lower and higher bounds on either side of the coefficient.

Appendix A

On June 23rd 2016, a British referendum was held to assess the support for the possible departure of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union. This led to a majority vote of 51.9% in favor of departure and therefore the UK will leave the EU in March 2019.

The result of the departure of the UK from the EU, also known as 'Brexit', is that many rights and rules will change in the UK. For a certain group of citizens in particular, namely EU nationals such as Dutch living and/or working in the UK, the prospect of Brexit creates a high amount of uncertainty and stress. This is because the change of rules can have a direct impact on their rights to reside in the UK. After Brexit, for example, the right of Dutch EU nationals in the UK to move freely between member states will be replaced by the obligation to get a permanent status in the UK - if they want to continue living and working there. The right of Dutch citizens to transfer relatives to the UK may also be limited or even terminated after Brexit.

A recent quote from a Dutch woman in the British online newspaper "The Independent" is described below to give a clearer picture of the problematic situation:

"I was totally shocked by the outcome of the referendum, I cried a lot, I felt really suicidal, it was terrible." Later she added, "After living here all my adult life, it takes everything from what you know, everything you take for granted, including your relationship with other people. And this is the United Kingdom that has been my home and that I have known for 30 years. I mean, the British abroad have also experienced many uncertainties about pensions and other issues, but I do not think they have experienced such a hostile attitude from their governments there."

- Maaïke Bonenkamp, a Dutch citizen living in the United Kingdom.

In short, the vulnerable position that Dutch citizens have experienced up to now as a result of the Brexit means that they are seriously worried and feel anxiety, and also that they feel very unwelcome in the United Kingdom.

Appendix B

Responsibility statement.

A Dutch research agency has recently interviewed British people who voted in favor of Brexit to investigate how they think about the fears and concerns of Dutch people living and/or working in the United Kingdom.

A British citizen said:

"Great Britain has caused the negative consequences that Brexit has for Dutch people who live and work here. It is because of our decision that these consequences exist. I feel responsible for the fears and stress that Brexit causes among Dutch citizens in the UK."

Guilt statement:

A Dutch research agency has recently interviewed British people who voted in favor of Brexit to investigate how they think about the fears and concerns of Dutch people living and/or working in the United Kingdom.

A British citizen said:

"I consider the negative consequences that Brexit has for Dutch people who live and work here as a bad act of Great Britain. I think that these consequences are very unjust and immoral. I feel guilty about the fears and stress that Brexit causes under Dutch citizens in the UK."

Shame statement:

A Dutch research agency has recently interviewed British people who voted in favor of Brexit to investigate how they think about the fears and concerns of Dutch people living and/or working in the United Kingdom.

A British citizen said:

"I think that the negative consequences that Brexit has for Dutch people living and working here show that Britain has a bad character in general. I think that these consequences show that many British people are unjust and immoral. I am ashamed of the fears and stress that Brexit causes among Dutch citizens in the UK. "

Regret statement:

A Dutch research agency has recently interviewed British people who voted in favor of Brexit to investigate how they think about the fears and concerns of Dutch people living and/or working in the United Kingdom.

A British citizen said:

"I often wonder what we could have done differently to prevent the negative consequences of Brexit for Dutch people living and working here. I wish that this had not happened. I regret the fears and stress that Brexit causes among Dutch citizens in the UK. "

Very sad statement:

A Dutch research agency has recently interviewed British people who voted in favor of Brexit to investigate how they think about the fears and concerns of Dutch people living and/or working in the United Kingdom.

A British citizen said:

"It feels like a loss when I think of the negative consequences that Brexit has for Dutch people who live and work here. It is very tragic that these conditions have been brought about. I feel very sad about the fears and stress that Brexit causes among Dutch citizens in the UK. "

Non-emotional/control statement:

A Dutch research agency has recently interviewed British people who voted in favor of Brexit to investigate how they think about the fears and concerns of Dutch people living and/or working in the United Kingdom.

A British citizen said:

"I think it's important to say sorry for the negative consequences that Brexit has for Dutch people who live and work here. This is something to offer apologies for. Therefore I apologize for the fears and stress that Brexit causes among Dutch citizens in the UK.