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Berndsen, M., Wenzel, M., Thomas, E.F. and Noske, B. (2017) *I feel you feel what I feel: Perceived perspective-taking promotes victims' conciliatory attitudes because of inferred emotions in the offender.* European Journal of Social Psychology, 48 (2). 0103-0120.

I feel you feel what I feel: Perceived perspective-taking promotes victims' conciliatory

attitudes because of inferred emotions in the offender

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Abstract

In the context of bullying in a nursing workplace, we test the argument that an offender's perspective-taking promotes victim conciliation, mediated by perceived perspective-taking, that is, the extent to which the victim perceives the offender as taking their perspective. Perceived perspective-taking facilitates the attribution of moral emotions (remorse, etc.) to the offender, thereby promoting conciliatory victim responses. However, perceived perspective-taking would be qualified by the extent to which the severity of consequences expressed in the offender's perspective-taking matches or surpasses the severity for the victim. In Studies 1 and 2 (Ns = 141 and 122), victims indicated greater trust and/or forgiveness when the offender had taken the victim's perspective. This was sequentially mediated by perceived perspective-taking and victim's inference that the offender had felt moral emotions. As predicted, in Study 2 (but not Study 1) severity of consequences qualified victims' perceived perspective-taking. Study 3 (N = 138) examined three potential mechanisms for the moderation by severity. Victims attributed greater perspective-taking to the offender when the consequences were less severe than voiced by the offender, suggesting victims' appreciation of the offender's generous appraisal. Attributions of perspective-taking and of moral emotions to the offender may play an important role in reconciliation processes.

Key outcome: To the extent that victims *perceive* the offender as taking their perspective (perceived perspective-taking), they *infer* that the offender feels more moral emotions, prompting victims to be more conciliatory. Perceived perspective-taking benefits from the offender over-stating the consequences to the victim.

Keywords: perceived perspective-taking, bullying, inferred moral emotions, trust, forgiveness, severity of harm

I feel you feel what I feel: Perceived perspective-taking promotes victims' conciliatory attitudes because of inferred emotions in the offender

Imagine you are a nurse and a colleague bullies you in front of the other nurses. Later, (s)he approaches you, saying "I thought about how that must have made you feel, and I won't do it again in the future". Does this purported empathic concern act of contrition make you feel more conciliatory?

As illustrated above, the question in the present research is whether another's act of perspective-taking can facilitate conciliatory attitudes following wrongdoing. Perspective-taking involves the active consideration of another person's situation, feelings or experiences (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Typically research has focused on how perspective-taking can lead the perspective taker to show more prosocial, less egocentric, and less prejudicial behaviour (e.g., Galinsky, Ku & Wang, 2005). However, it is also plausible that the person whose perspective is taken responds favourably to such an act, to the extent that he or she recognizes or perceives the perspective-taking. *Perceived perspective-taking* is the extent to which an individual believes their perspective has been taken by someone else (Goldstein, Vezich & Shapiro, 2014). The goal of the present research is to investigate how perceived perspective-taking mediates between an offender's perspective-taking and victim's conciliatory attitudes, as well as factors that can facilitate (or inhibit) perceived perspective-taking. We consider these processes in the context of bullying, specifically, in a nursing workplace where a nurse bullies other nurses. Bullying is an example of an interpersonal "transgression" (a harmful or illegal act; Oxford English Dictionary, 2017). We refer to the person who commits the bullying as the "offender" and to the recipient of the bullying as the "victim". We investigate the effects of an offender taking the perspective of the victim following a workplace transgression.

First, we argue that when victims perceive the offender's perspective-taking, they make inferences about the moral emotions (shame, guilt, remorse) felt by the offender. The attribution of such moral emotions is expected to promote conciliatory attitudes towards the offender. Second, we argue that these effects are more prominent when the consequences of the transgression are less severe for the victims compared to more severe. Third, we argue that the perceived match between the actual consequences of the transgression for the victim and the offender's voiced consequences in the perspective-taking statement underlies the moderating role of severity of consequences.

Perceived Perspective-Taking, Emotional Inferences, and Conciliatory Attitudes

In the context of transgressions, an offender taking the victim's perspective should convey an understanding of the victim's suffering caused by the offender's wrongdoing. In turn, an offender's acknowledgement and understanding of the victim's suffering may foster the victim's belief that his or her perspective has been taken by the offender. Acknowledging the victim's harm indicates to the victim that the offender understands the extent of the wrongdoing and feels responsibility for the wrongdoing. Appraisals of responsibility or blame for immoral behaviour tend to elicit moral emotions such as shame, guilt, and remorse in the agent (e.g., Roseman, 1984). Similarly, a victim may *infer* that the offender experiences these moral emotions when the offender has (successfully) taken the victim's perspective, even when the offender does not explicitly express those emotions. This is because people have prototypes of emotions and emotional states and these can be used to infer emotions even if they are not explicitly expressed (see Oatley, 1999a, 1999b). Thus when a victim (a nurse) perceives that the (bully) offender acknowledges correctly their suffering for which the offender is responsible, the victim will infer that the offender feels shame, guilt, and remorse about the wrongdoing (bullying).

Inferences of offender's felt remorse, guilt, and shame indicate to the victim that the offender has reflected on their welfare. Hence the victim believes that it is unlikely that the offender will repeat the wrongdoing and can therefore trust the offender to behave better in the future. Trust is an acceptance of vulnerability based on expectations of benevolence of the other (Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004). We therefore expect that these inferred moral emotions (remorse, guilt, shame) will be positively associated with trust and conciliatory attitudes towards the offender, promoting potential reconciliation processes (e.g., Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; Nadler & Liviatan, 2006).

Thus, we expect that perceived perspective-taking will increase conciliatory attitudes towards the offender through inferences of offender's moral emotions when acknowledging the victim's suffering. As such, our research extends the work of Goldstein et al. (2014) who investigated perceived perspective-taking in a set of six experiments examining participants' preferences for a perspective taker in a neutral, non-transgression context. They found that perceptions of empathy in the perspective taker mediated the relationship between perceived perspective-taking and increased liking of the perspective taker. However, in the context of a wrongdoing at least, the offender's acknowledgement of the victim's suffering may well affect both the victim's perceptions of perspective-taking *and* attributions of moral emotions like guilt, shame and remorse. We therefore argue that in such contexts these inferred moral emotions are the more relevant downstream mediating mechanism. As such, we propose that inferred moral emotions mediate the relationship between perceived perspective-taking and conciliatory attitudes.

Severity of the Consequences of Harm: Success versus Failure of Perspective-taking

Victims' conciliatory attitudes to offenders are likely to depend on the severity of the consequences of the wrongdoing, and how much harm or suffering the offenders have caused victims. For example, research has shown that severe consequences for a victim are

associated with a loss of trust in the offender (Menzies-Toman & Lydon, 2005) and even in other people (Koestenbaum, 2011). More severe consequences predict also less forgiveness for the offender (Fincham, Jackson, & Beach, 2005; Kotz, 2016). As such we can expect that severe consequences of the transgression experienced by the victim will reduce conciliatory attitudes towards the offender.

However, the severity of consequences may furthermore condition the effects of offenders' reparative statements. For example, Darby and Schlenker (1982) showed that, while with severe consequences victims were harsher in their judgments of offenders, more elaborate apologies led to less blame and more forgiveness. And, indeed, offenders tend to offer more elaborate apologies for wrongdoing with more severe consequences (Schlenker & Darby, 1981). Hence we argue that the severity of consequences may qualify whether an offender's attempt at, or claimed act of, perspective-taking will lead victims to perceive it as such.

One reason why an offender's perspective-taking may fail to be recognized as such by the victim is that it fails to acknowledge the seriousness of the victim's suffering. Operationally, such a failure of the offender's perspective-taking could be realised by varying the severity of the consequences for the victim whilst keeping the offender's communicated acknowledgement of the victim's suffering constant. Hence the second key factor in our research involves the manipulation of severity of the consequences for victims. When the consequences are severe but the offender suggests they are moderate, we anticipate that the offender will be seen as insufficiently acknowledging the intensity of the harm done, reducing the victim's perception that the offender has taken their perspective. Conversely, when the consequences are less severe and communicated as moderate by the offender, the victim will consider that the offender more appropriately appreciated the consequences for the victim, thus increasing perceived perspective-taking. We therefore

anticipate that, *ceteris paribus,* less severe consequences of the harm doing will amplify perceived perspective-taking; this, in turn, will increase conciliatory attitudes (outcome variable) through increased shame, guilt, and remorse (mediators) compared to when the consequences of the harm doing are more severe.

In Study 1, using the example of workplace bullying in a nursing context, the victim's conciliatory attitudes are operationalized by trust in the offender, as trust is a socially important conciliatory attitude (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2002; Nadler & Liviatan, 2006). We expect that when victims perceive the offender's perspective-taking, they make inferences about the moral emotions (shame, guilt, remorse) felt by the offender. The attribution of such moral emotions is expected to promote trust towards the offender. However, we expect that victims are more likely to perceive perspective-taking when the consequences of the transgression are less severe for the victims compared to more severe. In Study 2, we aim to replicate these findings and extend our conceptualization of conciliatory attitudes by including both trust in, and forgiveness of, the offender. In Study 3, we investigate possible mechanisms that underlie the moderating role of severity of consequences in promoting conciliatory attitudes towards the offender.

Study 1

Study 1 investigated the impact of perspective-taking and severity of the consequences for a victim of a transgression on trust in the offender. As mentioned before, the research was set in a nursing context. Nursing is an occupation that is notorious for workplace bullying among employees (e.g., Hutchinson, Jackson, Wilkes & Vickers, 2008; Johnston, Phanhtharath & Jackson, 2009). Participants were instructed to imagine being nurses and read a description of a nurse who was a victim of workplace bullying that resulted in either severe or less severe consequences for them. Participants then learned that an offender wished to cease such behaviours, publicly renouncing future bullying. The

offender reasoned their decision by detailing either the victim's perspective (perspective-taking) or the perspective of the workplace (control group). Our choice for the control condition was based on the idea that both conditions should be comparable in terms of an objection to future bullying but with divergent concerns; the focus was either on the psychological wellbeing of the victims or the prosperity of the workplace.

We predicted that victim perspective-taking would lead to more perceived perspective-taking compared to taking the perspective of the workplace. Moreover, when the consequences of the bullying for the victim were less severe, the content of the bully's renouncement was expected to correspond more to the victim's actual feelings compared to the more severe condition. Hence, we predicted that less severe consequences would lead to more perceived perspective-taking than more severe consequences for the victim. Specifically, we expected perspective-taking and severity of the consequences to interact in their effects on perceived perspective-taking. That is, when the consequences are less severe, taking the victim's perspective would produce higher ratings on perceived perspective-taking than taking the workplace perspective. When the consequences are more severe, we predicted less difference in perceived perspective-taking between the two perspective conditions. Thus, severity of consequences would moderate the effects of perspective-taking on perceived perspective-taking.

Moreover, we predicted that the relationship between perceived perspective-taking and trust in the offender would be mediated by inferences of moral emotions in the offender. In other words, we predicted a moderated mediation: when the consequences for the victim were less severe (compared to more severe), the offender's perspective-taking would indirectly increase conciliatory attitudes (i.e., trust) on the part of the victim, sequentially mediated by perceived perspective-taking and attributions of moral emotions.

Method

Participants and design. One hundred and forty-one participants were recruited from an Australian university first-year psychology student pool, (78% female; M_{age} = 22.45, SD_{age} = 7.50). The study used a 2 (perspective: victim, workplace) x 2 (severity of consequences: severe, less severe) between-subjects design. Participants accessed the questionnaire online by clicking on a link in the study advertisement and were randomly assigned to one of the 4 experimental conditions.

Stimulus materials and procedure. The scenarios used depicted either severe or less severe consequences, and the bully renounced future bullying either by taking the nurse's perspective or the workplace perspective. The basic scenario described a case of bullying among nurses at a hospital: 'Imagine that you are a nurse. You have been employed at this hospital for one year. Bullying is vastly common among your team of nurses at this hospital. For the past year, you have been the victim of bullying by other nurses, including a nurse named Lisa. This group of nurses have addressed you by the nickname "stupid" and have rolled their eyes and laughed every time you've spoken'.

Severity of consequences. The scenario continued with a description of the effects of the bullying on the victimised nurse. In the severe consequences condition the participants read: 'You absolutely hate your working environment and fear going to work each day. You stress every night about your situation, which causes an inability to sleep. This morning, when travelling to work, you suffered a panic attack, as you have regularly over the past year, in anticipation of more bullying'. In the less severe consequences condition the participants read: 'You feel awkward about your working environment and wary about going to work. You think about your situation every night before you go to sleep. This morning, when travelling to work, you thought about how you hope the bullying doesn't occur again today'.

Perspective-taking. The scenarios continued with a description of the bully's

renunciation of bullying: 'Today at work, Lisa (one of the bullying nurses) stands up at the morning staff meeting and says the following: "Although I have bullied other nurses myself, I think it is time that we stop bullying our co-workers."' This was followed by the manipulation of perspective-taking. In the victim perspective condition the bully said: "We could be causing them pain and suffering like decreased confidence or self-worth. They might be losing sleep or worrying excessively as a result of our behaviour. Or they may dislike working here at the hospital because of us. I've put myself in the shoes of those we are victimising, and I think they would benefit from us stopping our nasty behaviour". In the workplace perspective condition the bully said: **"We could be decreasing job satisfaction among employees. This hospital might be experiencing high absenteeism or high turnover as a result of our behaviour. Or the quality of patient care here at the hospital may be suffering because of us. I've put myself in the shoes of the hospital, and I think they would benefit from us stopping our nasty behaviour".

Dependent measures[1]

Manipulation check of severity of consequences. Participants responded on a Likert scale anchored 1 (*Not at all severe*) to 7 (*Very severe*) to the question "How would you rate the severity of the consequences of the bullying you were subjected to?"

Unless otherwise indicated, all questions below were measured on 7-point Likert scales anchored at 1 (*Not at all*) and 7 (*Very much*).

Perceived perspective-taking. A single item was used to measure the degree to which participants perceived the offender took their (i.e., the victim's) perspective: "As a victim of bullying, how much do you feel Lisa took your perspective when she talked about the adverse consequences of her and others' past behaviour?"

Perceived moral emotions. Two items assessed perceived shame, adapted from the Internalized Shame Scale (Cook, 1988): "In your opinion, how insecure does Lisa feel

about others' opinions of her?" and "How ashamed do you believe Lisa feels?" Two items measured perceived guilt, which were adapted from the Perceived Guilt Index (Otterbacher & Munz, 1973): "How guilty do you believe Lisa feels?" and "How much do you think Lisa believes her actions were unforgiveable?" Three items for perceived remorse were adapted from Fisher and Exline's (2006) measure of remorse. "How remorseful [regretful, sorrowful] do you believe Lisa feels?", $\alpha = .90$.

Trust. The measure of trust was partly adapted from Kim et al. (2004). Participants were asked "Do you trust Lisa?" Participants also responded on a Likert scale anchored 1 (*Definitely not*) to 7 (*Definitely yes*) to answer the questions "Do you believe Lisa is a fair person?" and "Do you believe Lisa will one day repeat her bullying behaviour?" (reverse-coded), $\alpha = .72$.

Results and Discussion

Scale inter-correlations and descriptive statistics for all dependent variables are shown in Table 1. As expected, perceived perspective-taking, perceived moral emotions, and trust were significantly and positively inter-correlated. Perceived severity of the consequences was not significantly correlated with the above variables.

Manipulation check. A 2 (perspective: victim, workplace) $\times$ 2 (severity of consequences: severe, less severe) between subjects ANOVA was used to test the severity manipulation check. The main effect of severity of consequences was significant, showing that the manipulation of severity was successful, $F(1, 135) = 8.94$, $p = < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. Participants in the severe consequence condition ($M = 5.79$, $SD = 1.52$) reported significantly higher scores on perceived severity than participants in the less severe consequence condition ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.25$). The main effect of perspective-taking was non-significant, $F(1, 135) = .01$, $p = .94$, as was the interaction between severity and perspective, $F(1, 135) = .16$, $p = .69$.

Comparison between conditions. The means and standard deviations for each variable as a function of perspective-taking and severity of consequences are presented in Table 2. We performed 2 (perspective: victim, workplace) × 2 (severity of consequences: severe, less severe) between-subjects ANOVAs on the dependent variables. For perceived perspective-taking, the main effects of perspective-taking and severity of consequences were significant, $F(1, 135) = 52.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .28$, and $F(1, 135) = 5.07$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, respectively. The main effects showed that relative to a workplace perspective, victim perspective-taking resulted in more perceived perspective-taking (Ms = 2.51 vs. 4.16, SDs = 1.42 vs. 1.36, respectively), and less severe consequences resulted in perceived perspective-taking compared to severe consequences (Ms = 3.53 vs. 3.14, SDs = 1.69 vs. 1.52). However, the predicted interaction between severity of consequences and perspective-taking was not significant, $F(1, 135) = 1.06$, $p = .30$.

For perceived moral emotions in the offender, the main effect of perspective-taking was significant, $F(1, 135) = 22.41$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$, such that compared to the workplace perspective, victim perspective-taking led to stronger perceived moral emotions (Ms = 2.53 vs. 3.53, SDs = 1.06 vs. 1.39). The main effect of severity of consequences and the interaction between severity of consequences and perspective-taking were not significant, $F(1, 135) = .15$, $p = .70$, and $F(1, 135) = .10$, $p = .75$, respectively.

For trust in the offender, the main effects of perspective-taking and severity of consequences were marginally significant, $F(1, 135) = 3.41$, $p = .067$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, and $F(1, 135) = 3.72$, $p = .056$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, respectively. That is, relative to the workplace perspective, victim perspective-taking led to more trust (Ms = 2.07 vs. 2.33, SDs = .94 vs. .91) and less severe consequences led to more trust than severe consequences (Ms = 2.34 vs. 2.06, SDs = .96 vs. .87). The interaction between severity of consequences and perspective-taking was not significant, $F(1, 135) = .67$, $p = .41$.

Path Analyses. As the interaction between perspective-taking and severity of the consequences on perceived perspective-taking was non-significant, we used AMOS 22 to test an unqualified mediation model (see Figure 1). The model fit was weak (see Kline, 1998); $\chi^2(6) = 12.80$, $p = .05$, χ^2/df ratio =2.13, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .96, and Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .09. Modification indices suggested that there was additional covariance in the relationship between severity of consequences and trust that needed to be accounted for. Including a direct path between the two resulted in a model that fit the data better; $\chi^2(5) = 7.77$, $p = .17$, χ^2/df ratio = 1.55, CFI = .98, and RMSEA = .06. However, inclusion of this path did not substantially affect the rest of the model.

The indirect effects of both perspective-taking and severity of consequences on inferred moral emotions through perceived perspective-taking were significant. These moral emotions predicted then trust in the offender (see Table 3 for the indirect effects). Thus, there was good support for the predicted relationship between perceived perspective-taking and trust via inferred moral emotions, suggesting that perceived perspective-taking may have positive effects in a conflict situation. The more victims of bullying perceived that their perspective was taken by the offender the more they trusted the offender due to inferences of more moral emotions in the offender. This study is the first to demonstrate that the inferred moral emotions of guilt, shame, and remorse may explain the influence of perceived perspective-taking on trust.

Nevertheless, our hypothesis about the moderating effects of the severity of consequences was not supported. This may be due to the fact that the experimental manipulation of severity was not strong enough for it to demonstrate differential fit of the offender's communicated perspective-taking with the victim's situation. This possibility is addressed in Study 2.

Study 2

In Study 2 we sought to create a clearer contrast between the levels of severity of consequences in the two conditions. To that end, in the low severity condition we made the victim's feelings about working at the hospital less negative and indicated that the victim had the opportunity to leave the current work environment. We expect to find evidence of a moderated mediation whereby the positive effect of perspective-taking on perceived perspective-taking will be more pronounced when the consequences are less severe, which, in turn, increases trust through inferred moral emotions.

Study 2 also extended on Study 1 by adding another outcome variable reflecting conciliation: forgiveness. In the area of apologies, trust has been found to be associated with forgiveness (e.g., Berndsen, Hornsey, & Wohl, 2015; Dovidio et al., 2002; Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger, & Niens, 2006; Nadler & Liviatan, 2006). We included measures of trust and forgiveness as two parallel outcomes.

Method

Participants and design. Participants ($N = 122$) were 68 second-year psychology students at an Australian university and 54 members of the Australian community recruited through an online forum (61% female; $M_{age} = 24.84$, $SD_{age} = 8.96$). There were no differences between the two samples on any of the dependent variables (all $ps > .09$) and the 2-way and 3-way interactions involving type of sample were also not significant (all $ps > .17$). As in Study 1, the study used a 2 (perspective: victim, workplace) x 2 (severity of consequences: severe, less severe) between-subjects design. Likewise, participants accessed the questionnaire online by clicking on a link in the study advertisement and were randomly assigned to one of the 4 experimental conditions. There were 5 outliers on the measure of check perceived perspective-taking. These were re-coded by assigning them with a score that is "one unit larger (or smaller) than the next most extreme score in the distribution"

(Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, p.71). For example, when participant X has a score of 7 and the next extreme score is 5, participant X's score is re-coded as 6.

Stimulus materials and procedure. The procedure and stimulus materials were the same as in Study 1 with three exceptions. First, the less severe consequences condition read as follows: "You feel uncomfortable about your working environment and do not like going to work. You think about your situation and you believe that it will be better to look for another working environment. This morning, when travelling to work, you thought about how you hope the bullying doesn't occur again today".

Second, we shortened the moral emotions measure by asking "How ashamed [guilty, remorseful, regretful] do you believe Lisa feels?", $\alpha = .94$.

Third, we included a 15-item forgiveness scale that assesses state forgiveness (Rey et al., 2001). The items were measured on 9-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 9 = *strongly agree*). We made two adaptations: Items asking about "praying for" the offender and about "feeling ruined" were replaced with: "getting even with Lisa is not important to me" and "I'm able to forgive Lisa for her wrongful actions", $\alpha = .76$.

The measures of perceived perspective-taking and trust ($\alpha = .78$) were the same as in Study 1.

Results

Scale inter-correlations and descriptive statistics for all dependent variables are shown in Table 4. All variables (except for perceived severity of the consequences) were significantly and positively inter-correlated. These findings are similar to those in Study 1.

Manipulation check of severity of consequences. A 2 (perspective: victim, workplace) $\times$ 2 (severity of consequences: severe, less severe) between subjects ANOVA was used to test the manipulation check. Confirming the success of the manipulation, ratings on felt severity were significantly higher in the severe consequence condition ($M =$

6.02, $SD = .73$) than in the less severe consequence condition ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.57$), $F(1, 118) = 23.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .16$ (compared to $\eta_p^2 = .06$ in Study 1). The main effect of perspective-taking and the interaction between severity and perspective were not significant, $F(1, 118) = .02$, $p = .89$, and $F(1, 118) = .78$, $p = .38$, respectively.

Comparison between conditions. The means and standard deviations for each variable as a function of perspective-taking and severity of consequences are presented in Table 5. Between-subjects ANOVAs with 2 (perspective: victim, workplace) × 2 (severity of consequences: severe, less severe) were conducted on the dependent variables and the results are presented in Table 6.

For perceived perspective-taking[2], the predicted main effects of perspective-taking and severity of consequences were significant and so was the interaction. Victim perspective-taking resulted in more perceived perspective-taking than taking the workplace perspective (Ms = 3.97 vs. 2.82, SDs = 1.46 vs. 1.34, respectively); and less severe consequences resulted in more perceived perspective-taking than more severe consequences (Ms = 3.87 vs. 2.94, SDs = 1.62 vs. 1.24, respectively). The interaction showed that, when the consequences were less severe, taking the victim's perspective resulted in stronger perceived perspective-taking ($p < .001$) compared to taking the workplace perspective; in contrast, when the consequences were severe the difference between the two perspectives was not significant ($p = .118$; see Table 5).

For perceived moral emotions in the offender, the main effects of perspective-taking and severity of consequences were significant. Victim perspective-taking resulted in stronger attribution of moral emotions (Ms = 3.46 vs. 2.27, SDs = 1.51 vs. 1.01, respectively) than taking the workplace perspective, and less severe consequences resulted in stronger attribution of moral emotions than more severe consequences (Ms = 3.21 vs. 2.53, SDs = 1.54 vs. 1.19, respectively).The interaction between perspective-taking and

severity of consequences was significant; when the consequences were less severe, taking the victim's perspective resulted in stronger perceived moral emotions ($p < .001$) than the workplace perspective. When the consequences were more severe, taking the victim's perspective also resulted in stronger inferences of moral emotions ($p = .031$), compared to the workplace perspective; but the effect was less pronounced than for less severe consequences.

For trust in the offender, the main effects of perspective-taking and severity of consequences were significant and marginally significant, respectively. Victim perspective-taking led to more trust than the workplace perspective (Ms = 2.47 vs. 1.86, SDs = 1.30 vs. .78, respectively) and less severe consequences led to more trust than more severe consequences (Ms = 2.35 vs. 1.99, SDs = 1.24 vs. .95, respectively). The interaction between perspective-taking and severity of consequences was significant. When the consequences were less severe, taking the victim's perspective resulted in more trust ($p < .001$), compared to taking the workplace perspective. When the consequences were more severe, the difference between the two perspective condition was not significant ($p = .516$)

For forgiveness, the main effect of perspective-taking was significant. Victim perspective-taking resulted in more forgiveness than taking the workplace perspective (Ms = 3.74 vs. 3.41, SDs = .86 vs. .71, respectively). The main effect of severity of consequences was not significant. The interaction between perspective-taking and consequences was marginally significant. When the consequences were less severe, taking the victim's perspective resulted in more forgiveness ($p = .004$) compared to taking the workplace perspective. When the consequences were more severe, the difference between the two perspective conditions was not significant ($p = .674$).`

Path Analyses. We used AMOS 22 to test our hypothesized model of how the interaction between perspective-taking and severity of consequences predicted forgiveness

and trust (see Figure 2). As multi-group modelling allows one to compare parameters in different groups, we conducted a multi-group analysis with severity as the grouping variable (i.e., severity is the moderator). We first fixed all structural relations between the severity conditions to be equal, $\chi^2(19) = 32.24$. We compared this with the model in which the path from perspective-taking condition to perceived perspective-taking was unconstrained, $\chi^2(18) = 24.78$. The difference between the models was significant, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 7.46$, $p = .006$, indicating that the less constrained model provided a better overall model fit.

The model fit for the unconstrained model was good (see Kline, 1998); $\chi^2(18) = 24.78$, $p = .13$, χ^2/df ratio = 1.38, CFI = .95, and RMSEA = .06. Consistent with our hypothesized model, severity of consequences moderated the relationship between perspective-taking and perceived perspective-taking; when the consequences were less severe (but not more severe), taking the perspective of the victim predicted higher levels of perceived perspective-taking. This, in turn, mediated the relationship between perspective-taking and perceived moral emotions in the offender (see Figure 2); taking the victim's perspective led to stronger attributions of moral emotions in the offender, via perceived perspective-taking. Stronger inferences of moral emotions, in turn, were then linked with more trust and forgiveness. Table 7 shows that all indirect effects were supported when the consequences were less severe and not when the consequences were severe (except for the indirect effect of perceived perspective-taking to trust), providing support for our hypothesized model.

Study 2 therefore finds strong support for our moderated mediation hypothesis. When taking the victim's (nurse's) perspective, severity of consequences moderated the occurrence of perceived perspective-taking, which then affected conciliatory attitudes through perceived emotions in the offender (bully). Relative to the workplace perspective, when the consequences of bullying were less severe, taking the perspective of a victim led to stronger perceptions of

moral emotions in the offender through increased perceived perspective-taking. Inferred moral emotions, in turn, predicted greater trust and forgiveness.

Discussion. What really underlies the qualifying effect of severity? There are three possibilities. First, it could be that severity provides a boundary condition for perceived perspective-taking; a limit to what victims believe allows a conciliatory response (see Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010). When the consequences are more severe, victims may be less willing to attribute perspective-taking to the offender, no matter what the offender states and acknowledges. Second, it could depend on the extent to which the consequences voiced by the offender match how the victim was actually affected by the wrongdoing. The more closely the offender understands and articulates the consequences for the victim, the more the victim will feel the offender took their perspective (see Koenig Kellas, Willer, & Trees, 2013). That is, in the present study the offender statement might have fallen short when the consequences of the victim were more severe. We term this process an 'objective' match because it reflects a straightforward equivalence between the severity of the transgression experienced by the victim, and the severity of the transgression voiced by the offender. Third, it may not be the objective match between the consequences experienced by the victim and voiced by the offender that promotes perceived perspective-taking, but rather a subjective match (as perceived by the victim). For example, the offender may go beyond the factual consequences and instead demonstrate particular concern by appraising the consequences as even worse than they have actually been. This suggestion is consistent with literature on conversational processes. Leech (1983) has argued that in conversational exchanges showing generosity to another person can create harmonious social interactions. Generosity occurs when a speaker focuses entirely on what the hearer wants, which is subsequently interpreted as 'generous' by the hearer. Thus when the offender overstates the severity of consequences

for the victim, the victim interprets this as an altruistic act that can pave the way for positive interactions between offender and victim.

Indeed, it is worth noting that in the less severe condition in Study 2, when the offender took the victim's perspective, the offender voiced consequences that seemingly exceeded the actual consequences. The offender referred to the bullying as 'causing pain and suffering, decreased confidence and self-worth, sleep loss and excessive worrying', whereas the victim's actual consequences merely referred to 'feeling uncomfortable and not liking going to work, looking for another working environment'. This condition yielded the greatest level of perceived perspective-taking. So, is the perception of perspective-taking a matter of the offender going beyond the minimum and showing concern for the more serious consequences that might have been? Study 3 addresses these questions.

Study 3

To be able to answer the question what exactly underlies the moderation effects and, hence, to better understand the role of perceived perspective-taking in promoting forgiveness, it was important to test whether severity of consequences exerted its effect independently of, or rather as a function of, the offender's acknowledgement of their severity. For this, we needed to calibrate the offender's (bully's) acknowledgement to the victim's (nurse's) reported experience of the wrongdoing. Towards this end, we first conducted a pilot study.

Pilot Study

Using a similar nursing scenario as in Studies 1 and 2, we manipulated the actual severity of the consequences for the victim (low vs. high) and the severity of the consequences voiced in the perspective-taking statement (low vs. high). Two situations were designed as reflecting an objective match between actual and voiced consequences of bullying (low actual/low voiced consequences and high actual/high voiced consequences). The other two situations reflect a divergence between actual and voiced consequences of

bullying, where the offender either overstated or understated the consequences relative to how the victim reportedly experienced the consequences (i.e., low actual/high voiced consequences and high actual/low voiced consequences).

In a within-subject design, participants ($N = 26$) were presented with all four conditions. In the scenario, Stevie, a nurse, had been bullied by other nurses, including a nurse named Alex. When the actual consequences of bullying were *less severe*, participants read the following about Stevie's situation:

Stevie feels uncomfortable about the working environment and does not like going to work. Stevie has been thinking about it and wondered what the problem is. This morning, when traveling to work, Stevie thought about how he/she hopes the bullying doesn't occur again today. Stevie loves being a nurse and believes he/she is good at it, but the current situation takes a bit the enjoyment out of it.

When the actual consequences were *more severe* for Stevie, the scenario read as follows:

Stevie absolutely hates the working environment and fears going to work each day. Stevie hates himself/herself and stresses every night about the situation, which causes an inability to sleep. This morning, when traveling to work, Stevie suffered a panic attack. Stevie has had them regularly over the past few weeks, in anticipation of more bullying. Stevie hates life.

Each of the two scenarios was followed by two different offender statements. In one statement, Alex' response at a staff meeting was designed as voicing less severe consequences:

"Although I have bullied other nurses myself, I think it is time that we stop bullying our co-workers. We could be causing them discomfort and unease, like decreased motivation or enjoyment of their work. They might be pre-occupied in their thoughts and feel a bit troubled as a result of our behaviour. Or they may not enjoy working here at hospital so

much because of us. I've put myself in the shoes of those we are victimising, and I think they would benefit from us stopping our behaviour."

In another statement, Alex response was designed as voicing more severe consequences:

"Although I have bullied other nurses myself, I think it is time that we stop bullying our co-workers. We could be causing them self-loathing and depression, like a loss of self-worth or seeing themselves as a complete failure. They might have nightmares and be extremely terrified as a result of our behaviour. Or they may hate working here at hospital because of us. I've put myself in the shoes of those we are victimising, and I think they would benefit from us stopping our nasty behaviour".

After each combination of scenario severity and offender response, participants were presented with four questions using 7-point Likert scales anchored at 1 (*Not at all*) and 7 (*Very much*). The first two items measured the objective match between actual consequences and offender-voiced consequences: 'How accurately does Alex's response describe Stevie's situation?', and 'How well does Alex's response match Stevie's situation?' ($r = .91$ to $.97$). Another two item were included for exploratory purposes, to tap how satisfying the victim is likely to be with the response: 'How satisfied do you believe that Stevie is with Alex' response?', and 'How pleased do you believe that Stevie is with Alex's response?' ($r = .87$ to $.95$).

The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 8. Paired *t*-tests were conducted examining differences between the four situations in Table 8. Actual and offender voiced consequences designed to be equally severe (objective match) were perceived to be a better match (columns 1 and 3 in Table 8) than when they were designed to be differently severe (columns 2 and 4) (all ps $< .001$). There were no differences between the 2 matching situations ($p = .293$) or the 2 diverging situations ($p = .119$). The results confirmed that we succeeded in designing scenarios and offender responses that

were objectively equivalent in their (low or high) severity of consequences for the victim. Further, the ratings of presumed victim satisfaction showed that in the overstated condition (where the actual consequences of bullying were less severe but the offender voiced them more severely; column 2 in Table 8), the response satisfaction was significantly higher than in each of the other 3 situations (all ps < .01). In line with findings from Study 2, this suggests that it is the subjective match rather than an objective match that allows for the perception that the offender (bully) has truly adopted the perspective of the victim (nurse).

The above findings suggest that there are two types of match between actual and voiced consequences of bullying: an objective match in terms of accuracy, and a subjective match in terms of satisfaction with the offender's emphatic expression of their concern for the victim – a match that is 'in the eye of the beholder'. Study 3 incorporates this distinction between an objective and subjective match.

Main Study

We used the piloted scenarios in our main study. Thus, we manipulated the severity consequences voiced in offender's perspective statement (severe, less severe) and actual severity of consequences experienced by victim (severe, less severe) In all conditions the offender claims or implies to have taken the victim's perspective (we dropped the condition of the offender taking the hospital's perspective).

Our goal was to test the three mechanisms through which participants (as the victims) attribute greater perspective-taking to the offender. First, as described above, it is possible that severe consequences of bullying form a boundary condition that undermines perceived-perspective taking and subsequent conciliatory attitudes (Fincham et al., 2005; Koestenbaum, 2011; Kotz, 2016; Menzies-Toman & Lydon, 2005). If this is the case we would expect to find a main effect of severity of consequences such that perceived-perspective taking, inferred moral emotions and conciliatory attitudes are lower when the

actual consequences are more severe than when they are less severe.

A second possibility is that victims may perceive more perspective-taking when there is an objective match between actual and voiced consequences, that is, when both are either low or high: the offender accurately assesses the consequences for the victim. If this is the case, we would expect an interaction between actual and voiced consequences such that perceived perspective-taking, inferred moral emotions, and conciliatory attitudes are higher when there is an objective match between actual and voiced consequences than when the actual and voiced consequences are divergent ('objective match hypothesis').

As a final possibility, elaborated above, it is possible that the perpetrator voicing more severe consequences in the perspective-taking statement than the victim actually experienced promotes victim satisfaction and the perception of a subjective match. If so, we would expect an interaction between actual consequences and voiced consequences such that perceived perspective-taking, subsequent inferred moral emotions, and conciliatory attitudes are higher when the actual consequences of bullying are less severe but acknowledged by the offender as more severe ('subjective match hypothesis').

To test these possibilities we also included a measure of perceived match in the current study. Participants were asked two questions, namely to what extent the perpetrator overestimated and underestimated the impact of bullying on the victim's feelings. Ratings of overestimation were subtracted from the ratings of underestimation. This index shows to what extent participants felt the content of the perpetrator's statement matched the consequences they experienced as the victim. A perfect match would be indicated by a value of zero; a negative value indicates overestimation, a positive value underestimation of the impact of the bullying on the victim.

Study 3 also addresses two other limitations of Studies 1 and 2. First, previous research has shown that severe offences promote retribution or punishment in order to impose

a consequence for the offender (McCullough, 2008) rather than a constructive orientation to an offender. As such, retribution is included as an outcome variable in the current study. On the other hand, victims of severe personal crimes (as opposed to property crimes) have been found to feel fear of offenders (e.g., Dull & Wint, 1997). Hence fear is also included as an outcome variable in the present study. Above we mentioned that more severe consequences can inhibit attributions of perspective-taking to the offender; in this situation we may expect higher levels of retribution and/or fear towards the offender than when the consequences of bullying are less severe.

Second, we have argued, but not shown, that appraisals of responsibility for or acknowledgement of immoral behaviour tend to elicit moral emotions such as shame, guilt, and remorse in the agent (e.g., Roseman, 1984). In Study 3 we therefore include a measure of the degree to which the offender is seen to accept responsibility for the wrongdoing and, consistent with our reasoning above, we predict that this will mediate the relationship between perceived perspective-taking and inferred moral emotions.

To summarize, we test three alternative possibilities for what determines perceived perspective-taking and, through this, conciliation: severity of actual consequences, objective match between actual and voiced consequences, or a subjective match. For each of the three hypotheses, the relevant conditions would indirectly both increase conciliatory attitudes (i.e., trust and forgiveness) and decrease fear and retributive tendencies on the part of the victim. This relationship would be sequentially mediated by perceived perspective-taking, perceived responsibility for the harm, and attributions of moral emotions.

Method

Participants and design. Participants were people from the general public in the United Kingdom recruited through Prolific Academic. They were paid £1.75 for their participation. Participants who completed the survey in less than 5 minutes were removed from the data set as the expected time commitment was between 10 and 15 minutes, resulting in a sample size of 138 participants (57% female; $M_{age} = 37.69$, $SD_{age} = 11.55$). The study used a 2 consequences voiced in offender's perspective statement (severe, less severe) x 2 actual severity of consequences experienced by victim (severe, less severe) between-subjects design. Participants accessed the questionnaire online by clicking on a link in the study advertisement and were randomly assigned to one of the 4 experimental conditions.

Stimulus materials and procedure. The scenarios used were similar to those in the pilot study, depicting either severe or less severe consequences, and the offender renounced future bullying either by voicing severe or less severe consequences for the victim of bullying. However, we changed the name of the offender back to Lisa, as in Studies 1 and 2. Similar to the previous studies, participants were instructed to imagine being a victimized nurse of bullying. The basic scenario was shortened compared to both previous studies by removing the content of bullying: 'Imagine that you are a nurse. You have been employed at this hospital for one year. Recently, you have been bullied by other nurses, including a nurse named Lisa'.

Dependent measures[3]

Unless otherwise indicated, all questions below were measured on 7-point Likert scales anchored at 1 (*Not at all*) and 7 (*Very much*). Where possible, ratings for each variable were averaged to create composite measures. The dependent measures were the same as in Study 2, with the following exceptions.

Perceived perspective-taking and empathy. Three items were used to measure perceived perspective-taking: "How much do you believe Lisa took your perspective"? , "How much do you believe Lisa put herself in your shoes"? and "How much do you believe Lisa considered the situation from your point of view"? In addition to assessing the cognitive aspects of perceived perspective taking, we included three additional items to measure affective empathy (adapted from Batson et al., 1997): "How empathic do you believe Lisa felt for you"?, "How concerned do you believe Lisa felt for you"?, and "How moved do you believe Lisa felt toward you"? Although cognitive and affective empathy have been demonstrated to be discrete, in this case principal components analysis showed one factor (all loadings > .88 explaining 85.29% of the variance). We therefore included the cognitive and affective items together in the measure of perceived perspective-taking (α = .96).

Perceived responsibility for wrongdoing. After the manipulation check of the severity of consequences, we included 4 items that assessed the perceived acknowledgement of, and responsibility for, the wrongdoing: "How much do you think Lisa..." "…acknowledges her wrongdoing", "…recognizes her wrongdoing", "…takes responsibility for her wrongdoing" and "…blames herself for her wrongdoing" (α = .92).

Fear and retribution. We assessed participants' fear of the offender and their desire for retribution. The 6 items started with: "How do you feel about Lisa" and fear was measured with 3 items "fearful", "afraid", and "scared" (α = .96). Retribution was assessed with 3 items "vengeful", "resentful", and "angry" (α = .85).

Subjective match. After measuring forgiveness, participants responded to two items assessing the perceived divergence between their feelings and the offender's statement: "To what extent did Lisa's statement overestimate [underestimate] the impact of bullying on your feelings?" The ratings of overestimation were subtracted from underestimation, providing a

measure of perceived divergence that varies between -6 (extreme overestimation) to +6 (extreme underestimation) with zero reflecting a perfect match.

Reliability values for inferred moral emotions, trust, and forgiveness, were excellent: $\alpha = .96$, $\alpha = .82$, and $\alpha = .87$, respectively.

Results and Discussion

Scale inter-correlations and descriptive statistics for all dependent variables are shown in Table 9. Many variables (except for perceived severity of the consequences) were significantly inter-correlated. These findings are generally similar to those in Study 1 and 2. Moreover, fear and retribution were negatively correlated with the main variables.

Manipulation check of severity of consequences. A 2 (perspective-taking expressing: less severe consequences, severe consequences) $\times$ 2 (severity of consequences: less severe, severe) between-subjects ANOVA for the severity manipulation check showed, as planned, that ratings on felt severity were significantly higher in the severe consequence condition ($M = 5.79$, $SD = 1.03$) than in the less severe consequence condition ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.21$), $F(1, 133) = 12.02$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$. The main effect of perspective-taking and the interaction between severity and perspective were not significant, $F(1, 133) = 1.23$, $p = .269$, and $F(1, 133) = .03$, $p = .872$, respectively.

Comparison between conditions. The means and standard deviations for each variable as a function of perspective-taking and severity of consequences are presented in Table 10. Between-subjects 2 x 2 ANOVAs were conducted on the dependent variables and the results are presented in Table 11. Below we present only the significant results (non-significant findings are presented in Table 11).

For perceived perspective-taking, the interaction between perspective-taking and severity of consequences was significant. When the consequences of bullying were less severe, taking the victim's perspective and voicing severe consequences resulted in stronger perceived perspective-taking compared to voicing less severe consequences ($p = .041$). In contrast, when the consequences were severe the difference between the two perspective statements was not significant ($p = .476$; see Table 10). This finding supports the perceived subjective matching hypothesis but not the perceived objective matching hypothesis that predicted a cross-over interaction between the conditions such that perceived perspective-taking should be greater when both the actual and voiced consequences are less severe and when they are more severe. The finding does also not support the severity of consequences hypothesis that predicted a main effect of the severity of consequences condition such that perceived perspective-taking should be greater when the actual consequences are less severe for the victim than when they are more severe.

For subjective match, we computed the difference between ratings of underestimation and overestimation of Lisa's statement about the nurse's feelings. Lower ratings are perceived as a better match as they are closer to zero that represents a perfect subjective match. The main effect of perspective-taking showed that voicing more severe consequences was perceived as a better match than voicing less severe consequences (Ms = .20 vs. 2.15, SDs = .94 vs. 1.58, respectively). The main effect of severity of consequences revealed that less severe consequences were perceived as a better match than more severe consequences (Ms = .36 vs. 1.89, SDs = 1.18 vs. 1.63, respectively). The interaction between perspective-taking and severity of consequences was significant. When the voiced consequences were high, the actual experienced low consequences were perceived as a better match than when they were high ($p < .001$). Likewise, but even more pronounced, when the voiced

consequences were low, the actual experienced low consequences were perceived as a better match than when they were high ($p < .001$).

Next, we tested for each of the 4 conditions whether the difference score deviated from zero (reflecting a perfect match). In the condition in which the actual consequences of bullying were less severe and the voiced consequences were more severe, the difference score did not deviate significantly from zero ($p = .107$), indicating a perceived match between actual and voiced consequences of bullying. The negative direction of the difference score points to a (non-significant) overestimation of the victim's feelings (see row 2 and column 4 in Table 10). In the other conditions the perceived match differed significantly from zero (all ps $< .001$). The positive difference scores in these conditions indicate underestimations of the victim's feelings (see Table 10).

The main effects of severity of consequences on fear and forgiveness were significant; when the actual consequences were less severe this resulted in less fear (Ms = 3.63 vs. 4.19, SDs = 1.61 vs. 1.44, respectively) and more forgiveness (Ms = 3.65 vs. 3.20, SDs = .77 vs. .89, respectively), than severe consequences.

Path Analyses. We used AMOS 22 to test the predicted mediation and its potential moderation by severity (see Figure 3). As in Study 2 we conducted a multi-group analysis with severity as the grouping variable. We first fixed all structural relations between the severity conditions to be equal, $\chi^2(36) = 48.15$. We compared this with the model in which the path from perspective-taking condition to perceived perspective-taking was unconstrained, $\chi^2(35) = 44.24$. The difference between the models was significant, $\Delta\chi^2(1) =3.91$, $p = .048$, indicating that the less constrained model provided a better overall model fit.

The model fit for the unconstrained model was good (see Kline, 1998); $\chi^2(35) = 44.24$, $p = .14$, χ^2/df ratio = 1.26, CFI = .98, and RMSEA = .04. Consistent with the subjective matching hypothesis, severity of consequences moderated the relationship between

perspective-taking and perceived perspective-taking; when the consequences were less severe (but not more severe), taking the perspective of the victim and voicing more severe consequences of bullying predicted higher levels of perceived perspective-taking. As such, this finding replicates that of Study 2 where we suggested that perceived perspective-taking occurred when the perpetrator's voiced consequences of bullying were more severe than the actual consequences experienced by the victim. Further, the relationship between perceived perspective-taking and inferred moral emotions was partially mediated by perceived responsibility for the wrongdoing (see Figure 3); higher levels of perceived perspective-taking were associated with stronger attributions of moral emotions in the offender through perceptions of offender's responsibility for the wrongdoing. Stronger inferences of moral emotions, in turn, were linked with more trust and forgiveness, as well as with less fear and retribution. Table 12 shows that all indirect effects were supported when the consequences were less severe and not when the consequences were severe.

Study 3 therefore finds support for a moderated mediation in line with the subjective match hypothesis. When an offender claims to have taken the victim's perspective and expresses a severity of harm caused that is greater than just objectively accurate, this promotes trust and forgiveness, and reduces fear and desire for retribution, because the victim feels that the offender has taken his/her perspective. This facilitates the attribution of responsibility-taking as well as moral emotions to the offender, leading to more conciliatory responses of the victim.

General Discussion

The main purpose of the present research was to investigate whether an offender (bully) taking the perspective of the victim (nurse) may increase the victim's conciliatory attitudes. We argued that this depends on the extent to which victims perceive the offender taking their perspective (perceived perspective-taking). In three studies we found that, when victims

perceived that their perspective was taken by the offender, trust in (Study 1, 2 and 3) and forgiveness for (Study 2 and 3) the offender increased. This occurred because victims inferred that the offender had felt moral emotions (shame, guilt, remorse) (Study 1, 2 and 3) and accepted responsibility for the wrongdoing (Study 3).

We also expected that the effects of perspective-taking on conciliatory attitudes would be qualified by the severity of the consequences for the victim. We did not observe this effect in Study 1, however, we did so in Study 2 where a clearer manipulation of the severity of consequences was included. Here we found support for the idea that, when the consequences were less severe (rather than severe), taking the victim's perspective resulted in more perceived perspective-taking compared to the offender taking a workplace perspective. Consistent with our model, perceived perspective-taking explained the positive association between the offender taking the perspective of the victim and perceived moral emotions in the offender when the consequences were less severe. Perceived moral emotions were, in turn, positively associated with trust and forgiveness.

Study 3 further clarified why the attribution of perspective-taking depended on the severity of the harm caused. It was not the case that more severe harm-doing generally reduced victims' inclination or capacity to attribute perspective-taking to the offender — although the existence of a threshold above which victims are unwilling to hold such favourable views of the offender cannot be completely ruled out (see Fincham et al., 2005). It was also not the case that the offender had to show an accurate appraisal of the severity of the harm done, for victims to attribute greater perspective-taking. Instead, what affected perceived perspective-taking was that the offender went beyond an objective appraisal of the harm done and voiced a severity of consequences that went beyond what the victim actually experienced. In the victim's eyes this might still be represented as a match, a subjective match, where the perpetrators' overly sympathetic expression is considered symbolically

appropriate for the harm and hurt caused. Perhaps, while an accurate assessment of the harm reflects an objective, detached attitude of the offender, the exaggerated acknowledgment of harm (or perhaps the harm that could have been) may express sympathy and concern that is more important for attributions of cognitive and affective perspective-taking.

Interestingly, moral emotions were *not* expressed by the offender but were rather inferred by the participants (Oatley, 1999a, 1999b), to the extent that victims perceived offenders to have taken their perspective. Experiences of shame, remorse, and guilt signal a willingness to behave better in the future (Radzik, 2009). Thus, when victims attribute these emotions to an offender, they may also trust the offender to behave better in the future which may then promote conciliatory attitudes.

Indeed, an intriguing question is whether inferences about offender's felt emotions and offender's explicit expression of emotions have different effects on the victim. Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Förster, and Montada (2004) found that the offender's objective expression of remorse had less impact on the victim's belief that the offender was remorseful. Rather, remorse was inferred from the offender's acknowledgement of the victim's suffering. Moreover, explicitly expressing moral emotions by offenders is sometimes not believed to be genuine by the victims (Giner-Sorolla, Castano, Espinosa, & Brown, 2008; Wohl, Hornsey, & Bennett, 2012), for example when victims believe that outgroup offenders are not capable of experiencing uniquely human emotions such as shame and guilt. The research of Giner-Sorolla et al. (2008), Schmitt et al. (2004), and Wohl et al. (2012) may suggest that offenders are not allowed to *claim* moral emotions (shame, guilt, remorse) but rather that they have to *demonstrate* them and it is the privilege of victims to attribute such emotions to offenders. On the other hand, explicit expressions of remorse are considered to be a core element of apologies (e.g., Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Lazare, 2004; McCullough Worthington, & Rachal,

1997; Montiel, 2000; Wohl, Matheson, Branscombe, & Anisman, 2013). More research is needed to investigate how remorse is construed by victim groups.

In broader terms, the current research demonstrates that perspective-taking may be a useful strategy in situations of conflict. When offenders are willing to take the perspective of their victims into account and to communicate the victims' experiences, this may prompt victims to acknowledge the offender's perspective-taking effort and respond with greater conciliation, promoting more positive outcomes of reconciliation processes. However, care should be taken when one takes the victim's perspective because it is not necessarily a matter of accurately assessing how the victim felt or was affected. Rather, as we have shown in Study 2 and 3, perspective-taking may need to reflect 'over-accurately' the victim's experiences, representing perhaps the worst consequences that *could* have befallen the victim or, qua the emphatic concern this expresses for victims, *symbolically* addressing the victim's hurt. If not, victims may not perceive perspective-taking and its positive benefits for reconciliation may not eventuate. However, it is possible that this conclusion applies specifically to victims' responses to offender claims of perspective-taking, whereas third-parties, as more detached respondents, may respond positively also to an offender's more accurate appraisal of the harm done; further research is needed to address this issue.

A limitation of the present research is that we used scenarios that may impact on the external validity of our findings. Future research may investigate whether the observed relationships would occur amongst real victims of bullying. It is possible, for example, that victim-based processes such as retribution and fear would be more pronounced amongst real victims, especially shortly after a severe transgression. It is also possible that bullying in other contexts (for instance at schools) will reveal different findings due to the age of the victims. Research has demonstrated that experiencing bullying at a younger age can have long lasting severe effects (e.g., Hartling & Luchetta, 1999). Furthermore, it needs to be

investigated whether our findings generalize to other forms of transgressions than bullying. It is possible that less intentional harm-doings (compared to bullying) have different effects on perceived perspective-taking and subsequent conciliatory attitudes. Finally, future research may also investigate whether perceived perspective-taking is similarly effective in intergroup contexts (i.e. when one group transgresses against another group; Hornsey & Wohl, 2013) and whether perceived perspective-taking can be effective in the emotional regulation of intractable conflict (Halperin, Cohen-Chen & Goldenberg, 2014).

Concluding Comments

The present research contributes to an understanding of perceived perspective-taking as an essential mechanism for the positive effects of offender perspective-taking on the victim's conciliatory response. Acknowledging more than accurately, hyperbolically even, the victim's experiences (as a conciliatory gesture) enhances the victims' feeling that their perspective has been taken. This has positive effects on the victims' conciliatory attitudes, triggered by their perceptions of moral emotions in the offender and the offender's acknowledgement of the wrongdoing. Hence this research makes an important contribution to the literature on perspective-taking, the emerging literature on the perceived perspective-taking, and to the literature on the psychological processes that give rise to conciliatory attitudes following a conflict.

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Footnotes

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1. We included more dependent variables in the study based on the research of Goldstein et al. (2014): 'self-other overlap' and 'liking of the offender'. However, these variables were less relevant in a conflict situation. The items that measured 'perceived empathy' showed a low reliability.

2. Without re-coding the five outliers, the main effects of perspective-taking and severity of consequences were significant, $F(1, 118) = 21.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$, and $F(1, 118) =$

12.31, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$, respectively. The interaction was also significant, $F(1, 118) = 3.97$, $p = .046$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$.

3. In Study 3 we included the item 'To what extent do you believe that Lisa's statement was due to concerns about her self-image?" Results from an ANOVA showed that the main effects of perspective-taking, severity of consequences, and the interaction were not significant, $F(1, 114) = .68$, $p = .412$, $F(1, 114) = .27$, $p = .604$, and $F(1, 114) = .16$, $p = .686$, respectively.

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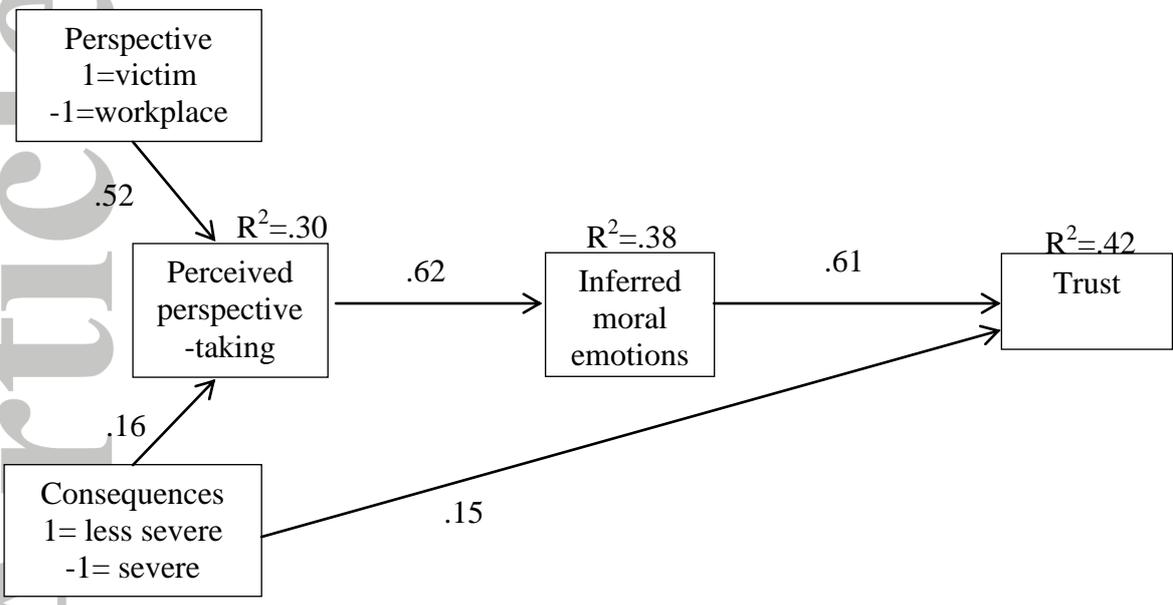
Figure 1. *Path model of perspective-taking and severity of consequences predicting trust.*

Note: Solid lines represent statistically significant paths (p < .05). All other paths were not

significant (Study 1).
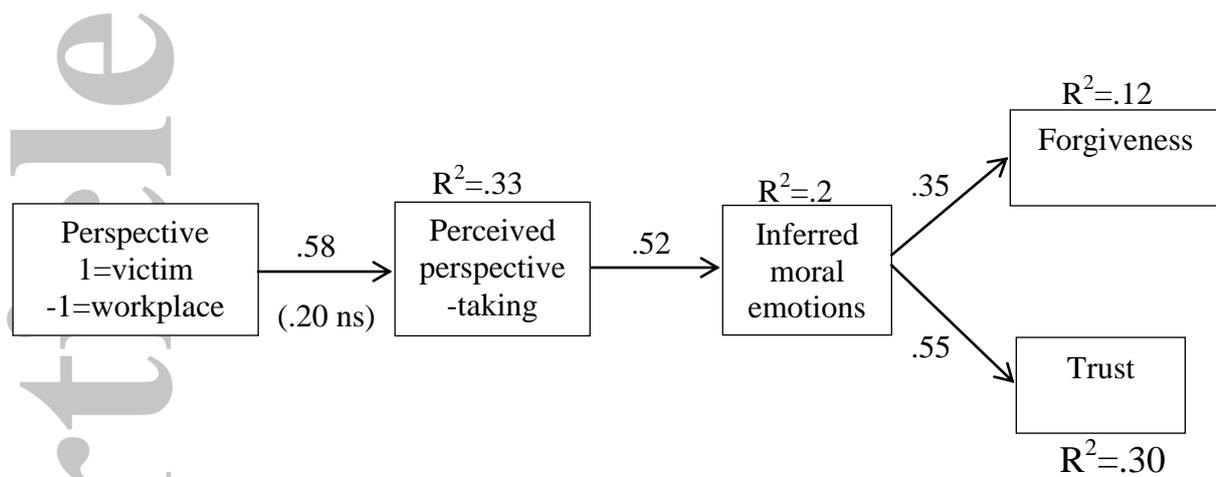
Figure 2. *Path model of severity of consequences condition moderating the mediating role of perceived perspective-taking in predicting forgiveness and trust. Values inside brackets represent the severe consequence condition. All paths are significant, p < .001, all other paths were non-significant. Forgiveness and trust, r = .43, p < .001 (Study 2)*

R²=.23
Forgiveness

.48

R²=.07

R²=.4

R²=.49
Trust

R²=.5

.70

Perspective-
taking and
voicing of
consequences
1=severe
-1=less severe

Perceived
perspective
-taking

Perceived
responsibility for
wrongdoing

Inferred
moral
emotions

R²=.04
Fear

.26

.68

.55

-.21

(-.08 ns)

.27

-.32

R²=.11
Retribution
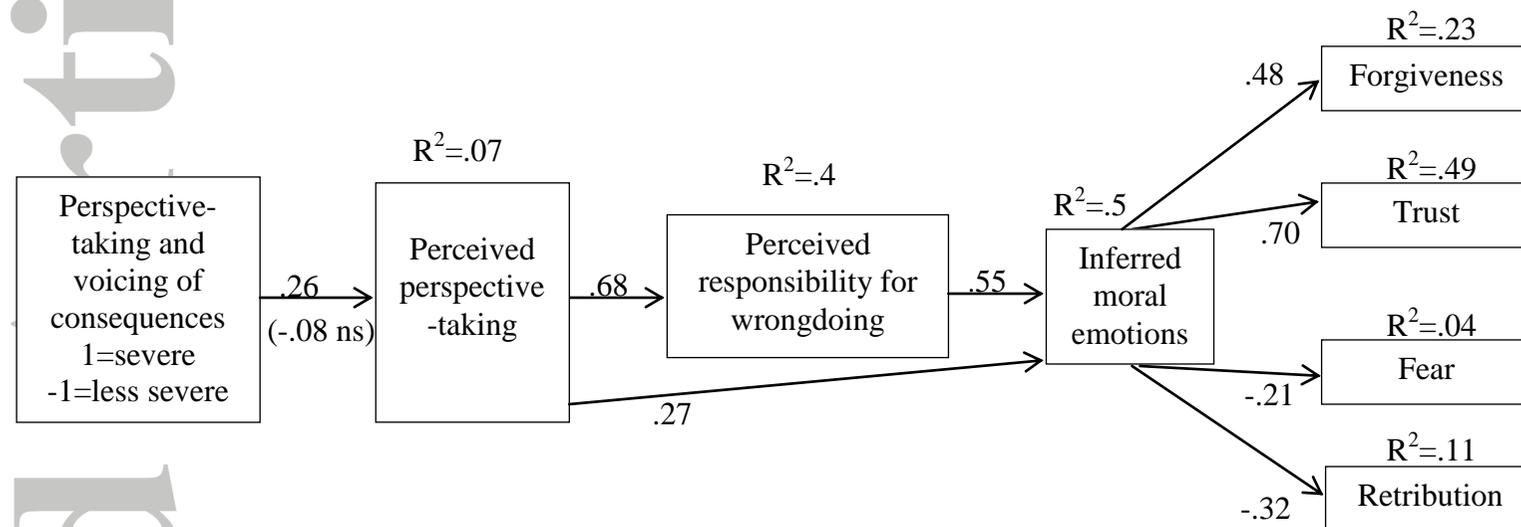
Figure 3. *Path model of severity of consequences condition moderating the mediating role of perceived perspective-taking in predicting*

forgiveness, trust, fear, and retribution. Values inside brackets represent the severe consequence condition. All paths are significant, p < .05, all

other paths were non-significant. Forgiveness and trust, r = .39, p < .001; forgiveness and retribution, r = -.68, p < .001; forgiveness and fear, r

= -.52, p < .001; retribution and fear, r = .54, p < .001; retribution and trust, r = -.29, p < .05; fear and trust, r = -.24, p = .057 (Study 3)

Table 1: *Scale Inter-Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (Study 1)*

	M	*SD*	1	2	3
1. Perceived perspective-taking	3.33	1.61			
2. Inferred moral emotions	3.03	1.33	.62***		
3. Trust	2.20	.93	.45***	.62***	
4. Perceived severity	5.44	1.43	.01	.07	-.11

Note. N = 139, ****p* < .001

Table 2: *Means (and Standard Deviations) as a Function of Perspective-taking and*

Severity of Consequences (Study 1)

	Perspective-taking			
	Victim		Workplace	
	Consequences		Consequences	
	Severe	Less severe	Severe	Less severe
Variable	*n* = 38	*n* = 31	*n* = 33	*n* = 37
PPT	3.81 (1.33)	4.58 (1.28)	2.36 (1.36)	2.65 (1.48)
Inferred moral emotions	3.52 (1.42)	3.53 (1.37)	2.45 (.97)	2.60 (1.14)
Trust	2.14 (.75)	2.57 (1.04)	1.98 (1.03)	2.15 (.86)

Note. PPT = Perceived perspective-taking

Table 3: *Tests of Indirect Effects (Study 1)*

IV → mediator → DV	*IE*	*SE*	*95% CI*
Perspective condition → PPT → INF moral emotions → trust	.37	.08	.24, .56
Perspective condition → PPT →INF moral emotions	.86	.16	.53, 1.23
PPT → INF moral emotions → trust	.22	.04	.16, .31
Severity consequences → PPT → INF moral emotions → trust	.12	.05	.03, .24
Severity consequences → PPT →INF moral emotions	.27	.12	.06, .54

Note. PPT = perceived perspective-taking, INF=inferred *IE* = indirect effect; *SE* = standard

error

Table 4: *Scale Inter-Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (Study2)*

	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Perceived PT	3.39	1.51				
2. INF moral emotions	2.86	1.41	.53***			
3. Trust	2.17	1.11	.43***	.56***	.	.
4. Forgiveness	3.58	.80	.22*	.36***	.48***	
5. Perceived severity	5.49	1.32	-.07	-.06	-.17#	-.21*

Note. $N = 122$, ***$p < .001$, *$p < .05$, #$p = .058$, PT=perspective-taking, INF=inferred

Table 5: *Means (and Standard Deviations) as a Function of Perspective-taking and*

Severity of Consequences (Study 2)

	Perspective-taking			
	Victim		Workplace	
	Consequences		Consequences	
	Severe	Less severe	Severe	Less severe
Variable	*n* = 31	*n* = 30	*n* = 31	*n* = 30
Perceived PT	3.19 (1.08)	4.77 (1.38)	2.68 (1.35)	2.97 (1.33)
Inferred moral emotions	2.87 (1.25)	4.07 (1.52)	2.19 (1.03)	2.35 (1.00)
Trust	2.08 (1.06)	2.89 (1.41)	1.90 (.84)	1.81 (.74)
Forgiveness	3.57 (.78)	3.93 (.91)	3.48 (.67)	3.34 (.76)

Note. PT = perspective-taking

Table 6: *Inferential Statistics and Effect Size (partial η^2) as a Function of Perspective-taking and Severity of Consequences of Harm for the Victim (Study 2)*

Variable	Effect	F^1	p	*partial η^2*
Perceived PT	PT	24.63	< .001	.17
	SoC	15.92	< .001	.12
	PT*SoC	7.57	= .007	.06
INF moral emotions	PT	29.40	< .001	.20
	SoC	9.38	= .003	.07
	PT*SoC	5.54	= .020	.05
Trust	PPT	11.00	= .001	.08
	SoC	3.67	= .058	.03
	PT*SoC	5.77	= .018	.05
Forgiveness	PPT	5.76	= .019	.05
	SoC	.57	= .450	.00
	PT*SoC	3.20	= .076	.03

Note. [1]Degrees of freedom = (1,118). PT = perspective-taking, SoC = severity of

consequences, INF=inferred

Table 7: *Tests of Indirect Effects (Study 2)*

IV → mediator → DV	*IE*	*SE*	*95% CI*
Less severe consequences			
PT → PPT/INF moral emotions → forgiveness	.17	.22	.44, 1.30
PT → PPT/INF moral emotions → trust	.36	.12	.18, .68
PT → PPT → INF moral emotions	.84	.07	.07, .35
Severe consequences			
PT → PPT/INF moral emotions → forgiveness	.05	.16	-.04, .58
PT → PPT/INF moral emotions → trust	.10	.07	-.01, .28
PT → PPT → INF moral emotions	.24	.04	-.00, .14
Both consequences conditions			
PPT → INF moral emotions → forgiveness	.20	.05	.04, .17
PPT → INF moral emotions → trust	.09	.03	.12, .31

Note. PPT = perceived perspective-taking, PT = perspective-taking, INF=inferred. *IE* =

indirect effect; *SE* = standard error

Table 8: *Means (and Standard Deviations) as a Function of Perspective-taking and*

Severity of Consequences (Pilot Study)

	Actual consequences			
	Less severe consequences		More severe consequences	
	Perspective-taking with voicing consequences that are			
	Less severe	More severe	More severe	Less severe
Variable				
Perceived match	5.44 (1.73)	3.63 (1.82)	5.81 (1.33)	3.08 (1.72)
Response satisfaction	3.71 (1.92)	4.61 (1.36)	3.81 (1.36)	2.35 (1.38)

Note. N = 26.

Table 9: *Scale Inter-Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (Study 3)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Manipulation severity									
2 Perceived PT	.05								
3. Subjective match	.31***	-.06							
4 Perceived responsibility	.06	.71***	-.13						
5 Inferred moral emotions	.03	.70***	-.08	.77***					
6 Fear	.14	-.26**	.05	-.20*	-.17*				
7 Retribution	.16	-.36***	.11	-.36***	-.32***	.57***			
8 Trust	-.00	.65***	-.07	.64***	.69***	-.28**	-.42***		
9 Forgiveness	-.17#	.46***	-.21*	.44***	.41***	-.53***	-.76***	.51***	
M	5.46	3.90	1.14	4.13	3.55	3.92	4.26	2.74	3.42
SD	1.17	1.56	1.61	1.42	1.44	1.55	1.42	1.09	.86

Note. $N = 138$, ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$, #$p = .053$, PT=perspective-taking

Table 10: *Means (and Standard Deviations) as a Function of Perspective-taking and*

Severity of Consequences (Study 3)

	Perspective-taking with voicing			
	Less severe consequences		More severe consequences	
	Consequences		Consequences	
	Severe	Less severe	Severe	Less severe
Variable	*n* = 34	*n* = 33	*n* = 37	*n* = 34
Perceived PT	4.02 (1.46)	3.51 (1.52)	3.76 (1.71)	4.29 (1.47)
Subjective match	3.26 (1.14)	1.00 (1.06)	.62 (.72)	-.26 (.93)
Perceived responsibility	4.08 (1.29)	4.01 (1.59)	4.12 (1.64)	4.29 (1.15)
INF moral emotions	3.59 (1.25)	3.22 (1.53)	3.62 (1.58)	3.74 (1.39)
Fear	4.04 (1.26)	3.48 (1.69)	4.32 (1.60)	3.77 (1.54)
Retribution	4.60 (1.34)	4.00 (1.49)	4.35 (1.38)	4.08 (1.48)
Trust	2.76 (1.01)	2.64 (1.09)	2.79 (1.21)	2.75 (1.09)
Forgiveness	3.12 (.73)	3.65 (.73)	3.27 (1.03)	3.64 (.82)

Note. PT = perspective-taking, INF=inferred

Table 11: *Inferential Statistics and Effect Size (partial η^2) as a Function of Perspective-taking and Severity of Consequences of Harm for the Victim (Study 3)*

Variable	Effect	F^1	p	*partial η^2*
Perceived PT	PT	.95	= .330	.01
	SoC	.00	= .965	.00
	PT*SoC	3.90	= .050	.03
Subjective match	PT	139.89	< .001	.51
	SoC	85.48	< .001	.40
	PT*SoC	17.40	< .001	.12
Perceived responsibility	PT	.45	= .505	.00
	SoC	.04	= .840	.00
	PT*SoC	.25	= .616	.00
Inferred moral emotions	PT	1.27	= .262	.01
	SoC	.25	= .617	.00
	PT*SoC	.98	= .323	.01
Fear	PT	1.21	= . 273	.01
	SoC	4.48	=. 036	.03
	PT*SoC	.00	= .993	00
Retribution	PT	.12	= .729	.00
	SoC	3.23	= .075	.02
	PT*SoC	.45	= .503	.00
Trust	PPT	.15	= .697	.00
	SoC	.19	= .659	.00
	PT*SoC	.06	= .810	.00
Forgiveness	PPT	.22	= .642	.00
	SoC	9.86	= .002	.07
	PT*SoC	.28	= .596	.00

Note. [1]Degrees of freedom = (1,134). PT = perspective-taking, SoC = severity of consequences

Table 12**:** *Tests of Indirect Effects (Study 3)*

IV → mediator → DV	*IE*	*SE*	*95% CI*
Less severe consequences			
PT → PPT/responsible*/emotions**→ forgiveness	.13	.07	.02, .29
PT → PPT/ responsible/emotions → trust	.28	.13	.02, .55
PT → PPT/ responsible/emotions → fear	-.11	.08	-.35, -.00
PT → PPT/ responsible/emotions → retribution	-.16	.10	-.42, -.02
PT → PPT/ responsible → emotions	.51	.25	.03, 1.01
PT → PPT → responsible	.52	.25	.03, 1.02
Severe consequences			
PT → PPT/ responsible/emotions → forgiveness	-.04	.07	-.19, .08
PT → PPT/ responsible/emotions → trust	-.09	.13	-.36, .17
PT → PPT/ responsible/emotions → fear	.04	.07	-.05, .24
PT → PPT/ responsible/emotions → retribution	.05	.08	-.09, .25
PT → PPT/ responsible → emotions	-.17	.25	-.64, .32
PT → PPT → responsible	-.18	.26	-.68, .31
Both consequences conditions			
PPT → responsible/emotions → forgiveness	.17	.04	.11, .25
PPT → responsible emotions → trust	.35	.04	.27, .44
PPT → responsible/emotions → fear	-.14	.07	-.28, -.01
PPT → responsible/emotions → retribution	-.21	.06	-.34, -.09
PPT → responsible → emotions	.38	.06	.27, .51
Responsible → emotions → forgiveness	.15	.03	.09, .23
Responsible → emotions → trust	.31	.05	.21, .41
Responsible → emotions → fear	-.12	.06	-.26, -.01
Responsible → emotions → retribution	-.18	.06	-.31, -.08

Note. PPT = perceived perspective-taking, PT = perspective-taking, *=perceived responsibility, **= inferred moral emotions. *IE* = indirect effect; *SE* = standard error