

The role of morality in the attitudes and behaviors toward the ingroup and the outgroup

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Study 1

The role of NFC and of attributions of morality to the ingroup and outgroup in the prejudice towards immigrants

Theodorou, A. & Kotic, A. (under review). Relationship between NFC, attribution of morality, sociability and competence to the ingroup and outgroup, and prejudice towards immigrants.



The role of attributions to the ingroup and the outgroup on the attitudes towards the outgroup

In their evaluations of themselves and of others, individuals refer mainly to the three characteristics: **competence**, **sociability** and, especially, **morality** (Leach et al., 2007).



→ **Ingroup morality attributions:** Individuals are motivated to preserve a positive self-image of morality (e.g., Moore & Gino, 2013) and, presumably, of their group.

The role of attributions to the ingroup and the outgroup on the attitudes towards the outgroup

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→ **Outgroup morality attributions**. When others are seen as immoral or dishonest, they are perceived as a **threat VS reliable** and, thus, more predictable (Brambilla et al., 2012; López-Rodríguez & Zagefka, 2015).

The role of attributions to the ingroup and the outgroup on the attitudes towards the outgroup

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To our knowledge, previous studies on global evaluations have considered ingroup (e.g., Leach et al., 2007) and outgroup **separately** (Brambilla et al., 2012).



What can we expect if we consider both ingroup and outgroup evaluations?

The role of attributions to the ingroup and the outgroup on the attitudes towards the outgroup

High ingroup's morality and low outgroup morality → **moral arrogance or superiority** that has been called elevation (Allison, Messick, & Goethals, 1989; Monin, 2007; Paulhus & John, 1998).



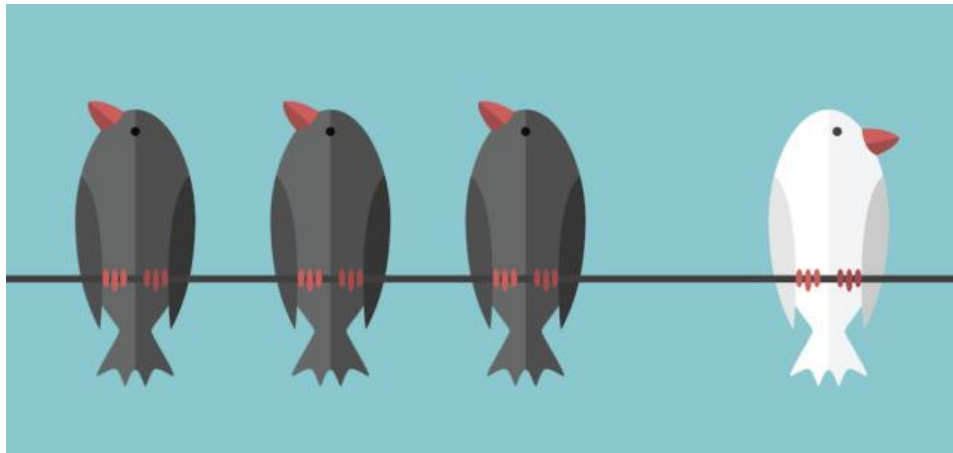
Low ingroup morality and high outgroup morality → **moral inferiority or moral confusion** (Monin, 2007) or **elevating the other as a moral example** (Gausel & Leach, 2011; Haidt, 2000, 2004).



The mechanism underpinning these two alternatives have not been yet understood. It could be moderated by individual dimensions.

The role of the Need for closure (NFC) in the attitudes towards the outgroup

High NFC was associated to the primacy effect on impression formation (Kruglanski & Freund, 1983; Webster, Richter, & Kruglanski, 1996), stereotypes formation (Dijksterhuis, van Knippenberg, Kruglanski, & Schaper, 1996) and leads to **higher negative evaluations of immigrants** (Baldner & Pierro, 2019).



Hypotheses

(H1) The higher the NFC the higher the prejudice towards immigrants.

(H2) High NFC and evaluation of high ingroup morality would lead to **higher** prejudice towards immigrants, especially in presence of evaluations of low outgroup morality.

(H3) High NFC and evaluations of low ingroup morality and of high outgroup morality will lead to **lower** prejudice towards the outgroup.

(H4) Low NFC and attributions of low ingroup morality would lead to lower levels of prejudice regardless of the level of attribution of outgroup morality.

(H5) Low NFC, high ingroup morality and low outgroup morality, low NFC individuals will experience again the superiority effect and high prejudice towards immigrant

Method

Participants. 747 of which 439 women and 308 men of young age ($M = 24.80$, $SD = 10.92$).

- **NFC.** Revised NFC Scale (Pierro & Kruglanski, 2005) e.g., «*Any solution to a problem is better than remaining in a state of uncertainty*».
- **Perceptions of morality.** Attributes reflecting morality of Italians and of immigrant groups (i.e., Romanian, Moroccan, and African) on a 6-point semantic differential scale (4 items, e.g. trustworthy; Brambilla, Sacchi, Rusconi, Cherubini, & Yzerbyt, 2012).
- **Prejudice.** Scale by Kosic, Phalet, & Mannetti (2012) e.g., «*I think immigrants steal the work of Italians.*»

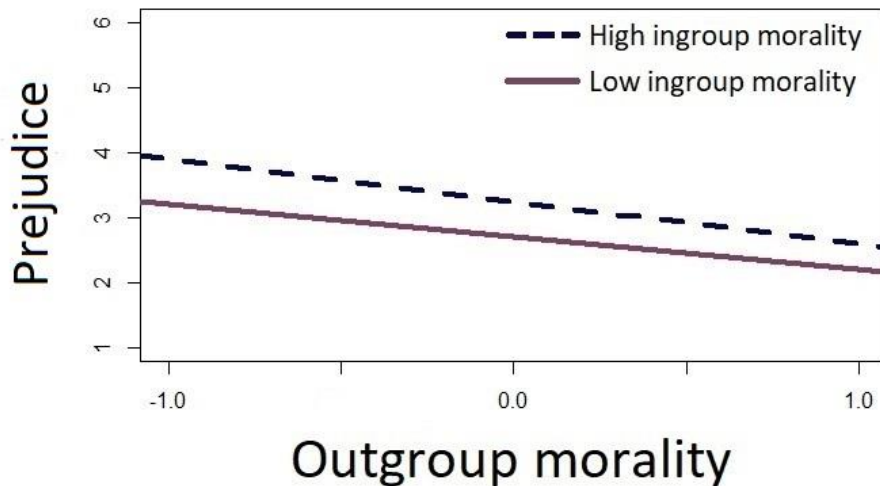
Results

	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. NFC	3.77	0.78	.84	-						
2. In-group morality	3.53	0.98	.72	.07	-					
3. Out-group morality	3.54	0.78	.90	-.23***	.08*	-				
4. Prejudice index	2.67	1.15	.91	.34***	.19***	-.43***	-			
5. Age	24.80	10.92	-	.07	-.10**	-.19***	.02	-		
6. Gender	-	0.49	-	-.12**	.04	.01	.11**	-.03	-	
7. Political orientation	3.57	1.24	-	.28***	.06	-.22***	.39***	.03	-.01	-
8. Identification with the in-group	3.63	1.20	.79	.18***	.04	-.05	.35***	.10**	.03	.23***

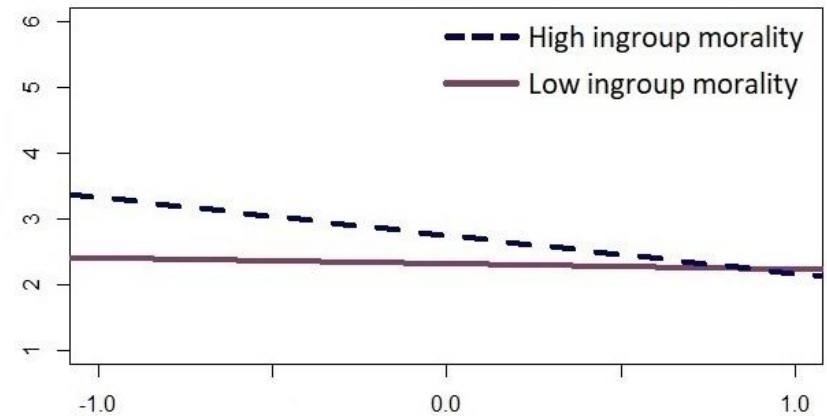
Note. Gender (Male 1; Female 0); NFC: need for closure. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Results

High NFC



Low NFC



Results show a cumulative effect depicting the worse possible situation when in the presence of high NFC, high ingroup morality and low outgroup morality. Interestingly, when ingroup morality is low and the outgroup morality is high, we observe the lowest levels of prejudice.

Discussion



Arrogance or “need to be right”
(Kruglanski, 1989)

VS



Humility
(Kruglanski, Peri, & Zakai, 1991; Pica, Milyavsky, Pierro, & Kruglanski, 2019; Pierro & Mannetti, 2004)

Study findings offer a positive picture. In fact, they suggest that even if stable individual dispositions are involved in enhanced negative outgroup evaluations, this latter are not an inescapable result; rather, intervening on changing plastic factors as morality attributions can reduce prejudice.

Study 2

Do binding moral foundations predict moral behaviors? The moderating role of social environment

Kosic, A., Theodorou, A., Leone, L. (under review) Do binding moral foundations predict moral behaviors? The moderating role of social environment.



The Moral Foundation Theory (MFT; Graham et al., 2013)



- care-harm
- fairness-cheating
- loyalty-betrayal
- authority-subversion
- sanctity-degradation



Do binding moral foundations predict moral behaviors? The moderating role of social environment



The Moral Foundation Theory (MFT; Graham et al., 2013)

care-harm
fairness-cheating



loyalty-betrayal
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sanctity-degradation

Criticisms to the MFT

Kugler et al. (2014) and others questioned the very classification of binding foundations into human morality.



On the other side, Haidt repeatedly pointed out how binding foundations are moral values and not always result in negative outcomes (Haidt & Jonathan, 2016).



Criticisms to the MFT

Can binding foundations be considered as moral guides, and if so, when is most probable to lead to positive outcomes?

When people perceive that their ingroup's behavior is not in line with moral standards, higher endorsement of binding foundations could motivate the adoption of staunchly moral choices in order to counteract to the threat represented by a **negative group image**.



Hypotheses

(H1) When people perceive that their ingroup's behavior is not in line with moral standards, higher endorsement of binding foundations could motivate the adoption of staunchly moral choices in order to counteract to the threat represented by a negative group image.

(H2) We did not expect the same effect to be found in the case of individualizing moral foundations.

Study 1: Method

Participants were 186 (95 females and 72 males; 19 did not provide this information). Age varied from 18 to 52 years ($M = 21.30$, $SD = 4.74$).

■ **Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ).** E.g. «*Compassion for those who suffer is the most important virtue of all*».

■ **Ingroup's violation of moral standards.** Perceptions of negative phenomena in the Italian society (8 items), such as corruption, theft, and tax evasion from 1 (*not at all present*) to 6 (*very frequently present*).

■ **Moral dilemmas.** Evaluations of the likelihood to behave a or b (0 - 100%) in eight scenarios.

E.g. «*You have to fill in the form for tax declaration. a) I would declare the expenses correctly and accurately. b) I decide to deduct expenses to which I would not be entitled to deduct.*»

«*Imagine finding on the street a wallet with about 1000 Euros and the owner's documents. a) I would return it to the owner with all the contents b) I would take the money and leave/throw the rest.*»

Two- factors explaining 55.18% of the variance binding and individualizing moral choices.

Study 1: Results

	Binding moral choices			Individualizing moral choices		
	β	SE	95% CI	β	SE	95% CI
Intercept	-.04	.08	[-.20, .11]	-.07	.07	[-.22, .07]
Binding foundations	.11	.09	[-.06, .28]	.09	.08	[-.08, .25]
Individualizing foundations	.08	.09	[-.10, .25]	.24**	.08	[.07, .41]
In-group violation of moral standards	-.05	.08	[-.21, .11]	-.10	.08	[-.25, .06]
Binding foundations*In-group violation of moral standards	.17*	.09	[.01, .34]	.13	.08	[-.03, .29]
Individualizing foundations*In-group violation of moral standards	.02	.08	[-.13, .18]	.12	.08	[-.03, .27]
Political orientation	-.03	.08	[-.18, .13]	-.02	.08	[-.17, .13]
Gender	.24**	.08	[.09, .39]	.21**	.07	[.07, .35]
Age	.07	.08	[-.08, .22]	.13	.07	[-.01, .27]

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Study 1: Results

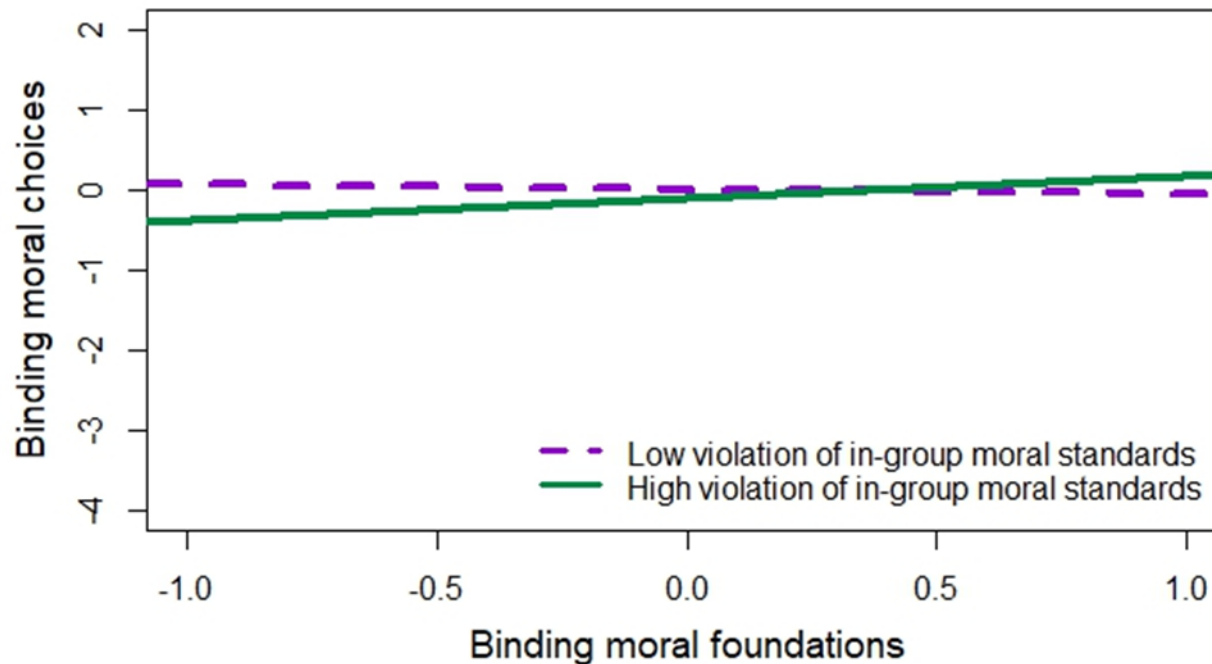


Figure 1. Simple slope analysis of the interaction between violation of in-group's moral standards and binding foundations on binding moral choices (Study 1).

Study 2: Method

Participants were 215 (90 male and 125 female), age varied from 15 to 61 years ($M = 29.07$, $SD = 11.84$).

- **Moral Foundations Questionnaire**
- **Moral Foundations Vignettes** (Clifford et al., 2015). Evaluation of a behavior that violates a particular moral foundation (74 items) from 1 (*completely unacceptable*) to 6 (*completely acceptable*).
- **Ingroup's violation of moral standards**
- **Moral dilemmas**

Study 2: Results

	Binding moral choices			Individualizing moral choices		
	β	SE	95% CI	β	SE	95% CI
Intercept	-.02	.07	[-.16, .11]	.01	.07	[-.13, .14]
Binding foundations	.06	.10	[-.14, .26]	.08	.10	[-.12, .27]
Individualizing foundations	.08	.10	[-.11, .27]	.17	.09	[-.02, .35]
In-group violation of moral standards	-.01	.07	[-.15, .14]	-.03	.07	[-.17, .11]
Binding foundations*In-group violation of moral standards	.21*	.09	[.04, .39]	-.05	.09	[-.22, .12]
Individualizing foundations*In-group violation of moral standards	-.04	.08	[-.20, .12]	.01	.08	[-.15, .16]
Political orientation	-.20*	.08	[-.35, -.05]	-.13	.07	[-.27, .02]
Gender	.06	.07	[-.08, .20]	.15*	.07	[.01, .29]
Age	.03	.07	[-.11, .17]	.21**	.07	[.07, .35]

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Study 2: Results

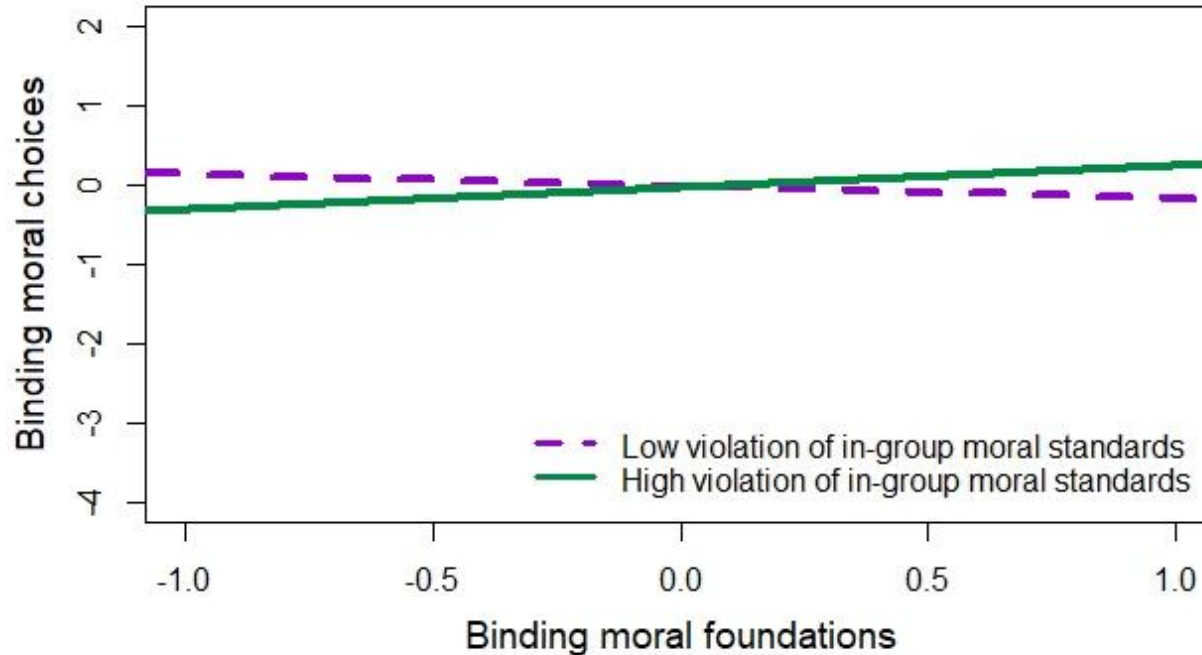


Figure 2. Simple slope analysis of the interaction between violation of in-group's moral standards and binding foundations on binding moral choices (Study 2).

Study 1 and 2: Results

	Binding moral choices		
	B	SE	95% CI
Intercept	-.03	.05	[-.13, .07]
Binding foundations	.06	.06	[-.06, .19]
Individualizing foundations	.09	.06	[-.03, .21]
In-group violation of moral standards	-.03	.05	[-.13, .08]
Binding foundations*In-group violation of moral standards	.18**	.06	[.07, .30]
Individualizing foundations*In-group violation of moral standards	-.01	.05	[-.11, .10]
Political orientation	-.11*	.05	[-.21, -.01]
Gender	.15**	.05	[.05, .25]
Age	.04	.05	[-.06, .14]

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Study 1 and 2: Results

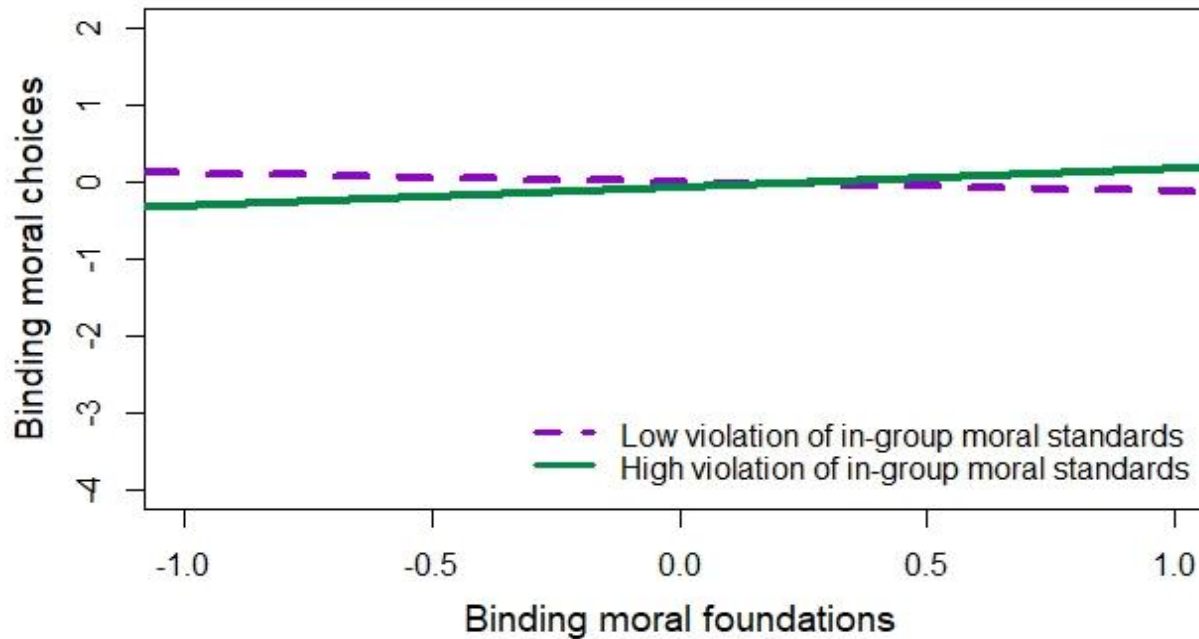


Figure 3. Simple slope analysis of the interaction between violation of in-group's moral standards and binding foundations on binding moral choices for the aggregated data (Study 1 and Study 2).

General discussion

People compare their moral behavior with their **moral ideals** (Zhong et al., 2009), and experience discomfort if their behavior falls short of their moral standards.

Our results contradict Kugler et al. (2014) and support the idea that binding moral foundations can result in **positive outcomes**.





GRAZIE!

