Texts for editing

Attached are excerpts from the General Discussion written in the dissertation. The excerpts do not form a sequence (because a large part of the General Discussion has been edited by you in the past). At the same time, every written idea is presented in fully and numbered.

1.

**Abstract**

The emotions associated with moral convictions can have profound implications for societies, as they shape people’s action tendencies in response to moral events. Previous work has shown that attitudes founded on strong moral convictions are strongly tied to emotions. Research on the association between moral conviction and emotion has, thus far, focused on moral convictions related to broad, overarching topics (e.g., abortion, same-sex marriage, gun control). However, in daily life, people encounter moral issues that are less general, rather ones that are concrete and specific. These types of moral events are more nuanced; however, it is important to note that not every daily moral experience evokes an intense emotional reaction. In the present research, I suggest that having a strong, general moral conviction might be insufficient to amplify one’s emotions and influence subsequent action tendencies in response to a specific event, even when the event is related to the broader domain of the moral conviction.

**2. General Discussion**

Do attitudes that are held with strong moral conviction always co-occur with intense emotional reactions and action tendencies? Morality models have generally posited that attitudes held with strong moral conviction elicit intense emotions, which subsequently shape behavioral reactions. The model presented here suggests that this assumption does not always hold true. I argue that the morality models, which propose close ties between moral conviction and emotions, are based on research that have not differentiated – both conceptually and methodologically – between different moral situations. In particular, past research has not distinguished between general moral convictions that concern broad issues or topics and general moral convictions that relate to specific events. In this investigation, I focus on a political context to illustrate that, although people hold moral convictions regarding political issues in general, when they encounter specific political events they may respond with varying levels of emotional intensity. I suggest that a general moral conviction that relates to a specific event leads to an intense emotional response only when the moral violation that is most prominent in the event is relevant to one’s moral foundations. Individual differences in emotional reactions to moral events may lead those with opposing viewpoints to accuse one another that the other lacks concern for morality; these mutual accusations may create tension and conflict between people and groups in society. My research – which draws upon theories of moral emotions (Haidt, 2001; Tangney, Stuewig & Mashek, 2007), The Integrated Theory of Moral Conviction (Skitka et al., 2008), and Moral Foundations Theory (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Joseph, 2004) – provides an explanation for why the intensity of emotional reactions to moral events varies. Using these theories, I developed a new model showing that political beliefs, which are connected to fundamental moral foundations, moderate the association between one’s general moral conviction and the intensity of emotional reactions to specific moral events.

I tested the validity of the model in the context of ideological intergroup conflicts, and specifically the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. I examined the associations between general moral convictions and emotional reactions among rightists and leftists, in reference to typical moral events that occur in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Taken together, my results (Studies 1-3) demonstrate that different prioritizations of moral foundations, as reflected by political ideology, shape ties between general moral convictions and emotions in reaction to concrete events of either individualizing or binding moral violations. Thus, both rightists and leftists with strong moral convictions react with high levels of emotional intensity to a moral event *only* when that event is relevant to the moral foundations that their political group most values. These findings shed light on the mechanisms that may explain why and how people who hold equal general moral convictions, when exposed to daily moral events, might differ in their emotional reactions. Although the investigation was conducted in the context of a political intergroup conflict, based on the theoretical model that I put forth, I believe that my findings can be generalized beyond a given particular context and across different populations. Additionally, I focused on two emotions – anger and empathy – but I expect that my findings would generalize to other moral group-based emotions. In future research, it would be important to test if and how the model generalizes to other social contexts and other group-based emotions.

**Implications**

This research has both theoretical and methodological implications for research in moral and political psychology. First, my research makes several conceptual distinctions, which have not been made in the past. I distinguish between different levels of moral situations, specifically between general moral convictions and specific moral convictions. In addition, I sharpen the distinction between concepts that represent individuals’ moral positions, namely, moral conviction and moral foundation. I pose that these distinctions have implications for morally relevant emotions and behavior.

My model offers a novel framework for conceptualizing individuals’ moral positions. I pose that people may view and understand events in the world in different resolutions. In some instances, they may focus more generally on the morality of an issue or topic and, in other instances, they may focus on concrete, context-dependent events within the broader issue. In other words, people may utilize different "lenses of binoculars" when assessing moral events. In a multifaceted and complex reality, these lenses are not necessarily coordinated. While sharpening the resolution, other moral concerns might come in to play. Possible characteristics of moral convictions, such as their effects on individuals’ emotional responses, are therefore proposed as testable propositions in a given context.

Further, prior work on moralization has often regarded the concepts of moral convictions and moral foundations (as well as moral mandates, moral beliefs, and moral intuitions) as intertwined, and has not adequately distinguished among them (Haidt, 2001; Graham et al., 2009; Skitka, Hanson, & Wisneski, 2017; Skitka, Wisneski, & Brandt, 2017). These moral processes have been described as possessing similar characteristics, such as (a) reflecting personal and intuitive evaluations (e.g., Haidt, 2001; Skitka et al., 2005), (b) being influenced by context (e.g., Skitka, Bauman, Aramovich, & Morgan, 2006), (c) being tightly connected to emotions (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005), and (d) containing a motivational force that leads to corresponding behavioral reactions (Graham et al., 2009). Only recently have Skitka and colleagues (2020) written a review that emphasized the differences between theories that pose that morality is an inherent property of particular issues or attitudes, such as the MFT (Graham et al., 2009), and the moral conviction theoretical approach which asks people whether they view particular issues as reflections of their personal moral beliefs and convictions.

The model presented here suggests that moral convictions and moral foundations are simply different segments of the moral judgment system, such that they each signal related, but distinct paths to moral judgments. Each path has a unique origin and endpoint; the top-down approach to morality of the moral foundations unequivocally defines what would be considered a moral violation, leading to a “dogmatic” judgment of moral” or “immoral.” In contrast, the bottom-up moral conviction approach to morality views moral violations as an empirical question, such that what distinguishes moral and immoral events or issues is the degree or magnitude of the violation. These differences result in different operationalizations of morally relevant constructs, varying levels of measurement, and differing implications.

I am aware of different theoretical approaches to morality (e.g., universalist moral theories such as neo-Kantianism) which indicate that morality, both moral foundation and moral conviction, proceed in a “top-down” fashion. Applying this perspective, we can expect that abstract moral principles are applied to specific cases; for example, when people deeply value a particular moral foundation (e.g., harm/care), they will reactively demonstrate their commitment to the foundation through specific moral convictions about issues and events (e.g., morally opposing nuclear armament). Some research suggests that “top-down” moral theories are generic and too abstract and cannot extend to all of the day-to-day aspects of an individual’s moral life (Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1995). As Tronto states, ‘‘in these theories, moral standards are largely governed by universalized rules, such as the principle of fairness. The danger of such theories, as many commentators have noticed, is that these formal criteria may ignore and not provide any account of the concrete details of the moral and political life of individuals’’ (Tronto, 1995, p. 143). Therefore, I suggest that it is not that one path “leads” to the other, rather that both paths contribute to one’s judgment about a specific event, such that together they may stimulate an emotional reaction. This leaves open several questions on the nature of the relationship between moral conviction and moral foundations, and future research is required in order to further understand this relationship.

3.

4.

These situations and the potential ties between moral conviction and emotions are presented in the following matrix (Table 1):

Table 1: Moral conviction situations and research conditions

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Moral situation | |  | | | |
| B | A |
| Specific event:  (e.g., an event depicting a woman choosing to have an abortion because of the gender of the fetus) | General topic:  abortion) (e.g., |
| A few studies (e.g., Hofmann, Brandt, Wisneski, & Skitka, 2018) indicate strong relationships between moral convictions and emotions. | Irrelevant | Specific measure:  (e.g., “My attitude about the event  is deeply connected to my beliefs about fundamental right and wrong.”) | 1 | MC measure |
| The current research (as well as a few other studies; e.g., Mullen & Nadler, 2007) suggests a moderated-mediation model for predicting the association between moral convictions and emotions. | The majority of studies that have used a general moral conviction design, have indicated a strong association between moral convictions and emotions. | General measure:  (e.g., “My attitude about legalized abortion/anti-abortion legislation is deeply connected to my beliefs about fundamental right and wrong.”) | 2 |

In this investigation, my focus is on general moral convictions related to specific events (category B2 in Table 1).

5.

For example, suppose a person holds a pro-life moral conviction on abortion. In a case of a woman who chooses to have an abortion because she prefers a boy rather than a girl, we might expect intense anger towards the moral violator (the woman), regardless of whether that person's most relevant foundation is “harm” (i.e., concern about the fetus' rights) or “binding” (i.e., concerns over group interests, including the importance of obeying authority). However, if the woman's community leader approves of her abortion, and one's most relevant moral foundation is obedience of authority, a strong pro-life moral conviction on abortion may not be sufficient to predict anger towards the woman. However, if one's most relevant moral foundation is harm, we would still expect an intense emotional response (along with behavioral consequences) to that specific abortion. In general, when people are exposed to a morally relevant issue or event, they naturally prioritize their moral considerations and only react with high levels of emotional intensity when the source of the emotion (i.e., the prominent aspect of the event) is especially relevant to their endorsed moral mandates. In other words, it is only when an event is both morally related (connected to one's strong moral conviction) and morally relevant (there is a match between the prominent moral violation in the event and one's endorsed moral foundation) that one’s general moral conviction will intensify an emotion response.