

Sharing moral values:

Anticipated ingroup respect as a determinant of adherence to  
morality-based (but not competence-based) group norms

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## Abstract

This research examines how moral values regulate the behavior of individual group members. We argue that group members behave in line with moral group norms because they anticipate receiving ingroup respect when enacting moral values that are shared by ingroup members. Data from two experimental studies offer evidence in support. In Study 1 (N = 82) morality-based (but not competence-based) ingroup norms determined whether members of a low status group opted for individual versus collective strategies for status improvement. This effect was mediated by anticipated ingroup respect, and emerged regardless of whether group norms prescribed collectivistic or individualistic behavior. We replicated these effects in Study 2 (N = 69), where no comparable effect was found as a result of moral norms communicated by a higher status outgroup. This indicates that social identity implications rather than interdependence or more generic concerns about social approval or importance of cooperation drive these effects.

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Morality has been defined as the evaluation of the “*actions or character of a person that are made with respect to a set of virtues held to be obligatory by a culture or subculture*” (Haidt, 2001, p.817). Accordingly, people in different social groups or cultures may endorse different moral values, such as autonomy vs. duty in individualist vs. collectivist cultures. Nevertheless, researchers in this area have primarily examined moral values that tend to be universal across groups and cultures (such as fairness, Haidt, 2001). Additionally, they have mainly addressed individual decision making in moral dilemmas (Turiel, 2006), whereas the social identity implications of moral behavior have not been explicitly examined so far. In fact, researchers of group processes and intergroup relations rarely focus on moral aspects of the phenomena they investigate, even though these may be quite relevant for instance in research on ingroup-outgroup biases (Killen, Margie, & Sinno, 2006). Our current aim therefore is to connect these two literatures, as we examine the impact of moral values shared by the ingroup on the behavior of individual group members. We report two studies that compare different types of normative moral values shared by the ingroup, to competence-based group norms (Study 1), and to moral norms endorsed by members of a higher status outgroup (Study 2). We assess how moral values shared by the ingroup (rather than competence norms or outgroup values) affect the behavior of individual group members, and address the psychological process underlying these effects (Study 1 and Study 2).

### **Social Identity and the Importance of Shared Moral Values**

The current investigation focuses on the social aspects and identity implications of shared moral values. The social identity approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) proposes that membership in social groups can help individuals define who they are, where they belong, and how they

should behave. In this perspective, social groups affect individual behavior, not only because of interdependence and instrumentality concerns, but primarily for more abstract meaning seeking and social distinctiveness reasons (Turner, 1991).

Recent research has revealed that moral behavior can be an important source of group pride and ingroup identification. Across a variety of groups in different cultural contexts, people's judgments of their group in terms of its morality were found to be even more important in this sense than evaluative judgments of the group based on its competence or sociability, irrespective of (high vs. low) group status or group type (Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007). When group members were asked to describe their identity, they often referred to shared values as being important to their social identity, and indicated this was a more important guide for their individual behavior than were aspects of their personal identity (Bettencourt & Hume, 1999). Other researchers have also proposed that normative expressions of morality at the group level may function as a situational cue that determines the moral behavior of individuals (Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Lim, & Felps, 2009).

Group norms have been defined as an *“accepted way of thinking, feeling or behaving that is endorsed and expected because it is perceived as the right and proper thing to do”* (Turner, 1991, p. 3; ‘injunctive norms’, Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Accordingly, adherence to group norms can earn respect from other ingroup members, as it demonstrates one is a ‘good’ group member, who is willing to let go of individual behavioral preferences in order to behave in ways that are approved by the group (see for instance, Barreto & Ellemers, 2000; Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002; Sherif, 1966). Competence vs. ‘warmth’ are often considered as central dimensions of social value (e.g., Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, & Kashima, 2005). However, judgments of ‘warmth’ – as considered in previous research, e.g., Wojciszke, 2005 – encompass perceived sociability as well as morality and recent evidence shows that of these two, morality judgments tend to be

most important in judging the behavior of other ingroup members (Leach et al., 2007). This is why we distinguish between competence and morality as two central dimensions underlying the judgments people make about themselves and others, both at the individual and at the group level (see also De Bruin & Van Lange 2000; Phallet & Poppe, 1997; Skowronski & Carlston, 1987; Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994). Group norms - as well as the evaluation of those who behave in line with or transgress these norms - can also be defined either in terms of the perceived competence of those who display group normative behavior, or in terms of the perceived morality of such behavior (Ellemers, Pagliaro, Barreto, & Leach, 2008).

### **Adherence to Moral Norms and Ingroup Respect**

Within social groups there is greater pressure to be moral than to be competent as diverse moral values are more problematic for groups than diverse competencies. The presence of people with different competences within the same group tends to be accepted, as in the case of new or less experienced group members (Rink & Ellemers, 2009), or may even be valued as their different abilities constitute a potential source of innovation and change (Ellemers & Rink, 2005). However, when members of the same group differ from each other in terms of moral values this is more problematic. Moral issues tend to be seen as self-evident, objective and non-negotiable (Fiske & Tetlock, 1997), causing lack of tolerance for those who endorse different moral values (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005; Turiel, 1983). Accordingly, moral value differences have been found to reduce the desire for social interaction (Haidt, Rosenberg, & Hom, 2003; Wainryb, Shaw, Laupa, & Smith, 2001). Indeed, people tend to experience intense negative emotions (such as disgust and contempt) towards those who endorse different moral values, and may even feel justified to display aggressive behavior against them (Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Skitka & Mullen, 2003). Moreover, research on trust violations suggests that people should be more concerned about

the violation of moral norms (e.g., that call into question their integrity) than about violating competence-based norms (Kim, Dirks, Cooper, & Ferrin, 2006; Ferrin, Kim, Cooper, & Dirks, 2007).

As a result, we propose that transgression of moral norms tends to be seen as more socially consequential than transgression of competence-based norms (see also Skowronski & Carlston, 1987). We argue that moral values represent a more powerful basis for social norms than competence-based norms because they are perceived to have more profound social identity implications (see also Rodriguez Mosquera, Manstead, & Fisher, 2002; Schwartz, 1992). Because of the lack of tolerance for differences in moral values, those who violate shared moral values are likely to anticipate social sanctions, such as ridicule or ostracism (Fry, 2006). Conversely, enacting moral norms may be seen as a way to earn respect and acceptance from other ingroup members, which is relevant to feelings of inclusion and self-esteem (Sleeboos, Ellemers, & de Gilder, 2006; Smith & Tyler, 1997; Tyler & Lind, 1992; see also Tatarodi & Milne, 2002).

Even though shared norms that help define a group identity can refer to competence-related attributes as well, we think that norms that are based on competence judgments are less likely to have such far-reaching implications for people's sense of self and social identity. First, this is the case because – as argued above – competence differences are generally considered less problematic than differences in moral values. Second, people are quite aware of how others perceive their moral behavior, and are less likely to consider how others regard their competence (Wojciszke, 1994), regardless of their status in society (Ellemers et al., 2008). Indeed, ingroup respect based on superior competence had relatively little impact on the tendency to see the self as a good group member (Spears, Ellemers, & Doosje, 2005).

Our main proposition thus is that people tend to enact moral group norms (rather than competence norms) as they see this as a way to earn respect from other ingroup members. This implies that moral norms should be particularly relevant as a guideline for individual behavior when they represent moral values that are shared by other *ingroup* members. This counters a more generic individual-level perspective according to which any source expressing a behavioral norm with reference to morality judgments might be able to induce people to behave in line with this norm. We argue that norms referring to moral values shared by the ingroup are most likely to have this effect. People will be less inclined to behave in line with moral norms deriving from values shared by members of an outgroup (see also Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2009) because this is seen as less consequential for the respect that can be earned from other ingroup members (see also Ellemers, Doosje, & Spears, 2004; Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996). Due to these differential social identity implications, we predict that the impact of moral norms is group-specific. Moral norms conveyed by an outgroup should have less of an impact on individual behavior than moral ingroup norms.

### **The Consensual Definition of Moral Behavior**

Previous research examined competence vs. morality judgments with reference to different types of behavior. For instance, competitive choices have been seen as indicative of individual competence, whereas cooperative displays are seen to convey morality (e.g., Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994). Indeed, the willingness to consider other people's outcomes in the allocation of resources is generally seen as indicating morality (De Bruin & Van Lange, 2000; Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994; see also Judd, et al., 2005; Wojciszke, 2005).

We do not wish to deny that in practice moral norms more often than not refer to cooperation and altruism as universally shared values. Nevertheless, we argue that the importance of morality-based norms stems more specifically from the desire to adhere to

moral values shared by the ingroup, and the social identity implications of doing so (see also Jetten et al., 2002). If this is indeed the case, behaving in line with morality-based norms should be independent of the specific behavior prescribed by these norms. If adhering to shared ingroup values helps individuals define their distinct group identity because they anticipate respect from other ingroup members by doing so, we should be able to observe these effects regardless of whether shared group values prescribe individualistic or collectivistic behavior.

In sum, we aim to demonstrate that the consensus within the ingroup about what is morally appropriate is decisive, and adherence to moral norms does not depend on the specific nature of the behavior prescribed. The processes we wish to examine stem from group-based social identities, not a generic desire for social approval or long term exchange or instrumentality. This is why we also argue that moral norms expressed by an outgroup are less likely to have these effects. This should be the case even when the outgroup has higher status than the ingroup, and even when outgroup approval or disapproval of one's actions may be instrumentally relevant to the anticipated success of these actions.

### **Overview of the Present Research**

Based on relevant theory and previous research we predict that people will be more inclined to behave in line with morality-based ingroup norms than to adapt their behavior to competence-based ingroup norms (*Hypothesis 1a*). Furthermore, we anticipate the greater impact of moral group norms (vs. competence norms) to be visible regardless of the individualistic vs. collectivistic behavior prescribed by these norms (*Hypothesis 1b*). We further predict that enacting moral ingroup norms leads individuals to anticipate receiving ingroup respect (*Hypothesis 2a*), and that the anticipation of ingroup respect mediates the effect of moral ingroup norms on individual behavioral choices (*Hypothesis 2b*). The effect of

moral norms on anticipated respect (*Hypothesis 3a*) and on individual behavior (*Hypothesis 3b*) is predicted to be less pronounced when moral norms refer to values shared by an outgroup.

We present two studies to test these predictions. We focus on members of a group with low societal status in the focal comparison context (inhabitants of Southern vs. Northern Italy; see Capozza, Bonaldo, & Di Maggio, 1982), as this allows us to assess different behavioral strategies group members can adopt to achieve position improvement (individual vs. collective status improvement). Previous research in which low status vs. high status groups were compared established that group status does not affect the perceived importance of morality over competence (Ellemers et al., 2008; Leach et al., 2007).

In Study 1, the effects of morality versus competence based ingroup norms are compared, to confirm that moral norms have a stronger effect on the behavioral choices of individual group members (H1a), regardless of whether these norms prescribe individual or collective status improvement (H1b), indicating that moral behavior does not coincide with a group-based choice but rather reflects adherence to moral prescription. In this study we also examine whether this effect is mediated by anticipated ingroup respect (H2a and 2b). In Study 2, we compare the effects of moral norms endorsed by the low-status ingroup (inhabitants of Southern Italy) versus moral norms conveyed by the high-status outgroup (inhabitants of Northern Italy). This enables us to further examine whether the effects of moral group norms are indeed due to their reference to shared ingroup values, and the impact of behaving in line with such values on anticipated ingroup respect (H3a and 3b). Comparing the impact of (low status) ingroup vs. (high status) outgroup norms allows us to exclude that the predicted effects stem from a more generic desire to adhere to moral norms. This provides a strong test of our predictions, as we argue that the norms of the outgroup should be less effective *despite* the superior social standing of this group.

## Study 1

### Method

**Design and participants.** The design of the study was a 2 (*Competence Norm*: Smart vs. Stupid evaluation of collective vs. individual strategies) X 2 (*Morality Norm*: Moral vs. Immoral evaluation of collective vs. individual strategies) between participants.

A total of 82 students from the University of Chieti-Pescara took part in this experiment (67 women and 15 men; evenly distributed across conditions). Their mean age was 21.56 ( $SD = 5.16$ ). Between 19 and 22 participants filled each of the four cells of the design. Each session lasted approximately half an hour, after which participants were thanked and fully debriefed.

### Procedure.

Participants were recruited during a Psychology class and asked to anonymously answer a paper-and-pencil questionnaire concerning employment in the South of Italy. Following the procedure developed by Ellemers et al. (2008; Study 3), in the introduction it was stated that the Italian Government was conducting a survey to better understand the opinion of Southerners regarding these issues. Participants were then asked to indicate in which part of Italy they were born (South Italy; Middle-South Italy; Middle-North Italy; North Italy). Since all participants declared they were born either in the South or Middle-South of Italy, they were all included in the analyses.

At this stage, *ingroup identification* was measured, by means of four items (e.g., “Being from the South is important to me”; see Barreto & Ellemers, 2000;)” scale ranging from 1 = *totally disagree* to 9 = *totally agree*;  $M = 6.08$ ;  $SD = 1.79$ ;  $\alpha = .82$ ). A one-way Analysis of Variance showed that identification was equal across conditions,  $F(3,78) = 0.49$ , *ns*. Additionally, when ingroup identification was included as a covariate in subsequent analyses, this did not change the pattern of results. Thus, the effects of our manipulations on

participants' responses cannot be ascribed to differences between conditions in ingroup identification.

***Reinforcement of low-status.*** Participants read that a previous survey conducted by the National Institute for Statistics in 2006-2007 to compare the current occupational opportunities in different areas of Italy, had demonstrated that the economical situation was very different in the (Middle-)South of Italy, compared to the (Middle-)North. Thus, the ingroup was presented as having relatively low status, by referring to a specific comparison outgroup (i.e., Northern Italians) in terms of a specific comparative domain (employment opportunities). Participants read that the previous survey highlighted two different ways in which people tried to deal with this difference in opportunities. One was to find a way to improve one's personal position or prospects, despite being from the South (*individual status improvement*). Alternatively, people could try to address this difference in opportunities between people living in the South and in the North more generally (*collective status improvement*). Examples of different courses of actions were provided, to further illustrate how these two types of strategies differed from each other. Participants also read that, as time and effort are limited, these two types of strategies tend to be incompatible with each other: investing in collective status improvement would likely imply that less energy and resources are available for individual status improvement, and vice versa (see Appendix A).

***Manipulation of group norms.*** Participants were asked to evaluate these two competing strategies, both in terms of morality and in terms of competence. This was done to emphasize these as the two focal dimensions of evaluation, to be able to credibly introduce the group norm manipulation at a later stage, and to control for participants' own *a priori* evaluations of each of these strategies, when examining the effects of the group norm manipulations.

Participants evaluated these strategies on scales ranging from 1 (= *absolutely stupid/absolutely immoral*) to 9 (= *absolutely smart/absolutely moral*). When these a priori

evaluations of individual and collective strategies in terms of morality and competence were included as covariates in further analyses, this did not affect the results obtained. After participants had completed their own ratings, they were provided with bogus feedback about the evaluation of collective (vs. individual) strategies by other ingroup members, allegedly as resulting from the previous survey.

Morality Norm was manipulated by providing participants with bogus feedback about the evaluation of these strategies in terms of morality. In the *moral condition*, participants read that the majority of previously interviewed Southerners (i.e., ingroup members) had declared that of the two types of strategies, trying to advance the position of one's group is the more moral way to act compared to individual advancement. To enhance credibility of our manipulation, this evaluation was further explained with reference to justice as a central aspect of morality (Osswald, Greitemeyer, Fischer, & Frey, 2010; Leach et al., 2007). Specifically, it was noted that group position improvement represents a more appropriate way to ensure just outcomes for everybody. By contrast, in the *immoral condition* they were told that the other ingroup members had declared that trying to advance the position of one's group is an immoral way to act (compared to individual advancement). This position was further clarified by pointing out that collective level measures are less likely to ensure just outcomes for everybody.

Competence Norm was manipulated by providing participants with bogus feedback about the evaluation of these strategies in terms of competence. In the *smart condition*, participants read that the majority of previously interviewed Southerners (i.e., ingroup members) had declared that trying to advance the position of one's group is a smarter strategy than individual position improvement. The rationale provided for this evaluation was derived from conceptualizations of competence as individual efficiency or rationality (De Bruin & Van Lange, 2000; Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994; Wojciszke, 2005). That is, it was explained

by noting that compared to individual advancement, collective position improvement is a more efficient way to improve outcomes for several group members at the same time. By contrast, in the *stupid condition* they were told that the other ingroup members had declared that trying to advance the position of one's group is a stupid strategy. This was further clarified by stating that collective position improvement is a less efficient way to improve outcomes for individual group members. These manipulations were subsequently checked by asking participants to recall which strategy was favored by other ingroup members in terms of morality and competence (from 1 = *individual* to 9 = *collective strategy*).

**Dependent variables.** *Anticipated ingroup respect* was assessed by asking participants to indicate how they anticipated *other members of their group* to react when they opted for the normative (vs. counter-normative) strategy. In line with definitions of respect as indicating inclusion and value (Sleeboos et al., 2006; Smith & Tyler, 1997; Tyler & Lind, 1992), we asked participants to provide their responses on eight bipolar scales ("I think that they would: Disregard me-Regard me; Not value me-Value me; Exclude me-Include me; Reject me-Accept me; Shun me-Welcome me; Avoid me-Approach me; Ignore me-Appreciate me; Isolate me-Involve me";  $\alpha = .97$ ).

*Willingness to invest in collective status improvement* was assessed by asking participants to indicate to what extent *they would themselves* engage in each of six specific status improvement strategies that might help advance the position of their group (e.g. "Develop an employment program for the Middle-South"; see Appendix B), on a scale ranging from 1 (= *Absolutely not*) to 9 (= *Absolutely*). Their responses were averaged to construct a single measure indicating participants' willingness to invest in collective status improvement ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

*Willingness to invest in individual status improvement* was assessed by asking participants to indicate to what extent they would engage in each of four specific strategies

for individual status improvement (e.g. “Move to the North”; see Appendix B) on a scale ranging from 1 (= *Absolutely not*) to 9 (= *Absolutely*). Their responses were averaged to construct a single measure indicating participants’ willingness to invest in individual status improvement ( $\alpha = .65$ ).

*Bipolar choice of strategy* was assessed after measuring intentions to invest in specific individual and collective strategies. We emphasized that different types of strategies tend to be incompatible due to limited time and energy, so that in practice pursuing one type of strategy would likely go at the expense of the other. We then asked participants to indicate on a bipolar scale which one of these two types of strategies they would prefer if they had to choose one at the expense of the other (from 1 = *my own position* to 9 = *the position of the South as a whole*).

## Results and Discussion

### Manipulation checks.

As intended, analyzes of the manipulation checks indicated that both norm manipulations were effective. As a result of the Moral Norm manipulation, participants indicated that other ingroup members had evaluated collective status improvement as more moral in the *moral condition* ( $M = 6.37$ ;  $SD = 2.76$ ) than in the *immoral condition* ( $M = 3.43$ ;  $SD = 2.66$ ),  $F(1,80) = 24.13$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .23$ . In response to the Competence Norm manipulation, participants declared that other ingroup members had evaluated collective status improvement as smarter in the *smart condition* ( $M = 6.51$ ;  $SD = 2.45$ ) than in the *stupid condition* ( $M = 3.55$ ;  $SD = 2.62$ ),  $F(1,80) = 27.56$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .26$ .

Importantly, we tested whether each of these manipulations only influenced the focal check, and not the other, in order to rule out the possibility that the norm defined in terms of morality may have influenced inferred evaluations in terms of competence, and vice versa. This test confirmed that each manipulation only affected the intended check, and there was

no significant interaction between the two factors. With regard to the competence norm manipulation check, neither the effect of morality norm,  $F(1,78) = 0.94, p = .739$ , nor the interaction,  $F(1,78) = 0.94, p = .742$ , were significant. In the same vein, with regard to the morality norm manipulation check, neither the effect of competence norm,  $F(1,78) = 1.06, p = .543$ , nor the interaction,  $F(1,78) = 0.11, p = .973$ , were significant.

**Dependent variables.** To test our predictions, we performed a 2 *Competence Norm* (Smart vs. Stupid evaluation of collective strategies) X 2 *Morality Norm* (Moral vs. Immoral evaluation of collective strategies) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for each dependent variable<sup>1</sup>.

***Willingness to invest in collective status improvement.*** The ANOVA only revealed a main effect of Morality Norm,  $F(1,78) = 25.31, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .25$ , in line with Hypothesis 1a. The relevant means indicate that participants were more willing to invest in collective status improvement strategies when this was valued as moral by other ingroup members ( $M = 6.98; SD = 1.59$ ) than when the group had described collective status improvement as immoral ( $M = 4.86; SD = 2.19$ ). Neither the main effect of Competence Norm,  $F(1,78) = 0.008, p = .93$ , nor the interaction,  $F(1,78) = 2.19, p = .145$ , were significant.

***Willingness to invest in individual status improvement.*** For this measure too, the ANOVA only revealed a main effect of Morality Norm,  $F(1,78) = 10.98, p = .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .12$ , as predicted in Hypothesis 1b. Participants were more willing to invest in individual strategies for status improvement when this was valued as moral by other ingroup members ( $M = 6.98; SD = 1.59$ ) than when the group indicated that individual status improvement was immoral ( $M = 4.86; SD = 2.19$ ). Neither the main effect of Competence Norm,  $F(1,78) = 0.21, p = .648$ , nor the interaction,  $F(1,78) = 0.32, p = .575$ , were significant.

***Bipolar choice of strategy.*** When participants were asked to choose between individual vs. collective status improvement, results again supported predictions made in Hypothesis 1. The

ANOVA only revealed a significant main effect of Morality Norm,  $F(1,78) = 7.79, p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .09$ . This effect indicates that participants were more inclined to choose collective status improvement—at the expense of individual status improvement—when this was considered the more moral course of action ( $M = 4.90; SD = 3.01$ ), compared to when the ingroup considered this immoral ( $M = 3.21; SD = 2.34$ ). Again, neither the main effect of Competence Norm,  $F(1,78) = 0.48, p = .491$ , nor the interaction,  $F(1,78) = 0.14, p = .708$ , were significant.

***Anticipated ingroup respect.*** The ANOVA revealed a main effect of Morality Norm,  $F(1,78) = 38.21, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .33$ . In line with Hypothesis 2a, participants anticipated more ingroup respect when they would opt for the strategy that was considered moral by other ingroup members ( $M = 6.05; SD = 2.17$ ) than when they would adopt the strategy that was considered immoral ( $M = 3.29; SD = 1.81$ ). Behaving in line with a competence-based norm was not seen as consequential for the amount of ingroup respect anticipated. That is, neither the main effect of Competence Norm,  $F(1,78) = 0.14, p = .814$ , nor the interaction,  $F(1,78) = 0.01, p = .984$ , were significant.

***Mediation analyses.*** Mediation analyses were conducted with the stepwise regression approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986), to examine the prediction that anticipated ingroup respect mediates the relation between morality norms and choice of behavioral strategy.

***Collective Strategies:*** As also observed in the ANOVA's reported above, Morality Norm ( $-1 = \text{immoral}; 1 = \text{moral}$ ) significantly predicted willingness to invest in collective strategies ( $\beta = .49, p < .001$ ) as well as anticipated ingroup respect ( $\beta = .57, p < .001$ ). Additionally, anticipated ingroup respect reliably predicted participants' willingness to invest in collective strategies,  $\beta = .61, p < .001$ . When Morality Norm and anticipated ingroup respect were entered simultaneously as predictors of willingness to invest in collective strategies, the effect of anticipated ingroup respect was retained ( $\beta = .49, p < .001$ ) while the

direct effect of Morality Norm was no longer reliable ( $\beta = .19, p = .084$ ; Sobel test:  $z = 4.64, p < .001$ )<sup>2</sup>. This indicates that the effects of morality-based ingroup norms on participants' willingness to invest in collective strategies were fully mediated by anticipated ingroup respect, as predicted in Hypothesis 2b.

*Individual Strategies:* Consistent with results from the ANOVA's reported above, Morality Norm (-1 = *immoral*; 1 = *moral*) significantly predicted both the willingness to invest in individual strategies ( $\beta = .35, p = .01$ ) and anticipated ingroup respect ( $\beta = .57, p < .001$ ). Furthermore, anticipated ingroup respect reliably predicted participants' willingness to invest in individual strategies,  $\beta = -.49, p < .001$ . Finally, when Morality Norm and anticipated ingroup respect were entered simultaneously as predictors, the effect of anticipated ingroup respect was retained ( $\beta = -.42, p < .001$ ) while the direct effect of Morality Norm was no longer reliable ( $\beta = .11, p = .357$ ; Sobel test:  $z = 4.63, p < .001$ ). This indicates that the effect of morality-based ingroup norms on participants' willingness to invest in individual strategies was also fully mediated by anticipated ingroup respect, which further supports Hypothesis 2b.

*Bipolar Choice:* In line with ANOVA results reported above, Morality Norm (-1 = *immoral*; 1 = *moral*) significantly predicted both the bipolar choice of strategy ( $\beta = .30, p = .01$ ) and anticipated ingroup respect ( $\beta = .57, p < .001$ ). Furthermore, anticipated ingroup respect reliably predicted participants' bipolar strategy choice,  $\beta = .59, p < .001$ . Finally, when Morality Norm and anticipated ingroup respect were simultaneously entered as predictors, the effect of anticipated ingroup respect on bipolar choice of strategy was retained ( $\beta = .62, p < .001$ ) while the direct effect of Morality Norm was no longer reliable ( $\beta = -.05, p = .652$ ; Sobel test:  $z = 4.50, p < .001$ ). Thus, as predicted, the effect of morality-based ingroup norms on participants' bipolar choice of collective vs. individual strategies was fully mediated by the level of ingroup respect they anticipated to receive when adhering to the

moral norm, as predicted in Hypothesis 2b.

## Study 2

Study 2 examined whether the tendency to behave in line with moral norms is generic, or should be ascribed to group-specific identity concerns. In this study we focus on moral norms only. Participants were simultaneously presented with ingroup (South of Italy) as well as outgroup (North of Italy) norms, with both groups either advocating the same strategy or ingroup and outgroup norms stating opposing preferences, depending on experimental conditions. In line with our rationale, we expected only moral ingroup norms to affect group members' behavior – regardless of whether or not the outgroup approved of this strategy - and this effect should be mediated by anticipated ingroup respect.

### Method

**Design and participants.** In this study, we adopted a 2 (*Ingroup Norm: Moral vs. Immoral evaluation of collective strategies*) X 2 (*Outgroup Norm: Moral vs. Immoral evaluation of collective strategies*) between participants design. Participants received information about ingroup as well as outgroup norms that were both defined in terms of moral judgments.

A total of 69 students from the University of Chieti-Pescara took part in this experiment (46 women, 19 men, 4 unknown; evenly distributed across conditions). Their mean age was 22.08 ( $SD = 4.68$ ). Between 17 and 18 participants filled each of the four cells of the design. Each session lasted approximately half an hour, after which participants were thanked and fully debriefed.

**Procedure and measures.** Participants were recruited during a Psychology class. As in Study1, they were informed about the fictitious results of a previous survey, indicating the ingroup (i.e., Middle-South of Italy) as having relatively low status, by referring to a specific comparison outgroup (i.e., Northern Italians) in terms of a employment opportunities. They

were then presented simultaneously with ingroup (South of Italy) as well as outgroup (North of Italy) morality-based norms. *Ingroup Norm* was manipulated by providing participants with bogus feedback about the evaluation of collective (vs. individual) strategies in terms of morality, as in Study 1. *Outgroup Norm* was manipulated in the same way, only the evaluations of collective (compared to individual) status improvement strategies allegedly were provided by a sample of previously interviewed Northerners—representing the high status outgroup relevant in this context.

These manipulations were checked with two questions, asking participants to recall which type of strategy had been evaluated as more moral by other Southerners (the ingroup) and other Northerners (the outgroup) on a bipolar scale (1 = *individual* to 9 = *collective*). *Ingroup identification* was assessed as in Study 1 ( $M = 5.99$ ;  $SD = 1.74$ ;  $\alpha = .83$ ). Again, a one-way ANOVA showed that identification was equal across conditions,  $F(3,64) = 0.55$ ,  $p = .638$ , and including ingroup identification as a covariate did not change the results. Thus, effects of our manipulations cannot be attributed to differences between conditions in ingroup identification. *Anticipated ingroup respect* ( $\alpha = .96$ ), *Willingness to invest in collective status improvement* ( $\alpha = .86$ ), *Willingness to invest in individual status improvement* ( $\alpha = .73$ ), and the *bipolar choice* measure were assessed with the same items as in Study 1.

## Results and Discussion

**Manipulation checks.** Both manipulations were successful. As a result of the Ingroup Norm manipulation, participants indicated that other ingroup members evaluated collective status improvement as more moral in the moral condition ( $M = 7.18$ ;  $SD = 2.26$ ) than in the immoral condition ( $M = 3.51$ ;  $SD = 2.62$ ),  $F(1,67) = 38.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .37$ . Similarly, the Outgroup Norm manipulation caused participants to indicate that outgroup members evaluated collective status improvement as more moral in the moral condition ( $M = 6.03$ ;  $SD = 2.63$ ) than in the immoral condition ( $M = 2.76$ ;  $SD = 1.89$ ),  $F(1,67) = 34.86$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 =$

.34. Importantly, the effect size was equal in both cases. Furthermore, we were able to rule out that the ingroup norm manipulation influenced the perceived evaluation of these strategies by the outgroup and vice versa. That is, each manipulation only affected the intended check, and there was no significant interaction between the two factors. With regard to the ingroup norm manipulation check, neither the effect of outgroup norm,  $F(1,65) = 2.12$ ,  $p = .15$ , nor the interaction,  $F(1,65) = 0.12$ ,  $p = .734$ , were significant. Similarly, with regard to the outgroup norm manipulation check, neither the effect of ingroup norm,  $F(1,65) = 1.75$ ,  $p = .191$ , nor the interaction,  $F(1,65) = 0.35$ ,  $p = .554$ , were significant.

**Dependent variables.** We performed a 2 (Ingroup Norm: Moral vs. Immoral evaluation of collective strategies) X 2 (Outgroup Norm: Moral vs. Immoral evaluation of collective strategies) for each dependent variable.

***Willingness to invest in collective status improvement.*** A main effect of Ingroup Norm was observed,  $F(1,65) = 152.24$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .70$ , indicating that participants were more willing to invest in collective strategies for status improvement when collective status improvement was valued as moral by other ingroup members ( $M = 7.86$ ;  $SD = 0.75$ ) than when the ingroup indicated this was immoral ( $M = 4.51$ ;  $SD = 1.46$ ). The main effect of Outgroup Norm was not significant,  $F(1,65) = 1.96$ ,  $p = .19$ , indicating that moral evaluations by outgroup members did not affect participants' willingness to engage in collective status improvement strategies. This is in line with Hypothesis 3b. The two-way interaction was not reliable,  $F(1,65) = 4.00$ ,  $p = .068$ .<sup>3</sup>

***Willingness to invest in individual status improvement.*** We found a main effect of Ingroup Norm,  $F(1,65) = 14.37$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .18$ , revealing that participants were more willing to invest in individual strategies for status improvement when individual status improvement was valued as the more moral strategy by other ingroup members ( $M = 7.46$ ;  $SD = 1.06$ ) than when the ingroup characterized this as immoral ( $M = 6.12$ ;  $SD = 1.76$ ).

Neither the main effect of Outgroup Norm,  $F(1,65) = 0.72, p = .929$ , nor the interaction,  $F(1,65) = 0.91, p = .722$ , were significant, providing further support for Hypothesis 3b.

***Bipolar choice of strategy.*** Participants' choices between collective vs. individual status improvement only revealed a significant main effect of Ingroup Norm,  $F(1,65) = 30.77, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .32$ . The relevant means indicate that participants were more likely to opt for collective status improvement when this was valued as moral by other ingroup members ( $M = 6.03; SD = 2.97$ ) compared to when the ingroup considered this immoral ( $M = 2.77; SD = 1.75$ ). Again, neither the main effect of Outgroup Norm,  $F(1,65) = 1.09, p = .292$ , nor the interaction,  $F(1,78) = 0.03, p = .697$ , were significant, in line with predictions in Hypothesis 3b.

***Anticipated ingroup respect.***

For this dependent variable we found a significant effect of Ingroup Norm,  $F(1,65) = 197.22, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .75$ . As predicted in Hypothesis 3a, the relevant means indicate that participants anticipated more ingroup respect when they would engage in the strategy that was valued as more moral ( $M = 6.98; SD = 1.39$ ) rather than immoral ( $M = 2.71; SD = 1.12$ ) by other ingroup members. Therefore, as in Study 1 and in line with predictions, participants thought they would receive more ingroup respect if they behaved in line with the moral ingroup norm. Neither the main effect of Outgroup Norm,  $F(1,65) = 0.70, p = .388$ , nor the interaction,  $F(1,65) = 1.10, p = .822$ , were significant, as anticipated.

***Mediation analyses.*** Mediation analyses were conducted with the stepwise regression approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986), to examine the prediction that anticipated ingroup respect mediates the relation between morality norms and choice of behavioral strategy.

*Collective Strategies:* As also observed in the ANOVA's reported above, Ingroup Norm ( $-1 = \text{immoral}; 1 = \text{moral}$ ) significantly predicted both the willingness to invest in collective strategies ( $\beta = .83, p < .001$ ) and anticipated ingroup respect ( $\beta = .86, p < .001$ ).

Furthermore, anticipated ingroup respect reliably predicted participants' willingness to invest in collective strategies,  $\beta = .79, p < .001$ . When Ingroup Norm and anticipated ingroup respect were entered simultaneously as predictors, both the effect of anticipated respect ( $\beta = .30, p < .001$ ) and the effect of Ingroup Norm were retained ( $\beta = .57, p < .001$ ). However, a Sobel test confirmed that there also was a significant indirect effect of ingroup norm on willingness to invest in collective strategies through anticipated respect ( $z = 8.39, p < .001$ ). This offers evidence for partial mediation, and indicates that the morality-based ingroup norm affects the endorsement of collective strategies not only directly, but also through a reliable indirect effect mediated by anticipated ingroup respect.

*Individual Strategies:* In line with results of the ANOVA's reported above, Ingroup Norm (-1 = *immoral*; 1 = *moral*) significantly predicted both the willingness to invest in individual strategies ( $\beta = -.43, p < .001$ ) and anticipated ingroup respect ( $\beta = .86, p < .001$ ). Furthermore, anticipated ingroup respect reliably predicted participants' willingness to invest in individual strategies,  $\beta = -.55, p < .001$ . Finally, when Ingroup Norm and anticipated ingroup respect were simultaneously entered as predictors, the effect of anticipated ingroup respect remained significant ( $\beta = -.70, p < .001$ ) while the direct effect of Ingroup Norm was no longer reliable ( $\beta = .18, p = .372$ ; Sobel test:  $z = -5.00, p < .001$ ). This indicates that the effect of morality-based ingroup norms on participants' willingness to invest in individual strategies was fully mediated by anticipated ingroup respect, as predicted.

*Bipolar choice of strategy:* In line with the ANOVA's reported above, Ingroup Norm (-1 = *immoral*; 1 = *moral*) significantly predicted both the bipolar choice of strategy ( $\beta = .56, p < .001$ ) and anticipated ingroup respect ( $\beta = .86, p < .001$ ). Furthermore, anticipated ingroup respect reliably predicted participants' bipolar strategy choice,  $\beta = .61, p < .001$ . Finally, when Ingroup Norm and anticipated ingroup respect were simultaneously entered as predictors, the effect of anticipated ingroup respect remained significant ( $\beta = .49, p = .01$ ),

while the direct effect of Ingroup Norm was no longer reliable ( $\beta = .13, p = .497$ ). A Sobel test ( $z = 5.79, p < .001$ ) confirmed that there was a significant indirect effect of ingroup norm on bipolar choice of strategy through anticipated ingroup respect, indicating full mediation as predicted.

### **General Discussion**

With this research, we connect current insights on moral psychology to existing theory and research on group processes and social identity. Previous work on morality has primarily examined what people consider to be moral or immoral and how this affects individual decision making in moral dilemmas. However, our explicit aim was to focus on the social identity implications of moral behavior, and to address the possibility that different groups can have different moral norms based on specific values they share, instead of examining the effects of universal moral convictions. This enables us to develop novel insights both on the effects of group norms in social identity maintenance, and on the social implications of shared moral values.

### **Contribution and Theoretical Implications**

The two studies reported here found empirical support for our theoretical analysis according to which shared moral values constitute a central aspect of people's social identities. The awareness of what other group members consider moral behavior affected people's willingness to engage in different behavioral strategies, as well as their bipolar choice of status improvement strategy. No comparable effect of ingroup norms was found when the behavior that was approved by the group was evaluated in terms of competence. This was the case despite the fact that the competence norm manipulation was successful and effect sizes of the manipulation checks indicated that the participants were equally aware of both types of norms.

Results of both studies extend previous findings (Ellemers et al., 2008) because they

indicate that people see adherence to moral ingroup norms as a way to earn ingroup respect, and this is why they are willing to act in accordance with these norms. This turned out to be the case regardless of whether individualistic or collectivistic behavior was considered moral by the group. This corroborates our reasoning that norm adherence is driven by the awareness of moral values that characterize the ingroup, and does not depend on the specific nature of the behavior prescribed by these norms. It also enables us to exclude alternative explanations in terms of intra-group interdependence or instrumentality of cooperative behavior in groups—that tend to be favored in biological and evolutionary accounts of moral behavior.

Moral norms expressed by the high status outgroup did not have comparable effects on individual behavioral choices. Again, this was the case despite our observation that the outgroup norm manipulation was equally effective as the manipulation of the ingroup norm. This contributes to existing insights, and substantiates our analysis in terms of social identities instead of interdependence concerns. In fact, the null-effect of outgroup norm is theoretically meaningful, because in this context the norms of the higher status group indicate which behavior is favored by those currently holding superior societal status. One might argue that—because of their higher social status—the judgments of this group should be more highly valued than ingroup judgments. That is, the high status group ultimately determines the chances that any attempts at status improvement undertaken by members of the low status group are likely to succeed, for instance because they have to accept upwardly mobile individuals in their midst or need to approve broader societal changes. Because the judgments of high status group members do matter, if only for instrumental reasons, it is all the more meaningful that participants nevertheless preferred to behave in line with salient ingroup norms. This illustrates the significance of distinct group identities and the importance of ingroup respect. Moreover, previous findings (Leach et al., 2007) indicates that morality is fundamental to ingroup identity, irrespective of group status, so we are inclined to believe

that there is no reason to expect status to moderate the presented effects, nor that the lack of outgroup norm effect is due to higher status group stereotyping principally in terms of competence.

In sum, when information about moral ingroup and outgroup norms is provided simultaneously, people prefer to behave in line with moral ingroup norms, as they consider this to be most relevant for the respect they anticipate to receive from other ingroup members. This confirms our contention that moral norm adherence is a way to express and enact one's social identity, rather than reflecting a more generic desire to seek moral approval from others—even if they have higher status.

In this research, different group norms were induced by indicating how others had generally evaluated a particular type of strategy for status improvement. The tendency to enact these norms was assessed by asking participants to indicate their willingness to engage in different specific behaviors that would be in line with these types of strategies. This excludes the possibility that participants simply reproduced the norm information that they received, because the norm manipulation did not directly map onto the way in which participants' responses were assessed. Furthermore, participants not only opted for strategies that were in line with what the group endorsed, but also internalized the further implications of the group norm that was provided, as they inferred that other types of strategies would be disapproved by the group. Importantly, this was the case both when they indicated their choice of strategy on the bipolar measure and when they could freely indicate their willingness to engage in each of specific behavioral strategies.

Another important feature of this research is that we examined the impact of moral judgments on individual behavior, while disentangling this from the specific nature of the behavior that was endorsed by moral norms. This extends previous work in which moral behavior tends to be equated with cooperation, altruism, or mutual helping. By keeping

constant the specific behavioral strategy endorsed by the ingroup while varying the extent to which this same behavior was considered moral or immoral by others, we were able to demonstrate that the effects observed were caused by the social identity implications of enacting moral values shared by the ingroup, and that this did not depend on the type of behavior that was approved by these values.

Finally, we see the nature of the groups examined (inhabitants of the South vs. North of Italy) and the realistic nature of the focal situation (actual differences in employment prospects) and the behavioral strategies examined as a strong point of this research. That is, we examined existing social categories, and assessed people's willingness to enact group norms despite their prior knowledge of (and their a priori preferences for) these very real and consequential ways in which they might try to improve their current standing in society. Furthermore, compared to many laboratory simulations, the format and context in which participants completed these measures makes it highly unlikely that participants felt directly accountable to others for the choices they made. That is, their answers were provided anonymously, making it more likely that we assessed their actual desire to enact group norms, instead of tapping more superficial or public displays of compliance.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Because our aim was to disentangle different types of norms in order to make a theoretical point, the situation we examined may be seen as quite artificial. From an experimental point of view, it is important that we succeeded in creating orthogonal norm manipulations, as this enables us to draw unambiguous theoretical conclusions. Indeed, the manipulation checks confirm that the moral norm manipulation did not spill over into the perceived competence of the normative behavior, and that the manipulation of ingroup norm did not affect outgroup norm perceptions. However, in more naturally occurring situations it is very rare to have available such explicit and complete information about the behavior that

is endorsed by different groups, or about specific competence or morality judgments on which these norms are based. In the absence of antagonistic intergroup relations people are likely to assume that the behavior endorsed by the outgroup might also be valued by the ingroup. Likewise, they have no reason to doubt that the behavior that the ingroup approves as competent will also be considered moral. Future research might address whether and how people actually make such inferences about different aspects of behavioral norms. It might be interesting to examine for instance whether knowledge about ingroup norms affects the inferences people make about outgroup norms – either in the form of assimilation or contrast effects. Future research might also assess whether such effects are moderated by status or power differences between the groups. Likewise, it may be worthwhile to learn more about the likelihood that people infer morality judgments from information they have about the perceived competence of particular behaviors, and vice versa.

An important aim of the current research was to examine the psychological process underlying the effect of moral ingroup norms on the behavioral choices of individual group members. We found converging support for our prediction that anticipated ingroup respect plays an important role in this process. However, our mediation hypothesis was not fully supported, in that the effect of moral ingroup norms on the willingness to engage in collective strategies was only partially mediated in Study 2. We note that a direct effect of the moral ingroup norm in addition to the indirect effect we predicted only emerged for one out of three dv's, in one of the two studies conducted. Thus, there is converging support for the predicted psychological process across different measures and in different studies. Nevertheless, future research might further examine whether alternative or additional considerations play a role besides anticipated ingroup respect.

Finally, both studies reported here focused on a specific intergroup context, and on the choice for different status improvement strategies as the focal behavior addressed by

group norms. In the future, it might be of interest to determine whether these effects of moral group norms are limited to behavioral choices that directly impact on the group and its members, or may also extend to other domains, where individual behavioral choices are less likely to reflect upon other members of the group. In a similar vein, because the measure we used captured participants' initial choice of strategy, it might be of interest to explore how robust these effects are over time. That is, whether people are also more likely to persist in behaviors that are endorsed by moral ingroup norms than in the case of behaviors that are approved by other types of norms.

### **Conclusion**

With the present research we connect different theoretical perspectives and research traditions, and have gained more insight into when and why moral values are likely to impact on the behavior of individual group members. We have found evidence in support of our analysis that people are motivated to enact moral values shared by the ingroup because they see this as a way to receive or maintain ingroup respect. This has important implications for current theories on moral psychology and social identity, and gives rise to several new and intriguing questions.

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## Footnotes

1. The ingroup examined included both participants with relatively low societal status (South of Italy) as well as those with a relatively neutral position in society (Middle-South of Italy). Thus we conducted additional analyses to ascertain that the effects we found did not depend on the status position of participants. These confirmed that our findings are robust across these different types of ingroups and participants, and are not specific for groups with low societal status.

2. Given the relatively strong relation between the mediator and the dependent variable we conducted a PCA, which confirmed that anticipated ingroup respect and the willingness to invest in collective strategies can be considered separate constructs, which together account for 82% of the variance in the individual items. Additionally, when we examined a reversed mediation model, this fits the data less well, as the direct effect of moral norm (IV) on anticipated ingroup respect (DV) remained significant after controlling for willingness to invest in collective strategies as a potential mediator.

3. Because of the relatively large F-value observed for the two-way interaction, we checked whether the main effect of Ingroup Norm emerged in both Outgroup Norm conditions. This proved to be the case (both  $p$ 's  $<.001$ ).

## Appendix A. Manipulation of group norms.

A previous survey was conducted by the National Institute for Statistics in 2006, in order to evaluate and compare the actual occupational possibilities in different areas of Italy. That research demonstrated that the economical situational was very different comparing the Middle-South and the North of Italy. In particular, that research highlighted that the Middle-South was drastically disadvantaged, in terms of an higher percentage of precarious workers compared to the North (85% vs. 20%), very lower salary (700 € vs. 1,300 €) and triple percentage of unemployment (65% vs. 19%). In addition, the survey highlighted how there are two different ways to deal with these differences in opportunities. One is to find a way to improve one's personal position or prospects, despite being from the Middle-South. In this vein, different possibilities are, for instance, moving to the North; getting a higher level of education or finding people who are willing to help a person to get a job, and so on. An alternative, is to try to redress this difference in opportunities between people living in the Middle-South and in the North. Here too, different courses of action could possible achieve this, e.g., becoming politically active, and lobbying for additional government support for the Middle-South; setting up a program to facilitate employment in the Middle-South; organizing support for people to help each other develop the Middle-South and so on. To summarize, that survey classified all the possible courses of action in two different and in a way opposite strategies to deal with the disadvantaged situation, namely the strategy activated in order to better one's personal position vs. the strategy activated in order to better the position of the Middle-South as a whole. Choosing for a strategy would obviously imply abandoning the other.

[A priori evaluation of individual vs. collective strategies]

In the 2006 survey, a representative sample of 3000 Southerners have evaluated the strategies activated in order to better the position of the Middle-South as better (*vs. worse*) than the

strategies activated in order to better one's personal position both in terms of morality and competence. That is, the strategies aiming at bettering the position of the Middle-South have been evaluated as more moral (*vs. immoral*) and smarter (*vs. more stupid*) than the strategies activated to better one's personal position. In fact, the majority of interviewed Southerners declared that trying to advance the position of one's group is the more moral (*vs. an immoral*) way to act compared to individual advancement, because the group position improvement represents a more appropriate way to ensure just outcomes for everybody (*vs. because collective level measures are less likely to ensure just outcomes for everybody*).

Moreover, the majority of previously interviewed Southerners declared that trying to advance the position of one's group is a smarter (*vs. stupid*) strategy than individual position improvement because compared to individual advancement, collective position improvement is a more efficient way to improve outcomes for several group members at the same time (*vs. is a less efficient way to improve outcomes for individual group members*).

Appendix B. Items assessing collective strategies and individual strategies, respectively.

Collective Strategies

1. Develop an employment program for the Middle-South;
2. Create a social network to facilitate employment in the Middle-South;
3. Becoming politically active;
4. Develop an employment program that qualifies the Middle-South for support from the European Union;
5. Lobbying for additional government support for the Middle-South;
6. Participate in a committee investigating the differences in the average salaries between North and Middle-South, in order to reduce such differences;

Individual Strategies:

1. Move to the North to find a job;
2. Getting a higher level of education;
3. Find people who are willing to help you to get a job;
4. Chose a profession in which there are more work opportunities.