



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Journal of Intercultural Relations

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel

Moral foundations of positive and negative intergroup behavior: Moral exclusion fills the gap

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Moral foundations
Moral exclusion
Intergroup relations
Intergroup behavior

ABSTRACT

Personal criteria about the morally appropriate forms of behavior can be crucial when coming into contact with members of culturally different outgroups. In our study, we investigated whether moral exclusion mediates the relationship between moral foundations and positive and negative behavioral intentions toward Muslim people. Our aim was to identify the psychological mechanism that explains why particular people intend to harm (or not harm), and help (or not help) members of particular outgroups. Using survey data from an online questionnaire, structural equation modeling and mediation analysis showed that individualizing moral foundations had a negative relationship with negative behavioral intentions and a positive relationship with positive intentions towards Muslim people. Binding moral foundations showed the opposite connection with behavioral intentions. The relationship between moral foundations and intergroup behavioral intentions was mediated by moral exclusion. These results imply that moral intuitions form the basis of behavioral intentions toward a culturally different outgroup both directly and by influencing whether or not the outgroup is worthy of moral concern.

Introduction

History books will most likely mention the post-2015 period in Europe as the time after “The Big Migration Crisis”. In 2015 and 2016 about 2.6 million refugees applied for asylum after reaching the territory of EU-member countries. Most refugees came from Muslim countries escaping from Middle Eastern and North African conflict zones (Eurostat, 2017). This meant an enormous challenge and source of tension in most European countries, not only in those countries that actually accepted refugees, but also in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). These countries had practically no previous experience with immigration, especially immigration from Muslim countries, while the general level of xenophobia is higher in these countries than in Western Europe. The appropriate way to respond to the crisis became a highly controversial issue in CEE countries. The question was framed mainly as a moral dilemma between the responsibility to defend the country from mass-immigration and the responsibility to help people in need. Considering the moral nature of this dilemma, the current research aims to reveal how people’s concepts about right and wrong predict specific forms of behavior towards a culturally different outgroup.

Social psychological research on intergroup relations and behavior has described at least two important factors regarding morality that influence behavioral preferences towards outgroups. Firstly, people behave on the basis of their personal *moral intuitions* toward another person: what they feel to be morally right or morally wrong towards the members of that particular group in that particular situation. (e.g. Graham et al., 2013; Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013). Secondly, behavior toward another person can also depend on

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the definition of one's moral community, that is, the demarcation of the boundaries within which personal moral values and rules apply. People outside these boundaries are not regarded as worthy of moral considerations (e.g. Crimston, Bain, Hornsey, & Bastian, 2016; Opatow, 1990, 2012; Passini & Morselli, 2017).

By linking these two factors, our aim is to supplement existing research about the moral aspects of intergroup behavior. Building upon *moral foundations theory* (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt & Graham, 2007, 2009) and research on *moral exclusion* (e.g. Opatow, 1990, 2012; Passini & Morselli, 2017), we suggest that moral intuitions and the exclusion of a culturally different outgroup do not affect intergroup behavioral intentions independently from each other. Instead, we suggest that certain moral intuitions are related to the expansiveness of one's moral community, and either expose or defend culturally different outgroups from the risk of moral exclusion. We suggest that this kind of moral exclusion mediates the effect of one's moral intuitions on intergroup behavioral intentions.

Western societies – including Hungary – have treated Muslim immigrants and refugees both by unimaginable hostility (Dearden & McIntyre, 2017), and by offering help in the form of donations, volunteer helping, and political advocacy (Frayer, 2015). Positive and negative intergroup behavior are associated with common, but antagonistic psychological mechanism, and associated with different intergroup stereotypes and attitudes (as suggested by e.g. the stereotype content model, Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007). However, engagement in pro-social behavior, such as volunteerism or social change oriented collective action, cannot be explained simply by the reversed mechanisms of intergroup hostility (for the motivations of collective action engagement see van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, for an overview of volunteer motivations, see Penner, 2002; Snyder & Omoto, 2008). Therefore, we aim to supplement previous research by focusing on the psychological mechanisms of both negative and positive intergroup behavior in the context of moral decisions.

Moral foundations and intergroup relations

In the recent years, several attempts have been made to map and integrate the values and motives of moral judgments and intuitions (e.g. Graham et al., 2011; Grey, Young, & Waytz, 2012; Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013; Rai & Fiske, 2011). One of the most fruitful branches of this undertaking is undoubtedly the moral foundations theory (Graham et al., 2011, 2013; Haidt & Graham, 2007, 2009).

According to moral foundations theory, moral intuitions are primarily determined by personal moral foundations. These are innate, modular foundations of moral reasoning with evolutionary roots but also shaped by the social and cultural environment. The theory maps five moral foundations that are related to five different domains of morality: care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and sanctity. Care and fairness are often mentioned as *individualizing foundations*, and loyalty, authority, and sanctity constitute the category of *binding foundations* (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Nilsson, Erlandsson, & Västfjäll, 2016).

The main evolutionary function of both forms of foundations is to protect the community from individual selfishness. However, they serve this function by essentially different mechanisms. Individualizing foundations achieve this by direct disapproval and prohibition of doing harm to others, and by making people respect the rights of others. In contrast, binding foundations protect communities by binding people to cohesive groups and institutions, and by creating well-defined roles within these groups and their institutional systems (for a review see Graham et al., 2013).

It follows from the characteristics of moral foundations that individualizing foundations make people take others' well-being into consideration regardless of their group membership, and binding foundations make them consider the interests and intactness of the ingroup first. This has important consequences for intergroup attitudes and behavior. Individualizing moral foundations foster helping intentions towards outgroups in need, while binding foundations are negatively related to prosocial intentions if the beneficiaries are outgroup members (Nilsson et al., 2016; Smith, Aquino, Koleva, & Graham, 2014). Individualizing foundations are negatively, and binding foundations are positively associated with intergroup prejudice (Hadarics & Kende, 2017b; Kugler, Jost, & Noorbaloochi, 2014; Low & Wui, 2016; Van de Vyver, Houston, Abrams, & Vasiljevic, 2016). Furthermore, people with strong binding and weak individualizing foundations tend to perceive culturally different outgroups as more threatening (Hadarics & Kende, 2017a), they are more willing to display discriminatory behavior towards them (Kugler et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2014), and prefer more aggressive and less cooperative conflict resolution strategies in international conflicts (Kertzer, Powers, Rathbun, & Iyer, 2014).

Moral exclusion and intergroup relations

Although it is clear that the two overarching dimensions of moral foundations have a consistent relationship with intergroup attitudes towards culturally different outgroups, the underlying mechanism of this relationship is less clear. For specific intergroup behavioral intentions, a decision is made about the moral status of the target group. This decision about moral exclusion or inclusion determines whether a particular form of behavior towards the target group is perceived as morally appropriate or not. In other words, moral exclusion creates a link between moral intuitions and intergroup behavior.

The concept of *moral exclusion* suggests that our moral standards, values, and considerations only apply to those within our moral community (Opatow, 1990). People do not feel the same moral responsibility towards everyone. Most importantly, they define the group of people who belong to their moral community, and therefore they are within their personal *scope of justice* (Deutsch, 1973; Opatow, 1990). Members of one's moral community deserve the treatment based on basic moral principles and rules of justice. Members of one's moral community have the right for fair treatment and their entitlement for support is acknowledged and respected. In contrast, the morally excluded can be treated immorally as they are outside the moral community, and therefore they are excluded from this personal scope of justice (e.g. Deutsch, 1973; Opatow, 1990, 1993, 1995, 2012; Staub, 1989). For this reason,

moral exclusion can be an essential underpinning of the most severe forms of intergroup discrimination and violence (see Lima-Nunes, Pereira, & Correia, 2013a; Opatow, 2012; Staub, 1990).

Intergroup threat and psychological distance can be the primary sources of moral exclusion. Outgroup members are actively excluded from the boundaries of moral concerns when they are perceived as threatening to the well-being of the ingroup. However, moral exclusion can also be based on the absence of identification with the other group. The lack of identification with the group is manifested in indifference and the assumption that one has no moral obligations towards the members of the distant group (Lima-Nunes, Pereira, & Correia, 2013b; Olson, Cheung, Conway, Hutchison, & Hafer, 2011; Opatow, 1990, 1993).

In accordance with these two main reasons for moral exclusion, Olson et al. (2011) argue that the concept of moral exclusion refers to two distinct mechanisms. In the first mechanism, moral exclusion refers to the belief that a moral principle of justice does not apply to the target. It mostly occurs when people fail or refuse to recognize the moral responsibilities towards the target. According to the second mechanism, moral exclusion also occurs when the target is considered to deserve the negative treatment, or in other words, moral exclusion and subsequent mistreatment is justified by the perceived misbehavior of the target. In this case, negative behavior is based on the moral principle of deservingness.

Consequently, culturally different outgroups might be especially at risk of moral exclusion, since their dissimilar cultural background can be the source of both perceived psychological distance and a sense of threat to the norms and values of the ingroup. For instance, Coryn and Borshuk (2006) found that moral exclusion of Muslims was often justified by perceiving Muslims as potential terrorists and malevolent enemies who threaten American society. Passini and Morselli (2017) found that moral exclusion strongly correlated with both blatant and subtle prejudice against immigrants, furthermore, respondents with a higher level of general group-based moral exclusion reported a greater subjective social distance from outgroups in general. According to Lima-Nunes et al. (2013a), prejudice against immigrants was a strong predictor of moral exclusion, which served as a direct antecedent of discriminative behavioral intentions.

Research question and hypotheses

We have seen that both moral foundations and the moral exclusion of a culturally different outgroup influence intergroup attitudes and intergroup behavior, but we also presume that the influence of these two characteristics are not independent from each other. Our hypothesis is that the individual pattern of moral foundations determines the exclusion of culturally different outgroup members from one's personal scope of justice. We suggest that binding moral foundations constrict the scope of justice to the members of the ingroup to strengthen its cohesion and intactness. Consequently, people with strong binding moral intuitions do not feel obliged to take the well-being of outgroup members into consideration. Furthermore, people who decide upon the rightness of an act based on whether it threatens the cohesion and norms of the ingroup, are more likely to perceive the behavior of a culturally different outgroup members as threatening, and therefore regard the moral exclusion of the outgroup justified and appropriate.

In contrast, people with strong individualizing moral foundations are expected to be more willing to accept members of a culturally dissimilar outgroup and consider them entitled to morally appropriate treatment. As individualizing moral foundations make people realize the injustice of prejudice against others purely based on their group-membership, it is also likely that people endorsing these moral intuitions will recognize the suffering caused by prejudice, and therefore feel an increasing sense of moral responsibility towards them.

We therefore hypothesized that individualizing moral foundations would be positively associated with positive behavioral intentions that aim to promote the well-being of a culturally different outgroup, and negatively associated with negative behavioral intentions that put the outgroup at a disadvantage. In contrast, binding moral foundations were expected to show the opposite relationships with intergroup behavioral intentions. We also hypothesized that moral exclusion of the target group would mediate the effect of moral foundations on intergroup behavioral intentions. The importance of revealing this connection is that we can make more accurate predictions, and therefore design more effective interventions if we understand that people not only behave differently toward culturally distant outgroups based on their moral intuitions – because they either focus on the well-being of their ingroup or show solidarity with people in need – but also because they perceive the intergroup relationship entirely differently.

The study

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a survey to reveal whether respondents' moral intuitions were related to their willingness to promote and/or to fight against the interests of Muslim people, and whether the moral exclusion of Muslims mediated this relationship. Since the beginning of the European migrant crisis, the effect of migration from Muslim countries has become a prominent topic in Hungarian public discourse. Much of this discourse has been about the security, the economic, and the symbolic threat that Muslim people represents to Europe and to Hungary in particular. Threat was at the center of an anti-immigrant campaign that the government initiated even before the refugee crisis of 2015, a part of which was a referendum in 2016 about immigration (Simonovits & Bernáth, 2016). Despite the fact, that Muslim immigration remains a hot topic in public discourse, the country has practically no Muslim population (it is under 0.1% according to Pew Research Center, 2010), and very little immigration from Muslim countries. Therefore, most Hungarians have no personal experiences with Muslim people and are not likely to have a strong sense of psychological connection to this group. In this context, both perceived threat and psychological distance from the group are important factors in the perception of Muslims in Hungary.

Participants

Our sample consisted of 490 Hungarian university students from Eötvös Loránd University, who received credits for their participation in the study (349 female, $M_{age} = 20.82$; $SD_{age} = 2.07$).

Measures

Participants completed an online questionnaire measuring individualizing and binding moral foundations, moral exclusion of Muslims, and different positive and negative behavioral intentions towards Muslims. The questionnaire was part of an omnibus survey; we report all measures for variables related to the research question. Responses were measured on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) on all items except for the items of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ), where we kept the original 6-point scale (1 = not at all relevant; 6 = extremely relevant). The scales of the survey were presented in a randomized order to our respondents. Answers were collected between the 2nd and 17th of March in 2017.

For measuring moral foundations, we used a shortened Hungarian version of the MFQ that was designed to measure individualizing and binding moral foundations (Graham et al., 2011; the Hungarian adaptation is from Hadarics & Kende, 2017a). Since the original five factor structure of the MFQ was not adequate in the Hungarian context, 10 items from the 32 items of the original questionnaire were kept (Graham et al., 2011). Four items measured individualizing foundations and six items measured binding foundations. This Hungarian version of the MFQ was identified as an appropriate tool for measuring these two broader categories of moral foundations both in terms of psychometric qualities and construct validity (Hadarics & Kende, 2017a).

Moral exclusion was measured by Opatow's (1993) Scope of Justice/Moral Exclusion Scale. We adapted the items for the target group of Muslims (see Appendix A). Higher scores on this scale indicated a higher level of moral inclusion, however as our predictions were phrased about moral exclusion and not inclusion, we reversed the scores of this scale so that higher means indicated higher level of moral exclusion.

Intergroup behavioral intentions were measured by 10 items created for the purpose of this questionnaire to grasp both positive and negative, and both individual and collective level behavioral intentions toward the target group. The items were constructed in line with previous research on collective action and prejudice (e.g. Becker and Wright, 2011). Five items were formulated to assess positive and five items to assess negative behavioral intentions. In both cases three items described different forms of collective action, and two items portrayed mere avoidance or helping behaviors without the intentions for social change (see Appendix B). The choice of measuring both individual and collective behavioral intentions was justified by the context of Muslim immigration.

When examining the factorial structure of these 10 behavioral intention items, four models were compared to test whether the two dimensions of the items indeed loaded onto different factors. We used the AMOS 23.0 software (Arbuckle, 2014) for this model comparison procedure, as well as for the structural equation modeling analyses. The first model included all items on the same factor, the second model had the positive and negative behavioral items loading on separate but correlating factors, and the third model had four separate, but correlating factors (positive collective action, negative collective action, helping behavior, avoiding behavior). The fourth model was based on the four factors, but these factors built up two correlating second-order factors as well (positive and negative behaviors). Fit indices of these models are displayed in Table 1 with the second-order factor model showing the most adequate fit only slightly exceeding the four-factor model.

The four-factor and the second-order factor models were nearly equally appropriate, the $\Delta\chi^2$ -test that we conducted to test the difference between these two models showed no differences between them ($\Delta\chi^2 = 0.88$; $\Delta df = 1$; $p = .348$). However the four-factor model showed that the positive collective action factor correlated more strongly with the helping factor ($r = 0.87$; $p < .001$) than with either of the negative behavioral factors (negative collective action: $r = -0.47$; $p < .001$; avoidance factor: $r = -0.53$; $p < .001$). Similarly, the negative collective action factor correlated more strongly with the avoidance factor ($r = 0.80$; $p < .001$) than it showed with the helping factor ($r = -0.50$; $p < .001$). The partial correlation between the avoidance and the helping factors ($r = -0.60$; $p < .001$) was also weaker than the partial correlation between the two positive or the two negative behavioral factors. Taken together, these results indicated that collective action may be a unique form of intergroup behavior, nevertheless, on a more abstract level it is reasonable to assume that in this study it more generally reflected – positive or negative – intergroup behavioral intentions.

Results

To reveal how individualizing and binding moral foundations predicted positive and negative intergroup behavioral intentions,

Table 1
Model Fit Statistics for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Behavioral Intention Items.

Models	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	AIC
One-factor solution	789.64	35	.707	.211	.126	849.64
Two-factor solution	225.88	34	.925	.108	.063	287.88
Four-factor solution	97.26	29	.973	.070	.052	169.26
Second-order two-factor solution	98.14	30	.975	.068	.051	168.10

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between Variables.

Variable	Mean	SD	α	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Positive collective action	2.88	1.54	.87							
2. Helping behavior	3.43	1.61	.77	.72***						
3. Negative collective action	2.69	1.38	.70	-.35***	-.36***					
4. Avoidance behavior	2.57	1.61	.86	-.46***	-.50***	.64***				
5. Moral exclusion	4.30	1.23	.76	-.68***	-.70***	.50***	.60***			
6. Individualizing foundations	4.71	.75	.75	.30***	.32***	-.14***	-.22***	-.33***		
7. Binding foundations	4.35	.67	.71	-.11*	-.08	.23***	.16***	.13**	.35***	
8. Gender	–	–	–	-.16***	-.24***	.02	.06	-.17***	-.15***	-.06

Note. *** = $p < .001$; ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$.

and how this prediction changed after moral exclusion was added to the relationship, a two-step structural equation modeling approach was applied with maximum likelihood estimation. Descriptive statistics and correlations between the variables of the model are presented in Table 2.

As a first step, we built a model with moral foundations as predictors, and the two forms of intergroup behavioral intentions as outcome variables (Fig. 1). Before the modeling procedure we checked whether missing values were missing at random in our dataset by running Little's MCAR test. The result of this test confirmed that they were ($\chi^2 = 632.27$; $df = 701$; $p = .970$). Subsequently, missing values were filled in by a regression imputation method described by Byrne (2010). In the course of the modeling procedure, first, we calculated mean score-based indices for the four types of behavioral intentions, since our scale reliability analysis showed appropriate Cronbach- α values for these indices if we used the items measuring the same sort of behavioral intention (and loading on the same first-order factor in the fourth CFA model) together as scales (see Table 2). After that, as our focus was on positive and negative behavioral intentions, we constructed these variables as latent variables built up from the four indices mentioned above. In the case of both latent variables, the indicator variables were the indices the items of which constituted the corresponding first-order factors in our fourth CFA-model presented above.

To test the mediating role of moral exclusion, we also constructed a second model in which moral exclusion of Muslims was incorporated into the model as a mediator between moral foundations and behavioral intentions (Fig. 2). Given that women generally show higher levels of prosocial attitudes and lower levels of prejudice when answering explicit attitude measures (e.g. Altemeyer,

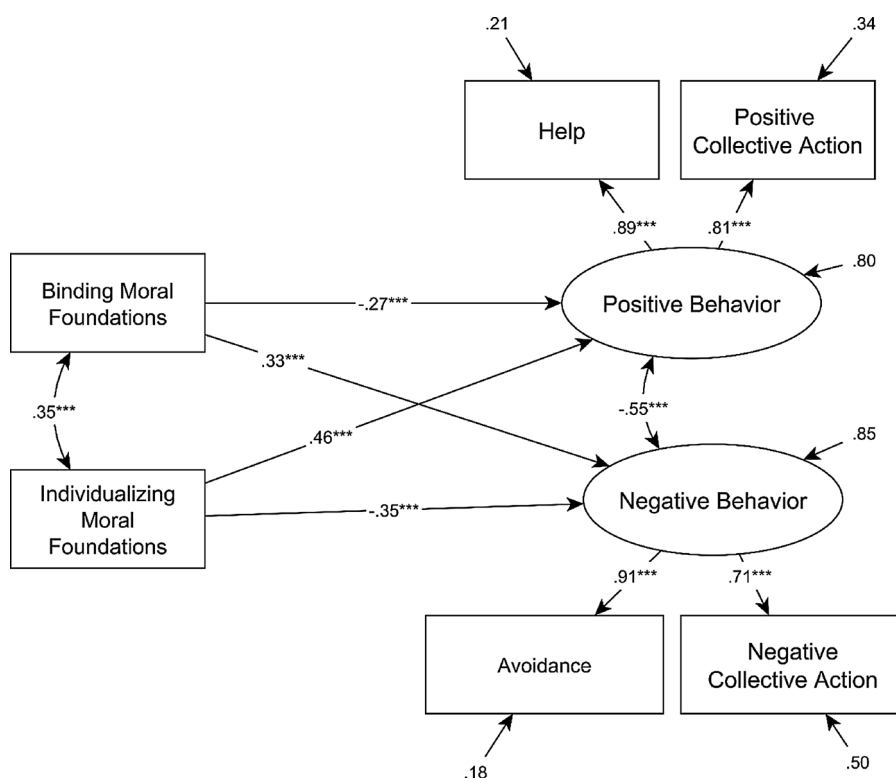


Fig. 1. Path model showing relationships between moral foundations and intergroup behavioral intentions. Path coefficients are standardized regression coefficients (*** = $p < .001$).

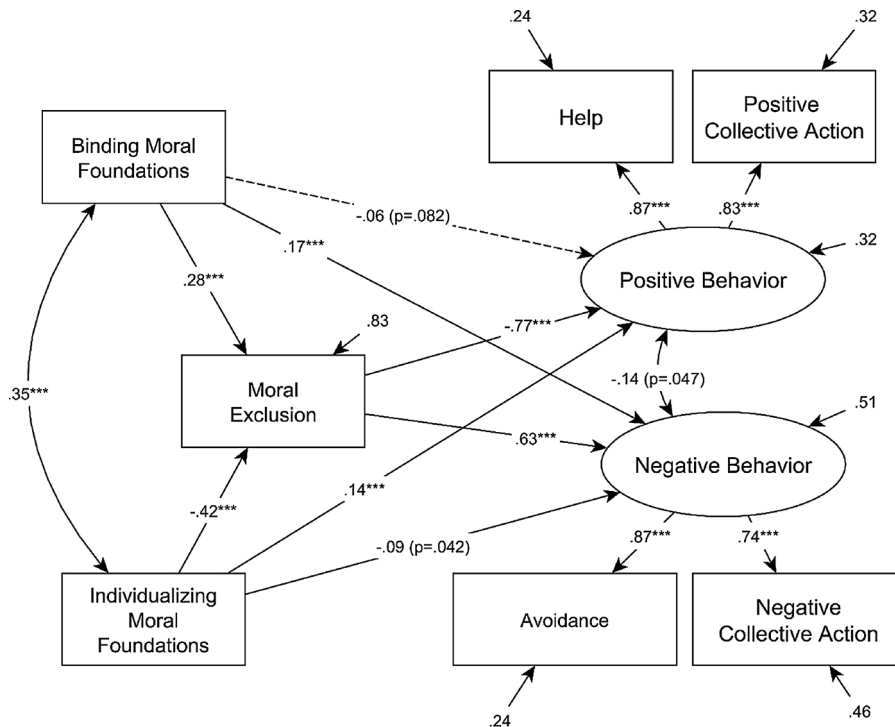


Fig. 2. Path model showing relationships between moral foundations, moral exclusion, and intergroup behavioral intentions. Path coefficients are standardized regression coefficients (***) = $p < .001$).

1998; Ekehammar, Akrami, & Araya, 2003; Milfont & Sibley, 2016; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) the statistical effects of gender on other variables were controlled in both models. (When coding our respondents' gender, we used "1" for "female" and "2" for "male".)

The first model showed a good fit ($X^2 = 16.18$; $df = 7$; CFI = 0.991; RMSEA = 0.052; SRMR = 0.020) and in line with our expectations, it also showed that individualizing foundations had a negative relationship with negative behavioral intentions ($\beta = -0.35$; $B = -0.69$; $SE = 0.096$; $p < .001$) and a positive relationship with the positive ones ($\beta = 0.46$; $B = 0.87$; $SE = 0.092$; $p < .001$), while binding foundations showed a significant positive relationship with negative behavior ($\beta = 0.33$; $B = 0.72$; $SE = 0.108$; $p < .001$) and a negative one with positive behavior ($\beta = -0.27$; $B = -0.58$; $SE = 0.103$; $p < .001$).

Our second mediation model also showed a good fit ($X^2 = 20.08$; $df = 9$; CFI = 0.992; RMSEA = 0.050; SRMR = 0.019), but more importantly it also showed that moral exclusion had a significant relationship with both forms of moral foundations (individualizing: $\beta = -0.42$; $B = -0.69$; $SE = 0.072$; $p < .001$; binding: $\beta = 0.28$; $B = 0.51$; $SE = 0.081$; $p < .001$) and intergroup behavioral intentions (positive: $\beta = -0.77$; $B = -0.87$; $SE = 0.044$; $p < .001$; negative: $\beta = 0.63$; $B = 0.72$; $SE = 0.051$; $p < .001$).

We also tested whether the effects of moral foundations on behavioral intentions would decrease significantly by adding moral exclusion as a mediator to the model. We did that by fixing these direct effects in the mediation model separately to the values that had been found in the first model for the direct effects of moral foundations on behavioral intentions. After that we compared the fit of the restricted models to the mediation model without restrictions. We can consider the relevant regression coefficients as different across the two models if the fit of the restricted models is significantly worse than the fit of the original mediation model without the restrictions. By this procedure we found a significant drop in the case of the effect of individualizing foundations on positive behavior ($\Delta\beta = 0.32$; $\Delta B = 0.62$; $\Delta X^2 = 70.28$; $\Delta df = 1$; $p < .001$) and negative behavior ($\Delta\beta = 0.26$; $\Delta B = 0.52$; $\Delta X^2 = 35.44$; $\Delta df = 1$; $p < .001$), as well as in the case of the effect of binding foundations on positive ($\Delta\beta = 0.21$; $\Delta B = 0.45$; $\Delta X^2 = 34.84$; $\Delta df = 1$; $p < .001$) and negative behavior ($\Delta\beta = 0.16$; $\Delta B = 0.36$; $\Delta X^2 = 15.32$; $\Delta df = 1$; $p < .001$) too.

To test whether moral exclusion mediated the effects of the two kinds of moral foundations on intergroup behavioral intentions, a series of mediational analyses was conducted with the bootstrapping technique suggested by Macho and Ledermann (2011), where we requested 95% confidence intervals using 2000 resamples. An indirect effect is considered significant if the unstandardized 95% confidence interval around the estimate does not contain 0. According to the results of this mediation analysis, individualizing moral foundations showed a significant indirect effect on both positive ($\beta = 0.32$; $B = 0.60$; $p < .001$; 95% CI [0.48, 0.75]) and negative behavioral intentions ($\beta = -0.27$; $B = -0.50$; $p < .001$; 95% CI [-0.64, -0.38]) mediated by moral exclusion, and binding foundations did the same (positive behavior: $\beta = -0.21$; $B = -0.45$; $p < .001$; 95% CI [-0.60, -0.30]; negative behavior: $\beta = 0.18$; $B = 0.37$; $p < .001$; 95% CI [0.25, 0.52]). The indirect effect explained 70.28% of the total effect ($\beta = 0.46$; $B = 0.86$; $p < .001$) of individualizing foundations on positive behavioral intentions, and 74.45% of the total effect ($\beta = -0.36$; $B = -0.67$; $p < .001$) of individualizing foundations on negative intentions. At the same time, the indirect effect explained 77.74% of the total

effect ($\beta = -0.27$; $B = -0.57$; $p < .001$) of binding foundations on positive behavioral intentions, and 50.87% of the total effect ($\beta = 0.35$; $B = 0.73$; $p < .001$) of individualizing foundations on negative intentions. The fact that the larger part of the total effects came from the indirect effects in all cases also point out the important mediating role of moral exclusion in the relationship between moral foundations and intergroup behavioral intentions.

Discussion

We hypothesized that moral intuitions were related to intergroup behavioral intentions towards culturally different outgroups, specifically that individualizing moral foundations would promote positive and hinder negative behavioral intentions, while binding foundations would do the opposite in connection with Muslim people in the Hungarian context. Our results were in line with previous studies showing that moral foundations had an effect on different aspects of intergroup relations, such as intergroup behavior (Kugler et al., 2014; Nilsson et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2014), intergroup attitudes (Hadarics & Kende, 2017b; Kugler et al., 2014; Low & Wui, 2016; Van de Vyver et al., 2016), perceived threat (Hadarics & Kende, 2017a), or policy preferences (Kertzer et al., 2014). Our findings indicated that moral foundations were connected to both prosocial and hostile intergroup behavioral intentions.

In the relationship between moral foundations and behavioral intentions towards a culturally different outgroup, the main function of binding foundations is to connect people in a coherent community based on shared principles about what is right and what is wrong. Therefore, it is not surprising that those with strong binding morality more easily perceive a culturally different outgroup as opposing the traditional worldview and practices of the ingroup. This perceived opposition can serve as a justification for hostilities and the lack of positive treatment. This assumption is in accordance with studies showing that people with a high level of cultural conventionality are especially inclined to regard culturally different outgroups as a symbolic threat (e.g. Charles-Toussaint & Crowson, 2010; Crowson, 2009; Kauff, Asbrock, Issmer, Thörner, & Wagner, 2015; Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008). In contrast, individualizing foundations make people more willing to judge the rightness of an act taking into account the well-being of others. Since negative intergroup behavior inevitably causes the suffering of others, those with strong individualizing foundations tend to oppose these behaviors. Furthermore, as these people are more sensitive to the suffering of others and injustices committed towards others, they may be more willing to initiate positive behavior to promote the well-being of the victim-group if they think that the outgroup's suffering and injustice was caused by the mere group-membership of the victims.

More importantly, we also found that moral exclusion was an important mediator in the relationship between moral foundations and intergroup behavior. This finding highlights a potential mechanism explaining how one's moral preferences transform into specific behavioral intentions towards culturally different outgroups. On the one hand, intergroup behavior is preceded by the decision about the moral appropriateness of the particular form of behavior toward the outgroup. This decision is influenced by whether the group is considered to be within one's personal scope of justice. On the other hand, moral foundations at least partly determine the boundaries of one's moral community (see also Crimson et al., 2016), and therefore they also have the potential to determine whether a culturally different outgroup is excluded from the boundaries of morality and justice.

Binding foundations predict a restricted scope for at least two reasons. Firstly, as this sort of morality binds people into a cohesive group, it has the potential to boost moral responsibility towards ingroup members, but it also has the potential to create strict boundaries between those within the group and those outside this moral community. Secondly, as mentioned before, people with strong binding moral foundations are more likely to perceive non-conventional outgroups as threatening (Hadarics & Kende, 2017a). Perceived threat may also justify the moral exclusion of the group, and the subsequent immoral acts toward them.

In connection with individualizing foundations, we found a stronger tendency for the moral exclusion of Muslims, which tendency mediated the effect of individualizing foundations on behavioral intentions. This finding can be explained by the fact that individualizing morality can enhance moral inclusion of a culturally different outgroup, because it makes people more conscious about the well-being of others. However, if the suffering of outgroup members is the result of the harsh treatment of the group, it increases the moral responsibility to work toward the well-being of the group as a whole. In this way, individualizing morality is likely to support the moral inclusion of entire groups rather than specific individuals only, and at the same time, motivate prosocial behaviors while inhibiting hostile ones based on a sense of shared moral community.

Our finding that both individualizing and binding morality strongly predict moral exclusion supports the adequacy of two main strategies for promoting positive intergroup relations. A sense of moral responsibility for the fate of others can be promoted either by including the outgroup into a common ingroup by recategorization (e.g. Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989), or by neglecting group-membership and focusing on the individual, as suggested by decategorization and personalization approaches (e.g. Brewer & Miller, 1984; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Swencionis & Fiske, 2014). We suggest that these two strategies may have two distinct moral underpinnings in the forms of the two types of moral foundations. In sum, we supplement the existing literature on moral foundations, moral exclusion, and intergroup behavior by showing that personal moral intuitions are not simply the direct predictors of intergroup behavior, but they also affect the way people, as members of groups, perceive particular intergroup situations. This finding highlights the importance of designing interventions that take into account individual differences not only for the sake of emphasizing individually important values, but also because people with different moral intuitions define the same intergroup situation differently. Therefore, based on our findings, we can make more accurate predictions about whether people will react by helping or hostility to intergroup conflicts than on the basis of either moral foundations theory or on the basis of the theory of moral exclusions.

Limitations and future directions

Generalizability of our findings was influenced by at least two characteristics of the study. Firstly, our student sample did not make it possible to generalize the revealed relationships to the entire Hungarian society as college and university students have special characteristics – such as their developmental stage and higher than average educational level and socioeconomic status – that can potentially influence their expressed opinions and attitudes (see e.g., [Sears, 1986](#); [Wintre, North, & Sugar 2001](#)).

Secondly, our study was conducted in a specific intergroup context for testing a more general theoretical assumption. Nevertheless, this specific intergroup context, Muslims as a target group, and Hungary as the site of data collection seemed suitable for the study because the topic dominates public discourse, and negative attitudes towards Muslim people have been on the rise since 2015 when the government launched an anti-immigrant campaign ([Simonovits & Bernáth, 2016](#)). Furthermore, public perception of this group blends the most crucial antecedents of moral exclusion, namely psychological distancing and perceived threat. Nevertheless, for higher external validity, the mediating role of moral exclusion should be tested in other intergroup contexts in future studies.

Our study was correlational, and did not test the causal relationships between the variables. Although we have evidence showing that moral foundations influence intergroup attitudes and not the other way around ([Van de Vyver et al., 2016](#)), we cannot rule out the possibility that previous behavior influence moral intuitions and intergroup attitudes simultaneously. We know from the classical work on the attitude-behavior relationship that behavior can affect attitudes and not just the other way around (e.g. [Bem, 1972](#); [Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959](#); [Olson & Stone, 2005](#); [Wells & Petty, 1980](#)), but since we did not ask about previous behavior, we have no way to control for this effect.

Our results show that moral exclusion is related to both positive and negative intergroup behavioral intentions. Nevertheless, the mechanisms underlying these two relationships may not be identical, but could be differentiated according to the two sorts of moral exclusion described by [Olson et al. \(2011\)](#). Since immoral behaviors causing direct harm to others need justifications like deservingness (e.g. [Bandura, 1999](#); [Opatow & Weiss, 2000](#); [Ribeaud & Eisner, 2010](#)), it seems likely that negative intergroup behaviors are driven by the justified, deservingness-based form of moral exclusion. On the other hand, it is possible that positive intergroup behavior requiring personal sacrifices is driven by the inverse form of the responsibility acknowledgment-based mechanism described by [Olson et al. \(2011\)](#). The latter would mean the mechanism of moral inclusion, when people are always aware of their moral responsibility to satisfy others' entitlement for fair treatment. In the future, it would be important to test these assumptions by differentiating more precisely between these two forms of moral exclusion on the level of measurement too.

Conclusion

Intergroup behavior has its moral side, and our study supports the assumption that morality affects the willingness to show either positive or negative intentions towards a culturally different outgroup in at least two ways. Our findings suggest that personal moral intuitions determine whether a behavior is right or wrong when it comes to a particular outgroup, but the personal scope of justice indicates whether we stick to these personal moral standards during an encounter with members of the outgroup. More importantly, the results presented here indicate that moral intuitions have the capacity to narrow down or broaden the scope of justice (see also [Crimson et al., 2016](#)). This mechanism seems vital in regulating both positive and negative intergroup behavior towards culturally different outgroups.

Funding

This research was supported by the National Research and Innovation Research Grant (Grant No.: NKFI-K119433). Anna Kende was supported by the János Bolyai research scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Appendix A

Items measuring moral exclusion of Muslims

- I believe that considerations of fairness apply to Muslims too.
- I am willing to make personal sacrifices to help or foster Muslims' well-being.
- I am willing to allocate a share of community resources to Muslims.

Appendix B

Items measuring behavioral intentions towards Muslims

Positive collective action:

- I would join an initiative (for example by signing a petition) in the interests of Muslim people.
- I would join an online campaign against the discrimination of Muslim people
- I would join an action (for example a street protest) for the rights of Muslim people.

Helping:

- I would support an organization helping Muslim people with financial donation or otherwise.
- I would donate clothes or other household articles, or food to an organization who support Muslim families in need.

Negative collective action:

I would sign a petition that is intended to protect Hungarian people against the harmful behavior of Muslim people
 I would share posts on Facebook or other social media sites that go against the demands and actions of Muslim people.
 I would vote for a political party or representative whose intention is to step up against Muslim people.

Avoidance:

I wouldn't like to work together with Muslim people.
 I would not send my child to a school that Muslim kids attend.

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