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Concern for close or distant others: The distinction between moral identity and moral inclusion

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Running head: *CONCERN FOR CLOSE OR DISTANT OTHERS*

Concern for Close or Distant Others: The Distinction between Moral Identity and Moral Inclusion

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Abstract

Research has analysed the relationship between moral identity – the extent to which people experience their moral character as being central to their self-conception – and the inclusion of others people within one’s own moral circle. These studies underline that the higher the moral identity, the larger the moral circle. However, recent studies have observed that a high moral identity person feels morally obliged towards close people and may be intolerant towards distant groups. The aim of the present research was to deepen the differences between moral identity and moral inclusion considering prejudicial attitudes, ethnocentrism, altruism, and values. The results indicated that moral identity alone does not imply a reduction in intolerant attitudes. Instead, when moral inclusion is considered, the results even show a positive effect of moral identity internalization on prejudice and ethnocentrism. Moreover, moral identity internalization has an effect on values of benevolence, security, tradition, and conformity. Hence, a strong moral identity does not denote an extension of one’s own moral circle. Instead, this variable is related to intolerance towards those groups considered not to be included in one’s own moral community.

Keywords: moral identity; moral inclusion; prejudice; values; altruism

Concern for Close or Distant Others: The Distinction between Moral Identity and Moral Inclusion

Moral identity is defined as the extent to which people experience their moral character as being central to their self-conception, that is the extent to which commitment to moral values pervades one's own sense of self (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Blasi, 2004; Reed & Aquino, 2003). Since the seminal work of Blasi (1980), scholars have focused on the way individual moral commitments are used as a basis for self-definition (Aquino, Reed, Thau, & Freeman, 2007). Among the various research works, some studies (e.g., Aquino et al., 2007; Winterich, Mittal, & Ross 2009; Reed & Aquino, 2003; Reed, Aquino, & Levy 2007) have analyzed the relationship between moral identity and the inclusion of other people or social groups within one's own moral circle, which includes those individuals we feel obliged to exhibit moral regard to. These studies have underlined that the higher the moral identity, the larger the moral circle, that is the more numerous are the people or social groups towards whom individuals feel morally obliged to. However, a recent study by Passini (2013) has shown that the fact that high moral identity people have a larger moral circle than low moral identity people can be explained with reference to moral inclusion/exclusion attitudes. For instance, the results of Passini's research revealed that even if moral identity and moral inclusion are closely interrelated concepts, the negative correlation between moral identity and prejudice was completely mediated by attitudes of moral inclusion towards the other groups. In a similar research study, Winterich and colleagues (2009) found that high moral identity people increase their donations to some outgroups. However, this occurs only for females, whereas males increase donations to the ingroup. Akin to Passini's (2012) research, the moderating role of

gender identity on the effect of moral identity on ingroup and outgroup donations was mediated by the inclusion of the other in the self, i.e. an individual “sense of being interconnected with another” (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992, p. 598) person.

These results suggest that how people consider others in respect to themselves – on an inclusion/exclusion continuum – is more relevant rather than what people think they are in terms of moral identity. Indeed, no matter how high the moral identity is, it might always be applied not to everyone but just to some. That is, a high moral identity person may feel morally obliged towards many people and at the same time be intolerant towards other groups. The aim of the present research is to confirm previous experimental works ([e.g.](#), Passini, 2013) by analyzing the different effects of moral identity and moral inclusion on prejudice and by investigating moral exclusion processes as mediators of the effects of moral identity on prejudice. In addition to a measure of prejudice, ethnocentrism is also investigated. Moreover, the novelty of the present work is to analyze the relationships of moral identity and moral inclusion with values and altruism towards outgroups and the mediation effect of moral inclusion.

Moral Inclusion Theory

As Opatow (1990) has pointed out, moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply to people we include within our scope of justice, namely the moral community. The moral community may be either narrow – [e.g.](#), referring just to ingroup members – or wide, as far as referring to the whole world community (see Passini, 2010). Opatow (1990) defined moral exclusion processes as the exclusion of other individuals or groups from one’s own moral community. That is, viewing others as lying beyond the boundary within which moral values, rules of justice and fairness

apply. Moral inclusion processes refer instead to the extension of social justice to groups that had formerly been excluded from the moral community.

In a review of the concept of the scope of justice developed by Opatow (1990), Hafer and Olson (2003) have observed that empirical research mainly focused on the variables influencing the exclusion from the scope of justice and on the consequences of exclusion. As concerns the consequences of exclusion, scholars found that people who exclude some targets from their scope of justice tend to contest those social policies intended to help the target (e.g., Beaton & Tougas, 2001; Opatow, 1994), to deny the rights of the target (e.g., Boeckmann & Tyler, 1997), as well as to feel more apathy in response to negative treatment of the target (e.g., Foster & Rusbult, 1999). Similar results were obtained by Morselli and Passini (2012). By the use of the moral inclusion/exclusion of other groups (MIEG) scale, the authors showed that moral inclusion of other groups is negatively correlated with prejudicial attitudes towards outgroups, social dominance orientation and positively correlated with post-materialism (e.g., “protecting freedom of speech,” Inglehart & Abramson, 1999) and support for democratic principles (e.g., “civil rights protect people from state oppression”). Thus, empirical research has linked exclusion from the scope of justice to the development or the entrenchment of prejudicial attitudes towards some outgroups and minorities. Given that the literature has shown that moral identity is negatively related to persecuting outgroups (e.g., Reed & Aquino, 2003) or to supporting hierarchy-legitimizing myths (e.g., Hardy, Bhattacharjee, Reed, & Aquino, 2010), one of the aims of this research is to analyze the distinct effects of moral inclusion and moral identity on prejudicial attitudes towards outgroups and on ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism

is defined as viewing one's own group more positively than others and as judging other groups as inferior (Levine & Campbell, 1972).

Many studies have shown that moral identity is positively related to altruism and to prosocial attitudes and behaviours (e.g., Detert, Trevino, & Sweitzer, 2008; Hardy, 2006; Pratt, Hunsberger, Pancer, & Alisat, 2003). For instance, Reed and Aquino (2003) found positive correlations between moral identity and volunteering activities and donation behaviours towards outgroups. Similarly, Detert and colleagues (2008) found that moral identity is positively correlated to altruism measured as an individual's willingness to take the problems and emotions of others into consideration. Another objective of the present research is to analyze the potentially distinct effects of moral identity and moral inclusion on altruism towards outgroups and the mediation effect of moral inclusion.

Value priorities also may shape moral inclusion versus exclusion. Values may be defined as trans-situational goals that vary in importance and that serve as a guiding principle in one's own life (Schwartz, 1992). Schwartz (1992) distinguished between ten value types: universalism (protection for the welfare of all people); benevolence (preservation of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact); conformity (restraint of actions that violate social expectations); tradition (respect of the traditional customs); security (safety and stability of society); power (social status and control over people and resources); achievement (personal success); hedonism (pleasure and self-gratification); stimulation (excitement and novelty in life); and self-direction (independent thought and action). To date, no studies have analyzed the relationship between these values types and moral identity and moral inclusion. However, as Passini (2013) has suggested, Schwartz's theory may help to explain the differences between

the concepts of moral identity and moral inclusion as well as the somewhat inconsistent results regarding the relationships between moral identity and prejudice and altruism. For instance, Schwartz (2007) has recently made a distinction between the values of benevolence and universalism. According to the author, even if both these values are directed to the promotion of others' welfare, they are different as concerns the target whom they express concern to. "Benevolence values apply primarily to those who are close to us. [...] Universalism values presumably apply to all of human kind" (Schwartz, 2007, p. 713). As Passini (2012) noted, this distinction may be relevant in differentiating moral identity and moral inclusion. Indeed, the nine moral traits that according to the literature characterize the high moral identity person mainly refer to benevolence values (i.e. caring, compassionate, friendly, generous, helpful, honest, and kind), while just one (i.e. fair) refers to universalism. Instead, moral inclusion is theoretically more directly linked to universalist values – i.e. tolerance and care for everyone's welfare.

Hypotheses

The aim of this study was to analyse the different effects of moral identity and moral inclusion on various variables, such as prejudice, ethnocentrism, altruism and values. In line with the literature described in the introduction, it was hypothesized that both moral identity and moral inclusion should have a negative direct effect on prejudice and ethnocentrism and a positive direct effect on altruism and universalism. Then, a mediation effect of moral inclusion processes on the predictions of moral identity on these variables was expected. That is, a previously presumed direct relationship of moral identity to prejudice, ethnocentrism, altruism, and universalism was hypothesized to be largely or completely mediated by moral inclusion. In other

words, after controlling for level of moral inclusion, the correlation of moral identity with these variables should go away or be substantially reduced. Instead, benevolence, was expected to be predicted just by moral identity. No specific hypotheses were advanced regarding the other values.

Method

Participants

A total of 185 (53 % females) Italian University students of the Faculty of Education served as participants. The mean age of the participants was 21.16 years ($SD = 3.31$). They were mainly born in the north (59.4 %), but also with 4.4 % in the centre, 28.3 % in the south of Italy, and 7.8 % declaring they were born outside Italy.

Measures

Moral Inclusion/exclusion of other groups (MIEG). The moral inclusion/exclusion scale constructed by Morselli and Passini (2012) was used. With reference to six target groups (Albanians, Americans, Chinese, French, German and Moroccans), respondents were asked to choose their position on 4 sets of bipolar statements: one identifying the group's moral exclusion and the other identifying the group's moral inclusion. As Morselli and Passini (2012) pointed out, the four oppositions tapped Opatow's (1990) exclusion-specific symptoms: derogation (disparaging and denigrating others by regarding them as lower life forms or inferior beings, e.g.g., barbarians); dehumanization (repudiating others' humanity, dignity, ability to feel, and entitlement to compassion); fear of contamination (perceiving contact with others as posing a threat to one's well-being). The four oppositions are: (1) "Values held by this group represent a threat to our well-being" *versus* "Values held by this group represent an opportunity for our well-being;" (2) "Members of this group deserve no respect" *versus* "Members

of this group deserve our utmost respect;" (3) "It is necessary to avoid any kind of contact with members of this group" *versus* "It is necessary for all of us to engage in establishing constructive contacts with this group's members;" (4) "I think that members of this group of people are extremely uncivilized" *versus* "I think that members of this group of people are extremely civilized." The response scale ranged from -3 (indicating the most agreement with the moral exclusion statement) to +3 (indicating the most agreement with the moral inclusion statement). The variable was re-scaled from 1 to 7. A one-factor solution was adopted ($\alpha = .96$) and a MIEG index was computed as the mean of all the four bipolar statements. Higher scores on the MIEG index indicate the inclusion of other groups in one's own moral community.

Moral Identity. The self-importance of moral identity (~~MI~~)-scale (MI)-constructed by Aquino and Reed (2002) was used to measure this construct. Respondents answered 10 questions on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). As in the original studies, two dimensions were computed: *internalization* ($\alpha = .80$) which ~~that~~ reflects the degree to which a set of moral traits (i.e. caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind) is central to the self-concept; and *symbolization* ($\alpha = .79$) ~~that~~ which reflects the degree to which these traits are expressed publicly through the person's actions in the world.

Subtle and blatant prejudice. A reduced version of Pettigrew and Meertens' (1995) ~~the~~ subtle-blatant prejudice scale (10 items on a 7-point scale from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree") by Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) ~~was used with~~ specific reference to Romanian immigrants. Romanians were chosen because they are commonly portrayed in the Italian media as a socially distant and threatening minority (see Solimene, 2011). Cronbach's alpha were .76 for subtle subscale (5 items) and .76

for blatant subscale (4 items¹). Some sample items of the scale are: “It is just a matter of some people not trying hard enough. If Romanians would only try harder they could be as well off as Italian people” (subtle); “Romanians have jobs that the Italian should have” (blatant).

Ethnocentrism. To assess the level of ethnocentrism, participants responded to a reduced six-item form of the ethnocentrism scale (Aiello & Areni, 1998). Items were measured on a 7-point scale, anchored at “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree.” The scale had a good reliability ($\alpha = .87$). An example of item is, “It is no coincidence that the prisons of our country are populated in large part by immigrants.”

Values. Participants responded to the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ; Schwartz, Melech, Lehmann, Burgess, & Harris, 2001). The PVQ includes 21 short verbal portraits of different people, each implicitly pointing to the importance of a value. For example, “It is important to him to listen to people who are different from him. Even when he disagrees with them, he still wants to understand them” describes a person for whom universalism values are important. Respondents indicate how similar the person is to themselves on a scale ranging from “not like me at all” (1) to “very much like me” (6). The PVQ measures each of the 10 motivationally distinct types of values (benevolence, tradition, conformity, security, power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction, and universalism) with two items (except for universalism with three).

Altruism towards Outgroups. On the basis of the self-report altruism scale (Philippe, Chrisjohn, & Cynthia, 1981), we asked participants to respond to four items for 6 national groups (Albanians, Americans, Chinese, French, Germans, Moroccans).

¹ The item “Most Romanians living here who receive welfare support could get along without it if they tried” was excluded because of [lack of an](#)-increment in Cronbach’s reliability.

“Would you do the following actions to an unknown person of a foreign nationality: (1) giving money to a stranger who needed it for bus fare; (2) giving a stranger a lift in your car; (3) letting a neighbor whom I didn’t know too well borrow an item of some value to me; (4) offering my seat on a bus or train to a stranger who was standing.” All the items were measured on a dichotomous scale, 0 = No, 1 = Yes. A principal axis factoring of the items was computed. The scree test revealed a clear break between the first and second eigenvalue: 10.41, 5.11, 3.84, 2.87, 0.62, 0.23, etc. Hence, only one factor was retained from the analysis and a moral altruism index was computed as the mean of all the items (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$).

Results

The participants had high scores on MIEG ~~and~~, scores at the scale midpoint for moral identity internalization, and low scores on moral identity symbolization (see Table 1, left side). ~~For what concerns the other variables,~~ tThey had low scores on both dimensions of prejudice and ethnocentrism, ~~while and medium~~ scores on altruism near the scale midpoint. On the measure of values priorities, ~~They they~~ mainly attached importance to universalism, benevolence and self-direction values and they had medium-high scores on all the other values except power (which they attached lower importance to).

-----INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE-----

MIEG was positively correlated with moral identity and altruism, while negatively correlated with both types of prejudice and ethnocentrism (see Table 1, right side). In contrast, moral identity was not significantly correlated with any of all these variables. As concerns values, MIEG was positively correlated with universalism, benevolence and self-direction and negatively with power. Moral identity was positively

correlated with hedonism, stimulation (only internalization), self-direction (only internalization), universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security.

Mediation Analysis

In order to analyse the predictions ~~made for~~ moral identity and MIEG on the variables analysed and the hypothetical mediation effect of MIEG (Hypothesis 1), a path analysis (using Mplus 6.1, Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2010) with moral identity internalization and symbolization as independent variables, MIEG as a sole mediator, and values, prejudice, ethnocentrism, and altruism as dependent variables was computed. Starting from the “full model,” which included -all paths from the two moral identity dimensions to the dependent variables (both directly and mediated through MIEG), the subsequent regression analyses progressively deleted non-statistically significant paths. Starting from the “full model” with all paths from the two moral identity dimensions and MIEG to dependent variables included, non-statistically significant paths were progressively deleted. In the resulting model (see Figure 1), the two dimensions of moral identity had a positive covariance ($\beta = .55, p < .001$), but only internalization was significantly related to MIEG, while they were not significantly related to MIEG. As concern outcomes, security ($\beta = .28, p < .001$), benevolence ($\beta = .48, p < .001$), and stimulation ($\beta = .11, p < .05$) were predicted just by moral identity internalization, while achievement ($\beta = .13, p < .05$) and hedonism ($\beta = .13, p < .05$) were predicted just by moral identity symbolization. Both MIEG and moral identity internalization predicted blatant prejudice (respectively $\beta = -.44, p < .001$; $\beta = .18, p < .01$), subtle prejudice ($\beta = -.38, p < .001$; $\beta = -.24, p < .001$), and ethnocentrism ($\beta = -.52, p < .001$; $\beta = -.25, p < .001$). Both MIEG and moral identity internalization predicted intolerant attitudes but in opposite directions. The direct paths from moral identity had

the effect of increasing the measured set of intolerant attitudes, while the corresponding indirect paths mediated by moral inclusion had the effect of reducing intolerance. MIEG partial mediation of moral identity reduced blatant prejudice ($\beta = -.13, p < .001$), subtle prejudice ($\beta = -.11, p < .001$), and ethnocentrism ($\beta = -.15, p < .001$), while the direct paths from moral identity internalization increased these intolerant attitudes (respectively, $\beta = .18, p < .01$; $\beta = .24, p < .001$; and $\beta = .25, p < .001$). Thus, the mediation of MIEG revealed a so-called “suppression” effect. On these variables, the mediation of MIEG had a so-called “suppression” effect²: what had been non-significant zero-order correlations of moral identity internalization with prejudice and ethnocentrism became significant effects when the mediator was included in the model. That is, the non-significant zero-order correlations of moral identity internalization with prejudice and ethnocentrism became significant positive effects via indirect paths (respectively $\beta = .13, p < .001$; $\beta = .11, p < .001$; $\beta = .15, p < .001$).

-Moral identity internalization increased universalism both directly ($\beta = .32, p < .001$) and when partially mediated by MIEG (indirect effect: $\beta = .10, p < .001$). Conformism was reduced when partially mediated by MIEG (indirect effect, $\beta = -.05, p < .05$), but the direct effects of moral identity internalization and symbolization increased conformism (respectively, $\beta = .45, p < .001$; $\beta = .13, p < .05$). Similarly, tradition was reduced when partially mediated by MIEG, but the direct effect of moral identity internalization and symbolization increased tradition (respectively, $\beta = .33, p < .001$; $\beta = .14, p < .05$). Finally, MIEG was a full mediator of the effect of moral identity internalization on self-enhancement, power, and altruism (indirect effects respectively,

² The suppression effect describes a condition in which “the magnitude of the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable becomes larger when a third variable is included” (MacKinnon, Krull, & Lockwood, 2000, p. 174).

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Discussion

The aim of the present research was to deepen understanding of the effects of moral identity and moral inclusion on prejudicial attitudes, ethnocentrism, altruism, and values and to analyse the mediation effect of moral inclusion. In line with Passini's (2013) study, the idea was to analyse whether the predictions of moral identity identified in the literature (especially on prejudice and altruism) may be explained by the moral inclusion *vs.* exclusion of the other groups in one's own moral community.

As concerns intolerant attitudes (i.e. prejudice and ethnocentrism), our data did not confirm the literature on moral identity, which generally indicated a negative correlation between moral identity and prejudice. Contrary to the hypothesis, both dimensions of moral identity (internalization and symbolization) were not significantly correlated with prejudice and ethnocentrism. However, as hypothesized, and as a confirmation of the study by Passini (2013), a mediation effect of MIEG was found. Moral identity, *per se*, was found to directly exacerbate prejudice and ethnocentrism and, yet, was balanced by a reduction in prejudice and ethnocentrism when moral inclusion mediated the effect of moral identity. The different effects of moral identity and moral inclusion were also evident on altruism. Indeed, altruism was positively predicted just by moral inclusion which fully mediated the effect of moral identity on this variable.

Thus, in contrast with Aquino and Reed's (2002) findings and theoretical expectations, these data suggest that people high on moral identity are not generally tolerant and altruistic and they do not tend to include other people or social groups

within one's own moral circle. Contrariwise, they may nurture intolerant attitudes towards the groups they consider not to be included in one's own moral community.

As concerns values, results partially confirmed the hypotheses. As hypothesized, moral identity internalization was the only predictor of benevolence. However, universalization was unexpectedly predicted directly by moral identity as well. Thus, results did not completely support the idea of Passini (2012) that moral identity is just linked with benevolence values. Although moral identity was indeed the only predictor of benevolence, the prediction of universalization suggests that moral identity is still a variable directly relevant to those attitudes that focus on protecting the welfare of all people. However, even if a partial mediation of moral inclusion was found, ~~universalization was predicted by moral identity as well. Thus, results did not completely support the idea of Passini (2012) that moral identity is just linked to benevolence values, even if moral identity was indeed the only predictor of benevolence. The prediction of universalization suggests that moral identity is still a variable impacting the development of the welfare of people.~~ However, with regard to the items of Schwartz of universalism, just one genuinely identifies this variable, i.e. "She/he thinks it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally. She/he believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life." The other two ("it is important to her/him to listen to people who are different from her/him. Even when she/he disagrees with them, she/he still wants to understand them" and "she/he strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to her/him") do not indeed directly measure equality and egalitarianism. Moral identity internalization was, in effect, not significantly correlated with the first item ($r = .13, p = ns$), while MIEG was ($r = .41, p < .001$). Thus, the lack of the hypothesized full

mediation of MIEG on the relationship between MI and universalism could also be explained by the items comprising the scale of universalism. Moreover, results concerning altruism suggest that the importance attached to ideals of broadmindedness (i.e. universalism) ~~might not be~~~~could be not been~~ put into practice when the person is asked to help an unknown person of a foreign nationality (i.e. the altruism scale used in the present research). ~~Future studies should further examine these incoherent results.~~

As concerns the other values, moral identity internalization was a positive predictor of all the three conservative values (i.e. security, tradition, and conformity) while moral inclusion was a negative predictor of these last two values as well as of power (while it was a positive predictor of self-enhancement). Thus, the results showed that moral identity internalization and moral inclusion are differently placed on a dimension of values characterized by the opposing values ~~the opposition between~~ openness to change and conservation ~~values~~. That is, moral identity is connected to submissive self-restriction, preservation of traditional practices, and protection of the *status quo*, whereas moral inclusion is related to encouraging independence of thought and action and receptiveness to change.

Finally, results indicated that moral identity symbolization was just a predictor of tradition, achievement and hedonism. This data suggests this dimension involves to some degree ~~to~~ a “moral appearance” for utilitarian purposes. This would then be a dimension therefore quite distant from that commitment to moral values which theoretically defines moral identity.

Implications

The findings of the present research may be relevant as concerns the analysis of the concept of moral identity and inclusion versus exclusion of other people or social

groups within one's own moral circle. First, in contrast with findings of research on moral identity (e.g., Smith, Aquino, Koleva, & Graham, 2014), a strong moral identity does not *per se* denote an extension of moral concerns to people belonging to perceived outgroups. According to Reed and Aquino (2003), people with a strong moral identity are likely to conceive a relatively expansive circle of moral regard. However, our results indicated that having a strong moral identity is not sufficient to support tolerance and altruistic attitudes towards outgroups' members. On the contrary, when the inclusion of other social groups within one's own moral community is considered, moral identity may lead to being more restrictive and rigid in considering the boundaries of one's own moral circle. Thus, moral identity should be not considered *per se* a variable leading to an expansion of moral circle and to greater tolerance towards outgroups, because when people do not consider all social groups as being within the boundaries of the scope of justice they may be supportive of ethnocentric and intolerant attitudes. That is, some social groups (e.g., ingroup) may be considered as more "people" with human dignity and rights than others, and an individual's subjects' moral identity may just be directed toward a moral community based on affinity~~them~~. Thus, it seems that moral identity is a good toolkit of intentions, but its applicability in the realm of everyday life and intergroup contact depends on the extension of the individual's moral community. In this sense, moral identity may serve to sustain both tolerant behaviors (when moral inclusion is high) and intergroup conflict and derogation (when moral exclusion is high).

The different effects on values by moral identity and moral inclusion in some ways account for the differences between these variables on prejudicial and altruistic attitudes. Indeed, even if both moral identity internalization and moral inclusion had an

effect on universalism, internalization was positively connected to conservative and traditional values while inclusion was in opposition to these values. Predictions based solely on these values would therefore suggest that moral identity potentially links to a more inconstant and restricted care for others in which the sense of being caring and compassionate (i.e. moral identity) may be limited by issues of ingroup safety (e.g., a sense of threat, as suggested by the prediction on security values) and pressure (e.g., uncritically or habitually follows customs and rules of one's own group, as suggested by the prediction concerning conformism and traditional values).

Second, studies on intergroup relationship should consider one's own attitudes of moral inclusion of other social groups, in particular when we analyse prejudicial attitudes and behaviors. Indeed, we can recognize people who nurture prejudice against some social groups while still supporting their access to equal procedures of fairness and justice, or, on the contrary, other people who are not apparently prejudicial towards some outgroups, while at the same they may agree with some forms of moral and social exclusion towards them. In this sense, the study of intergroup relationships should take into account how in Western societies blatant forms of discriminations have become politically incorrect and associated with non-desirable traits, but have not been altogether extinguished (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004), and how prejudice may be hidden by subtle forms of moral exclusion (Author/s, 2015).

These considerations also have some practical application. In particular, in order to reduce prejudicial attitudes and to promote intergroup cooperation, a key recommendation for practitioners may be to promote educational programs designed to enhance a self-understanding of the relevance of a wider perception of one's own moral community.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study had some limitations that need to be taken into account. **Firstly**, the results were based on one single sample and all measures were collected simultaneously. Future studies should replicate these results by testing the mediation effects more adequately. **Secondly**, future studies may use an ingroup vs. outgroup scenario to see whether high moral identity people effectively tend to use different moral standards towards ingroup and outgroup members. Moreover, the moral foundations theory by Haidt (2008) may be included in order to see whether it is moral identity (as in Smith et al., 2014) or, instead, moral inclusion that is a moderating/mediating variable between binding foundations and the condemnation of a morally illegitimate treatment of outgroups' members. **Thirdly**, future studies may deepen the relationships between moral identity, moral inclusion and benevolence with particular attention addressed to the neighborhoods in which the participants live as well as on the group membership of participants' friends. Indeed, given that benevolence applies to people close to us and these may belong to an outgroup, benevolence may constitute an alternative path to the possible inclusion of outgroups within one's own moral circle. In this sense, since some studies ([e.g.e.g., Weaver, 2008](#)) have shown that closeness is a key factor in promoting tolerance, this relationship may be mediated by benevolence values. **Fourthly**, the present study was limited to relation between observed variables rather than latent variables. Future studies might include a focus on the measurement model, or otherwise investigate the convergent and discriminant validity of the MIEG measure of moral inclusion in relation to measures of prejudice and ethnocentrism, though some overlap among the constructs would be theoretically expected. **Fifthly**, in future studies the same dependent variables used by moral identity

research (in particular as concerns altruism) should be investigated in order to better compare the results. Moreover, in the present research a measure of ingroup identification was not used. Future studies may test the expectation that elevated values that are attached to ingroup identification are linked to moral identity scores, while being unrelated to moral inclusion attitudes.

In conclusion, the results presented in this article confirmed the validity of considering moral inclusion vs. exclusion processes in analysing intergroup relations and altruistic and tolerant attitudes towards other people and social groups. Moreover, results supported the idea that ~~considering one's own~~ moral identity is not enough. The breadth/scope of the application of ~~the entailed this~~ morality should be considered, since it is not just important to be endowed with moral sensitivity, but to understand to whom a sense of who this fairness and ethics ~~are is~~ directed ~~to~~ and who is included in one's claim to a moral point of view~~own morality~~.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations between MIEG, Moral Identity and the other Variables.

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>		
			MIEG	MI INT	MI SYM
MIEG (1, 7)	5.50	1.11	–		
MI INT (1, 7)	4.01	0.75	.30***	–	
MI SYM (1, 7)	2.83	0.86	.18*	.55**	–
BLA PREJ (1, 7)	2.27	1.15	-.44***	.04	.03
SUB PREJ (1, 7)	2.77	1.29	-.37***	.13	.13
ETN (1, 7)	2.63	1.48	-.50***	.09	.06
Altruism (1, 7)	3.46	1.35	.36***	.11	.11
Power (1, 6)	2.73	1.19	-.24**	-.08	-.12
Achievement (1, 6)	3.97	1.06	-.09	.12	.13
Hedonism (1, 6)	4.17	1.14	-.03	.15*	.17*
Stimulation (1, 6)	4.24	1.07	.12	.20**	.13
Self-direction (1, 6)	4.96	0.73	.29***	.22**	.13
Universalism (1, 6)	5.03	0.79	.53***	.47**	.32**
Benevolence (1, 6)	4.67	0.88	.26***	.56**	.40**
Tradition (1, 6)	3.41	0.99	-.03	.37**	.37**
Conformity (1, 6)	3.95	0.96	-.03	.49**	.39**
Security (1, 6)	4.24	0.94	.05	.32**	.27**

Note. MIEG = Moral Inclusion/exclusion of other groups. MI INT = Moral identity

internalization. MI SYM = Moral identity symbolization. BLA PREJ = Blatant

prejudice. SUB PREJ = Subtle prejudice. ETN = Ethnocentrism. The numbers in

parentheses represent the scale range.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1. Path analysis testing the mediation effect of MIEG on the prediction between the two dimensions of moral identity and all the dependent variables. The reported coefficients are significant (at least $p < .05$) and standardized. MIEG = Moral Inclusion/exclusion of other groups. MI INT = Moral identity internalization. MI SYM = Moral identity symbolization. BLA PREJ = Blatant prejudice. SUB PREJ = Subtle prejudice. ETN = Ethnocentrism. CONF = Conformism. UNIV = Universalism. TRAD = Tradition. SELF = Self-direction. SECUR = Security. BENEV = Benevolence. STIMUL = Stimulation. ACHIEV = Achievement. HEDON = Hedonism. ALTR = Altruism.

