

Agent framing moderates concerns about moral contagion

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Abstract

Concerns about moral contamination shape peoples attitudes towards the objects they encounter in daily life. For example, money seems less desirable when it comes from a robbery (Tasimi & Gelman, 2017). Drawing on the theory of dyadic morality, we hypothesized that increasing an individuals sense of agency would reduce the salience of moral contagion and make people feel less vulnerable to moral contamination. Across two experiments, we adapted the study design of Tasimi and Gelman (2017), asking participants how much they desired a \$1 (Experiment 1) or \$100 (Experiment 2) bill associated with different negative moral histories. We modified the stimulus language so that participants were framed as either the moral agent or patient for all scenarios. As predicted, participants in the agent language condition expressed nearly the same level of desire regardless of the bills moral history, highlighting the role that feelings of agency play in moral decision-making.