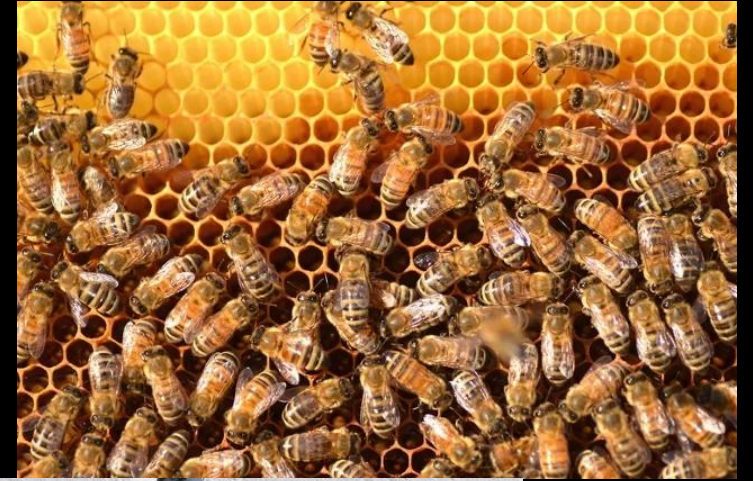


An underwater photograph of a large group of dolphins swimming in a deep blue ocean. The dolphins are seen from below, creating a sense of depth and movement. The water is clear, and the light filtering through creates a serene atmosphere.

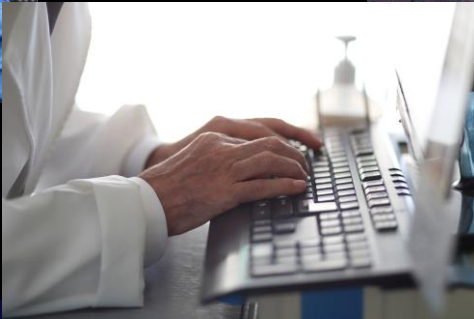
THE MORAL COMMITMENT PROBLEM, MORAL EMOTIONS, AND MORAL JUDGMENTS. AN EVOLUTIONARY ANALYSIS

Ann De Buck & Lieven Pauwels

COOPERATION IN NATURE



COMPLEX HUMAN COOPERATION



WHAT IS COOPERATION?

A social interaction in which an individual...

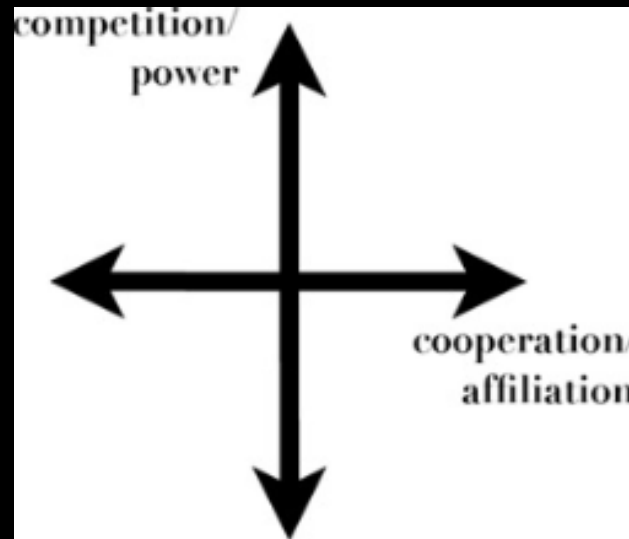
'... either suppress their self-interest in favor of others (e.g. helping, not hurting) or align their self-interest with that of others (e.g. reciprocity, conformity to social norms)'*

(Tomasello & Vaish, 2013)

**Note: self-interest is understood as a psychological mechanism*

COOPERATION FAILURES

MORAL COMMITMENT PROBLEMS



Social dilemma (e.g. Dawes, 1980)

Social problem (e.g. Hoffman, 2014)

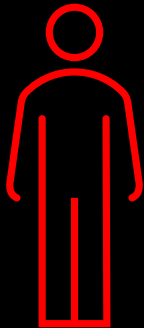
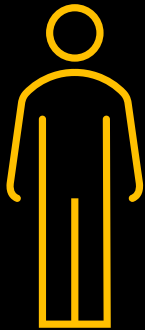
Collective action problem (e.g. Ostrom 1990)

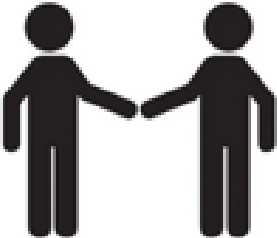


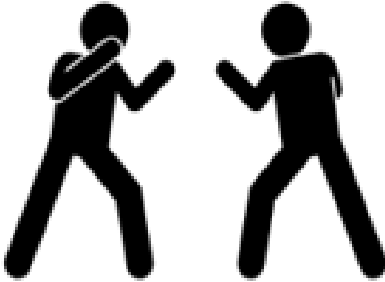
Conflict of interest (e.g. Alexander, 1987)

(Moral) commitment problem (e.g. Frank, 1988, 2001, 2011, 2020)

Figure: *The two dimensions of social life for complex organisms*
(Tomasello, 2016: p. 10)

THE MORAL COMMITMENT PROBLEM



	COOPERATE	DEFECT
COOPERATE		
DEFECT		

THE MORAL COMMITMENT PROBLEM

Broadly, speaking any situation in which you are tempted to do something but know it would be a great mistake if everybody did the same thing, is likely to be a commitment problem

Adapted from Ridley (1996)





Stealing

Cheating (e.g. breaking one's promise)





Free-riding (e.g. tax evasion but enjoying the benefits paid by the contributions of others)

SOLUTIONS TO THE MORAL COMMITMENT PROBLEM

- Humans have a “capacity for commitment” that is part of our behavioral repertoire.
- “Capacity for commitment” facilitated by moral emotions such as guilt, shame, anger, disgust.
- Moral emotions are evolved psychological mechanisms – commitment devices - that, at least partially, motivate people to ‘commit’ to cooperation in interactions involving a conflict of interest.
- See work of e.g. Alexander (1987), Curry (2016), de Waal (Frank (1988, 2001), Greene (2013), Haidt (2012), Nesse (2001), Tomasello (2016), Trivers (1971).....





	COOPERATE	DEFECT
COOPERATE		
DEFECT		

THE MORAL COMMITMENT PROBLEM AND MORAL EMOTIONS

	COOPERATE	DEFECT
COOPERATE	 TRUST	 MORAL INDIGNATION
DEFECT	 GUILT	 SPITE





THE MORAL COMMITMENT EMOTIONS

- Subtype of anger
- Involved in condemning others (Haidt, 2003)
- Trigger: a perceived lack of reciprocity
- Function: serves as a protective mechanism to uphold and enforce reciprocity (Trivers, 1971, 2006)

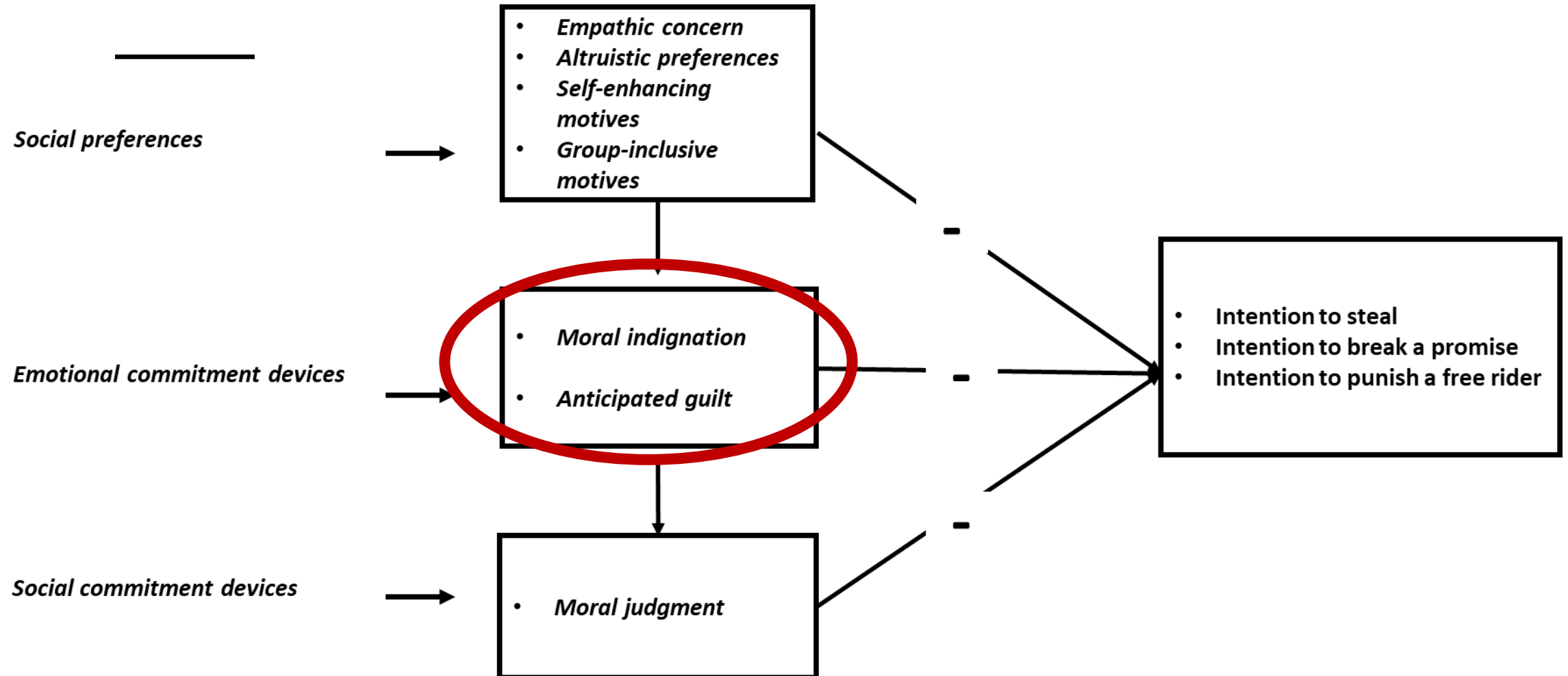
	COOPERATE	
COOPERATE	 TRUST	 MORAL INDIGNATION
DEFECT	 GUILT	 SPITE

THE MORAL COMMITMENT PROBLEM AND MORAL

- Self-conscious moral emotion (Haidt, 2003)
- Trigger: a perceived wrongdoing by self
- Function: to motivate a cheater to make amends and to behave reciprocally in the future (Trivers, 1971)
- *Anticipated guilt*

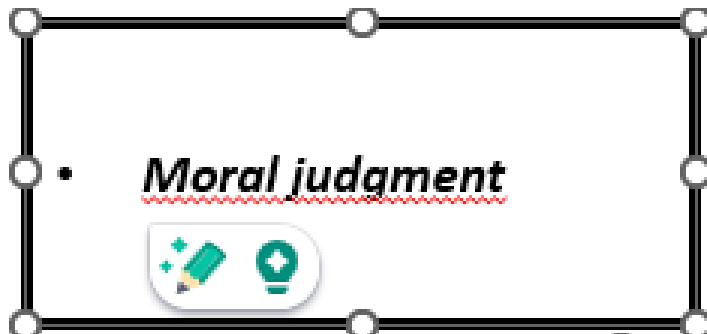
		COOPERATE	DEFECT
COOPERATE			 MORAL INDIGNATION
		 GUILT	 SPITE
DEFECT			

CONCEPTUAL MODEL



MORAL JUDGMENT

.



- Personal moral rules
- Rules that define:
 - What is right or wrong to do in a given situation
 - What is allowed and forbidden
 - Likely rewards or punishments for specific behaviors (e.g. Alexander, 1987; Opp, 2001, 2017, Turner & Stets, 2006)
- Internalized over the life course
- Central to many theories of delinquent behavior

SOCIAL PREFERENCES

- *Empathic concern*
- *Altruistic preferences*
- *Self-enhancing motives*
- *Group-inclusive motives*

- Affective component
- The ability to experience emotions directed toward another person
- Triggered by and congruent with the observed state of someone in need (Batson, 2011)

SOCIAL PREFERENCES

- *Empathic concern*
- *Altruistic preferences*
- *Self-enhancing motives*
- *Group-inclusive motives*

- Motivational component
- Preference to act with the goal of improving someone else's well-being (Batson, 2011)
- But, influenced by the perceived costs of helping (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2003)

SOCIAL PREFERENCES

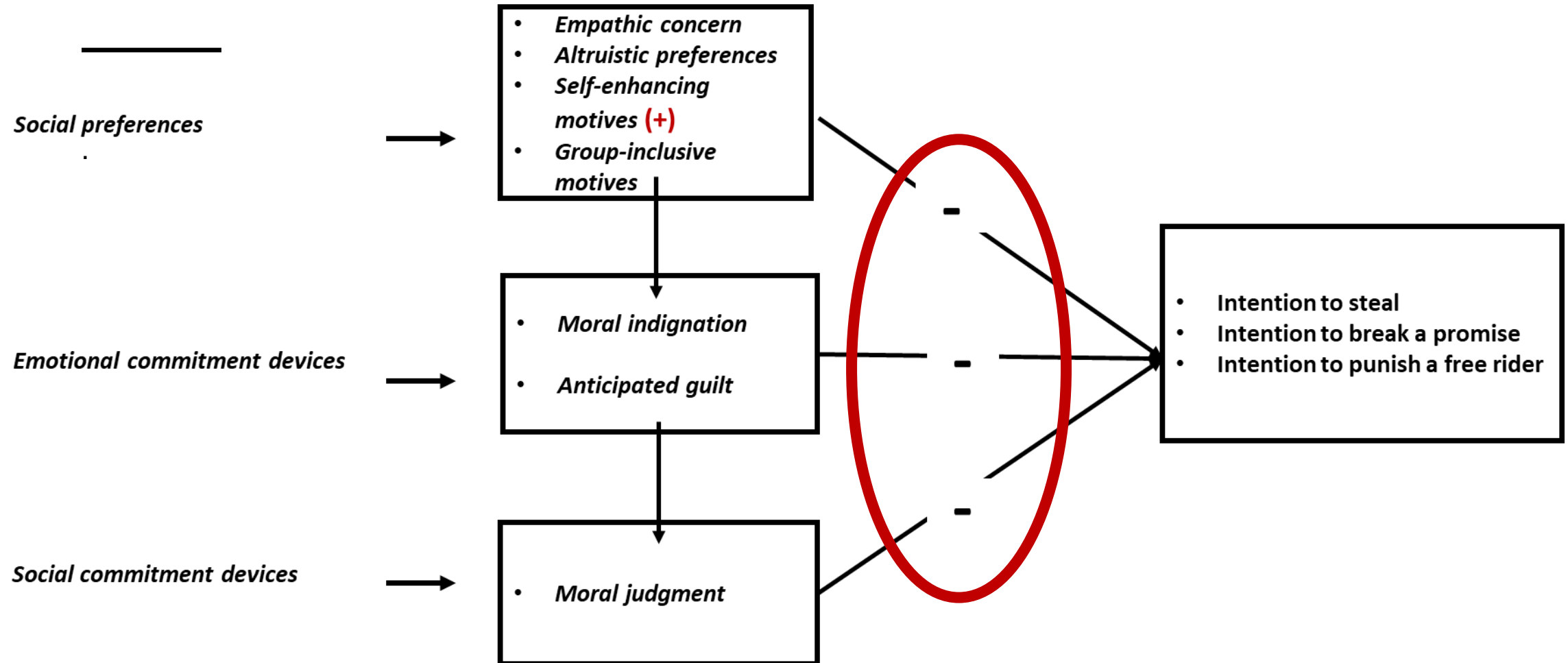
- *Empathic concern*
- *Altruistic preferences*
- *Self-enhancing motives*
- *Group-inclusive motives*

"I am selfish, unless there are cooperative incentives"
(incentive-based cooperation)

"I cooperate unless my partner is untrustworthy"
(trust-based cooperation)

Adapted from Declerck and Boone (2016)

CONCEPTUAL MODEL- HYPOTHESES



RESEARCH DESIGN



$n = 435$
Mean_age: 19,99
SD: 3,9 years

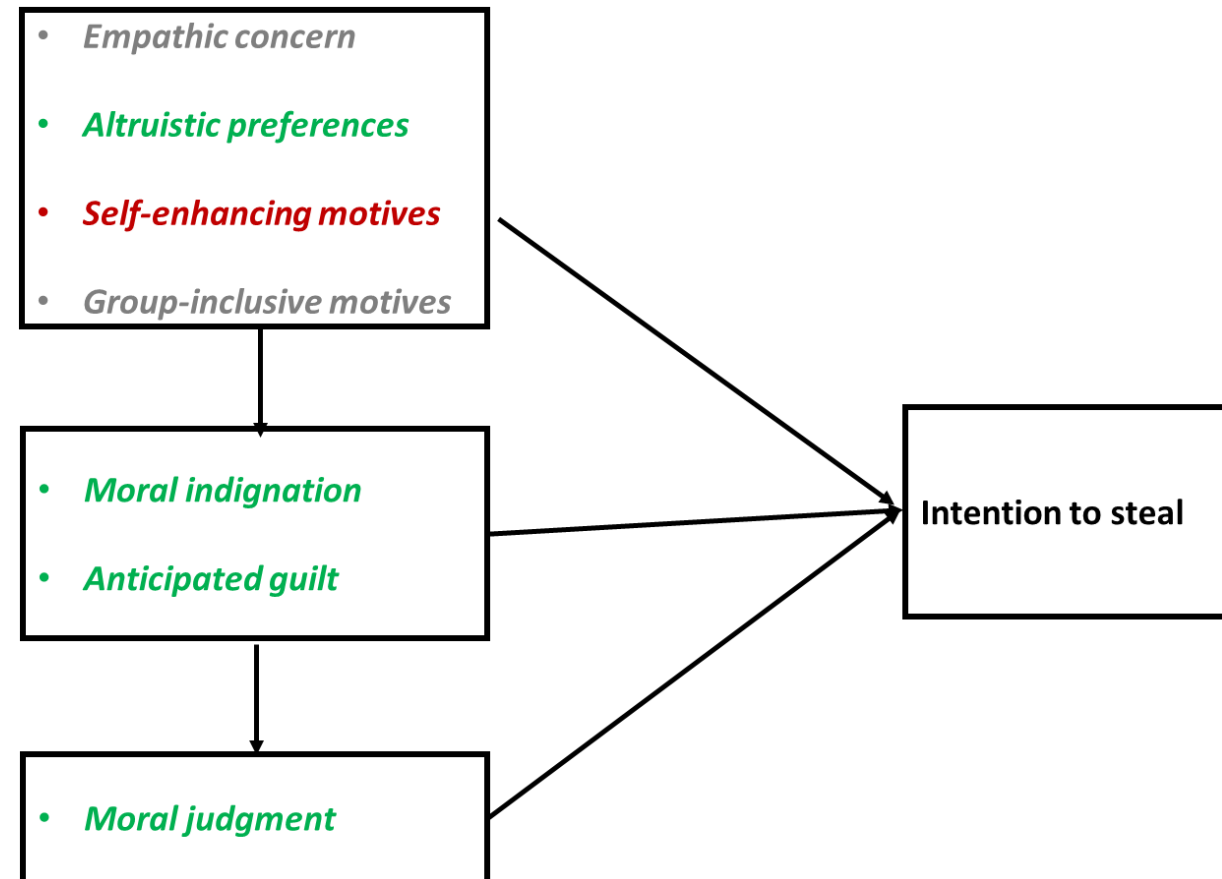
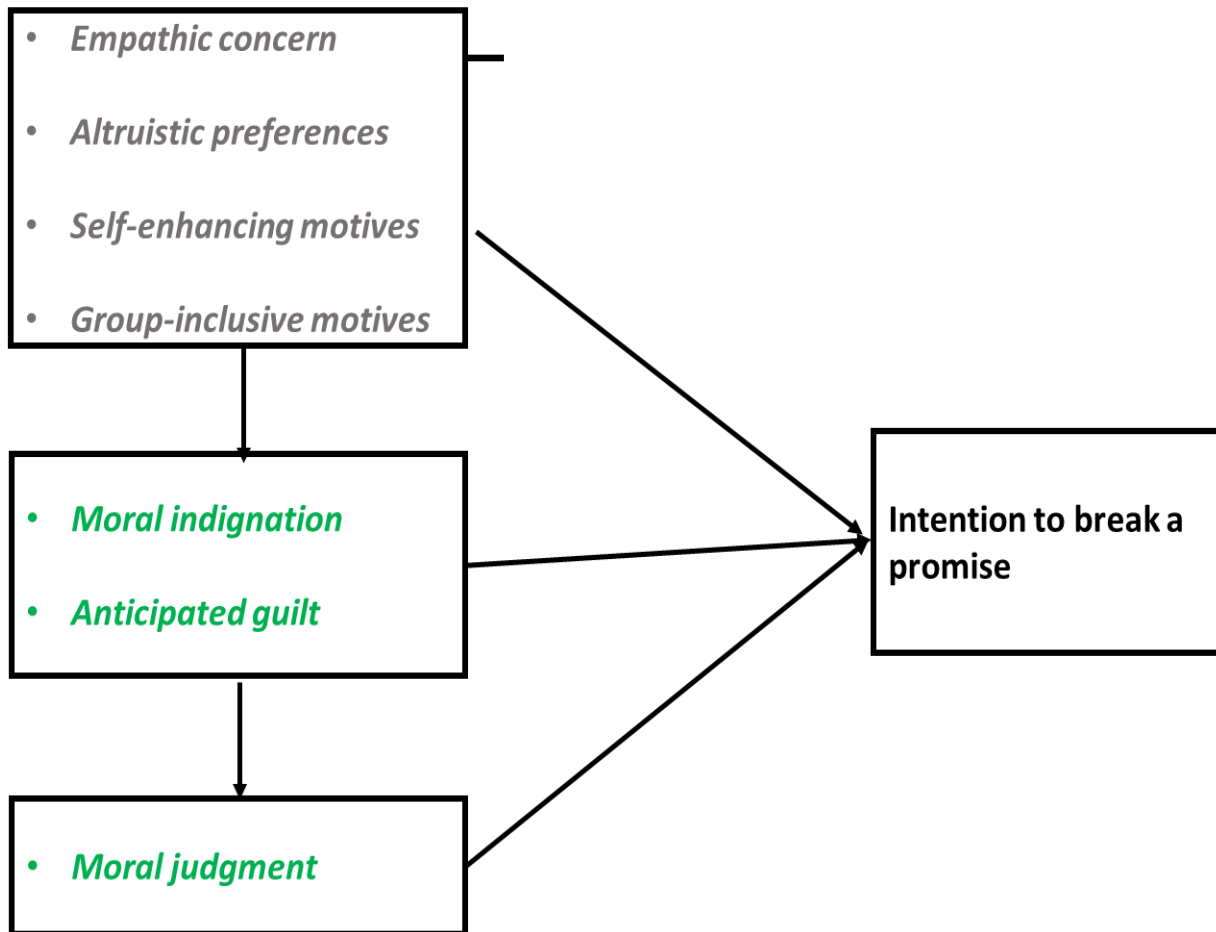


$n = 1061$
Mean_age: 19,85
SD: 2,9 years



Online survey
2 written scenarios

RESULTS



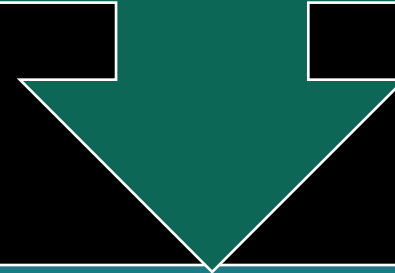
FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

1. Expanding the range of moral commitment problems
E.g. violence toward out-groups
2. Exploring additional emotions
E.g. Disgust
3. Modeling the individual-context interaction
E.g. interaction personal traits and situational factors in shaping moral decisions

THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION!



Imagine the following... *“Lucas, a master’s student, is conducting interviews with 50 ex-prisoners for his thesis. Pressed for time, he enlists the help of two fellow students, William and Robert, to transcribe the interviews. Lucas agrees to pay each of them 80 euros for a full day’s work. Both William and Robert get to work, but Robert works at twice the speed of William, completing significantly more transcriptions. At the end of the day, Lucas honors the agreement and pays Robert the full 80 euros. However, when it comes to William, Lucas claims there is no money left and hands him only 15 euros.”*



SCENARIO

‘BREAKING A PROMISE’

We ask you to put yourself in the shoes of Lucas, the master’s student:

1. Do you think what Lucas does is wrong? (moral judgment)
2. When you think about what Lucas does, does his behavior make you angry? (moral indignation)
3. If you were in Lucas’s place, would you do the same? (intention)
4. Suppose you acted like Lucas, would you feel guilty? (anticipated guilt)