The Moral Reasoning of Ideology: The Mediating Role of Moral Foundations, Moral Absolutism, and Consistency Norm

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Abstract. Focusing on the ideological and worldview premises of moral reasoning, our study (N = 313) has as a starting point the well-known relationship between morality and distributive justice norms. We examined the serially mediating role of progressiveness on morality, moral absolutism, and consistency norm on the relationship between ideological/ worldview perspectives and distributional criteria. Three groups of respondents were formed based on participants' ideological and worldview perceptions and then serial mediation analysis was conducted. The present findings suggest that morality is predicted by ideology and worldview and predicts attitudes toward the norms of equity and welfare chauvinism, through moral absolutism and interpretations of consistency norm, thus confirming our hypothesis. Moderate Passive Individualists emerged as the group who adopts the most progressive and inclusive attitude towards moral evaluations and practices, while Demobilized Collectivists and Neoliberals maintain a more conservative attitude towards issues that are subjected to moral framing. Our findings shed light on the crucial role of consistency norm, which has not received enough attention until now.

Moral reasoning has been a focal point of psychological science throughout time, as well as the starting point of socio-psychological problematics. Early attempts to negotiate morality, were focused almost exclusively on the benefit-harm binary (Gilligan, 1982; Hoffman, 1982; Kohlberg, 1969; Turiel, 1983) and ignored the importance of collectivity, were therefore considered to be unilaterally aligned with Western norms (Shweder et al., 1997). In the search for a definition of universal validity, Haidt and Joseph (2004) developed moral foundations theory, by drawing on, evidence from anthropological studies (see Shweder, 2008), evolutionary research (see de Waal et al., 2006) and social psychology (see Fiske, 1991; Schwartz, 1990). Many recent studies have focused on critically evaluating and assessing this theory (see for example: Graham et al., 2013; Gray & Keeney, 2015), and to infusing it with up-to-date research data. Morality is also exploited and studied in various ways: As an ideological premise and a distinctive difference between conservatives and progressives (Hannikainen et al., 2017; Jost et al., 2003; Lakoff, 2010; McAdams et al., 2008), as a normative predicate and individual difference (Dunn et al., 1995; Giammarco, 2016; Luke et al., 2021; Meindl et al., 2015), and as a main conflict resolution mechanism (Broeders et al., 2011; DeScioli & Kurzban, 2013; Opotow, 2004).

Our research examines moral reasoning as a practical application of the socio-psychological gaze and emphasizes the notion of consistency as an intrinsic operational element of moral reasoning and practices. The study

explores the link of ethics to both ideological and world-view concerns (Amable, 2011; Cornwell & Higgins, 2013; Hatemi et al., 2019; Pyszczynski & Kesebir, 2012) and to norms of distributive justice (Arsenio, 2015; Folger et al., 2013; Sparkes, 1990). It hypothesizes that ideology and worldview predicate specific moral bundles, which determine the levels of moral absolutism, and predicts the perspective of consistency norm in positive or negative terms and ultimately leads to the adoption of a specific attitude towards distributive criteria.

Ideological and Worldview Perspectives

The ideological-worldview function of the human subject has been widely studied within different traditions of social psychology, including social order and power relations (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Jost, Ledgerwood, et al., 2008), perspectives on human nature (Klubertanz, 1953; Wrightsman & Wuescher, 1974) and competitive world (De Keere, 2020; Perry et al., 2013). Each of these traditions assumes intrinsic human characteristics and content-specific dispositions and issues. In this sense, and taking into account how the worldview perspective is linked to and mediated by the adoption of ideological attitude systems (Federico et al., 2009; Walsh, 2000), perspectives on social order (Chryssochoou, 2018; Papastamou et al., 2022), neoliberalism (Bettache & Chiu, 2019; Girerd et al., 2020), perspectives on human nature (Klubertanz, 1953; Wrightsman & Wuescher, 1974) and competitive world (Duckitt et al., 2002; Perry et al., 2013), are tested as organizing principles of ethical reasoning.

Ideology refers to patterns and contents of social order perception and reproduction, directly linked to basic human motivations for understanding the world (Feldman, 2013; Jost et al., 2009, 2013). By mixing evaluative judgements with objective descriptions, ideology links individual, social and political views and allows for the avoidance and management of existential threat and the maintenance of important interpersonal relationships (Jost, 2017, 2019; Jost, Ledgerwood, et al., 2008; Duckitt & Fisher, 2003;). Conceived as a "complex of representations, ready-made ideas, relatively coherent, mixing values and beliefs, but perceived by those who subscribe to it as true and globalized knowledge" (Lipiansky, 1991, p. 359), ideology naturalizes social arbitrariness, transforms values into facts and interest into law (Papastamou, 2008). Finally, as a set of consensual shared beliefs that provide the moral and intellectual basis for a social, economic, and political system, ideology imbues human existence with meaning and inspiration, reduces, not always as effectively, anxiety, feelings of guilt and shame, dissonance, discomfort, and uncertainty (Chen & Tyler, 2001; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Kluegel & Smith, 1986).

Neoliberalism as an ideology constitutes both a specific socio-political project and, a system of ideas of anthropological implications with a clear political-cultural imprint (Asen, 2017; Bettache & Chiu, 2019; Girerd et al., 2020). It proposes an understanding of the self as a continuous developmental project and the need for personal growth and fulfilment as imperative (Adams et al., 2019; Beattie, 2019). Neoliberalism, also, presupposes freedom from the constraints of external interventions and posits effectively competitive relationships in the context of minimal state interventions as a common premise (Beattie, 2019). By emphasizing individual freedom, self-expression and personal development (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983) over other liberal values such as equality, it reinforces individualistic psychological tendencies (Adams et al., 2019; Kashima, 2019) and constitutes a highly attractive context for ambitious individuals (Davies, 2016). Rejecting, anything that impedes individual development and expression -even if they are obligations- enhances private initiative and individual economic interest as means and measures of personal well-being and happiness (Adams et al., 2019; Venugopal, 2015), and puts at risk the terms of social engagement.

Expressions of neoliberal cultural norms are associated with a wide range of social philosophies and worldviews (Birch, 2015; Frodeman et al., 2012; Leone et al., 2017; Wolford, 2005), such as the Competitive Worldview. Directly related to expertise and the sharing of knowledge among the competent and successful (Duckitt et al., 2002; Perry et al., 2013; Sibley et al., 2007), the world is described as a highly competitive environment, equivalent to a jungle, where engagement in a ruthless and unethical struggle for resources and power is inevitable and winning is everything (Duckitt et al., 2002; Federico et al., 2009; Perry et al., 2013). By insisting on maintaining the intergroup hierarchy and justifying inequality, it attracts people who belong to the conservative, right side of the conventional right-left spectrum (Duckitt, 2001; Freire, 2015) or who have been exposed to social situations of high inequality and competition (Perry et al., 2013; Radkiewicz & Skarżyńska, 2021). As a world view it fosters a belief in the dynamics of domination over the weak, producing a rationale for the more powerful to be paternalistically benevolent towards the less powerful (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Fisher, 2003).

Since ideology has anthropological foundations, the discourse on human nature is taken together as the dialectical relation of internal consistency-external feedback, which expresses the constitutive activity of the human subject, that is, its ability to negotiate and reflect on its own existence (Jaggar, 1983; Laird, 2014; Wrightsman & Wuescher, 1974). According to Wrightsman and Wuescher (1974), the Philosophy of Human Nature (PHN), is the composite of six factors -which can also be considered independent of each other- functions as

an existential and interpretative substrate and determines the terms of negotiation between self and "other". By grouping together, the central thematic reference points, it comes down to two main axes. On the one hand, it describes trustworthiness, altruism, independence, and willpower-rationality, as key regulators of human behavior and a measure of a subject's attitude and perspectives towards another, and on the other hand, complexity, and variability, as a common core of evaluative nature, related to the understanding and consistency of human nature (Agger et al., 1961; Maddock & Kenny, 1972; Wrightsman, 1964). As a world-theoretical dimension of social thought, it recognizes political cynicism, rationalism, lower levels of life satisfaction and less favorable value judgments about self and "others" as the basis for differentiating negative philosophy of human nature from positive philosophy of human nature, which is associated with strong religious feelings, reliability, morality and responsibility, goal-orientation, altruism, and an optimistic view of life (Sanford, 1961; Wrightsman, 1964).

Therefore, inter-subjective arrangements emerge as forms of reasoning and understanding of the world and reframe reality in socio-political and anthropological terms.

Morality

Moral foundations theory is a condensing theory that attempts to systematize the problematics of ethical thinking and evaluation (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). It proposes that the concept of ethics is regulated through five dimensions of moral foundations (Graham & Haidt, 2012; Graham et al., 2012):

Harm/care: Relates to values such as compassion, kindness, and caring and refers to a person's ability to feel -or not feel- another's pain.
Fairness/cheating: Emphasizes the principle of proportionality, refers to the sense of justice, the assertion of rights and the concept of autonomy.
Loyalty/betrayal: It refers to patriotism, self - sacrifice and vigilance as an obligation to the group.
Authority/Subversion: In the context of obligatory hierarchical social relations, it refers to respect for tradition and obedience to legitimate authority.
Sanctity/degradation: Purity, control of carnal desires, especially lust, and hygiene are posited as key components of man's effort to live virtuously.

According to moral foundations theory, morality, regulates attitudes towards self and "others" and sensitivity to external/internal feedback. It also determines the terms of negotiation at public and private levels and acts as a balancing factor between disengagement from the constraints of belonging and the qualification of sharing (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010; Graham et al., 2018;

Graham, Nosek, Haidt, Iyer, Koleva, et al., 2011; Zigon, 2009). Morality legitimates the social order because it facilitates an appreciation of social reality and governs relations of trust (Alexander, 2014; Rawls, 2010).

By examining the moral narrative of liberals and conservatives the differences that systematically appear between them are assessed as predictable and foreseeable (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Hersh, 2001). Specifically, one the one hand, conservatives prime the dimensions of loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation. They also strongly resist social change, accept inequality as natural and inevitable, appear as more dogmatic with a stronger death anxiety and choose conflict as a mechanism for restoring order (Graham & Haidt, 2012; Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Schein & Gray, 2015; Sherkat & Ellison, 1997). In contrast, liberals consistently demonstrate a preference for explanation and justification since harm/care and fairness/cheating are important to them. They also commit to upholding values such as altruism, justice, and equity in the context of promoting broader social change (Carens, 1992; Graham & Haidt, 2012; Perry & Perry, 2009; Schein & Gray, 2015).

Given conservative thinking generally refers to principles, while progressive perspectives are humanistically oriented, it is reasonable that moral absolutism, as a self-referential sentiment, is directly linked to the bundles of moral foundations. As an inviolable principle independent of content, moral absolutism is bounded and delimited in the qualitative characteristics that individuals attribute to the concept of morality (Peterson et al., 2009; Vecina et al., 2016). Moral absolutism violates the terms and conditions of social connectivity because it is derived from epistemological motives of certainty and functions as a predominantly rationalizing mechanism (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010; McConnell, 1981; Shaw et al., 2011). It proposes a model whereby morality is independent of culture and circumstances and posits morals as being dictated by self-interested ends (Graham & Haidt, 2012; Peterson et al., 2009), and that substantive moral behavior is optional (Hawley, 2008; Leone et al., 2017; Shaw et al., 2011). Moral absolutism operates as a scheme of thought that either prevents the reduction and matching of morality to its social contexts (Hawley, 2008) or emphasizes the positivity of consistency through the practical service of an ideal, recalls that moral behavior inherently involves patterns of consistency.

Norm of Consistency

Consistency, either as a socio-psychological concept and social value (Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1946, 1958; Newcomb, 1953) or as a constant human demand and

natural need, is studied as an ideological norm and a problematic about individual differences. The preference for consistency between beliefs, behaviors and attitudes, at public and private levels (Campus, 1974; Caspi & Moffitt, 1993; Nichols & Webster, 2014; Unsworth & Miller, 2021), is operationalized and interpreted, first and foremost as a specific theoretical problematic that presupposes a disposition to classify participants by their main 'personality trait' of commitment or not to the constancy of words and actions or to the consistency of words and attitudes over time (Fleeson & Noftle, 2008; Papastamou & Prodromitis, 2010; Swann & Brooks, 2012). Low levels of preference for consistency are associated with spontaneous and unpredictable reactions, a preference for constant and rapid change, lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression (Cialdini et al., 1995; Eriksson & Lindström, 2007; Guadagno & Cialdini, 2010; Sheldon et al., 1997). In contrast, high levels of preference for consistency are associated with an increased need for stability (Eriksson & Lindström, 2007; Koriat & Adiv, 2016; Nichols & Webster, 2014;), especially at the personal level, higher levels of self-control (Suh, 2000), a reduced need for reassurance from external sources (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001), more intense concern about the appropriateness of the social behavior at hand, and reduced variability of reactions to external feedback (Butler et al., 1994).

Consistency, on the other hand, operates as an abstract ideological principle, as a double-reading pattern of thought, which provides people with meaning and constitutes the existential ground on which the social self is constructed. It is considered essential to personal and social harmony, provides the primary evidence of maturity and is a prerequisite for security and predictability of human thought and behavior (Papastamou & Prodromitis, 2010). According to Papastamou and Prodromitis (2010), consistency is open to multiple readings. The *positive perception of consistency norm*, as a hyper–normative notion, relates to continuity, reliability and stability and is systematically contrasted with the adverse aspects of dogmatism and intolerance, the *negative perception of consistency norm*. The *positive perception of inconsistency*, as an organizational principle inherent to openness as a value and an element of individuality, praises flexibility and adaptability, as opposed to the *negative perception of inconsistency*, which also forcibly frustrates the expectations of the subjects, underlining the notions of unreliability and abrasiveness.

Given, consistency constitutes the most precious manifestation of human nature, and that the endorsement of immorality, in essence, amounts to the activation of the negative perception of consistency, moral behavior and consistency maintain a strong relationship. When someone is accused of being immoral and ends up being judged as inconsistent, highlights the moral judgments and the individual frames of the consistency norm involved in the process. Therefore, the inclusion and co-examination of consistency as a mediating factor in the relationship between morality and justice is necessary, given that the literature so far -at least explicitly- does not include it.

Distributive Justice Norms

Since the search for strict and objective criteria for evaluating and determining just behavior would overlook the importance of subjective experience, it is acknowledged that norms of justice constitute a socially constructed reality, the dynamics of which shape, maintain and alter people's evaluations of justice (Bauman & Skitka, 2009; Deutsch, 1983; Folger, 1977, 2012; Folger et al., 2005). Distributive justice norms, as criteria for distributing goods and resources in contexts of organized social interactions, presuppose and are based on worldview principles and constitute the practical realization of ethical assumptions (Arsenio, 2015; Sparkes, 1990; Folger et al., 2013). The norms respond to different rationales, correspond to political actions, and are reflected as the active contribution to socio-political organization (Miller, 2017; van Parijs, 2017). The *principle of equity* presupposes that the benefit is proportional to the contribution, so negotiations and comparisons between individuals are undertaken based on assessments of pros and cons (Adams, 1965; Greenberg & Cohen, 2014), and is prioritized in cases where productivity is the main concern (Arts & Gelissen, 2001; Deutsch, 1975). In terms of social policy, it appears in the discourse of conservative regimes as the basis of social welfare programmes (Ennser-Jedenastik, 2017). The *principle of equality*, on the other hand, is based on the formulation and application of conditions that ensure equal treatment of all without exception and regardless of social status, income, contribution or need (Deutsch, 1975). The application of this principle ensures social harmony and protects against the disruption of interpersonal relationships (Ennser-Jedenastik, 2017). Finally, the *principle of need* argues that benefits should be directed -primarily- towards those who are underprivileged (Deutsch, 1975) and is favored in communities that prioritize individual development and well-being based on income criteria (Arts & Gelissen, 2001).

High social status and abundance of goods are associated with a preference for the equity norm according to Ennser-Jedenastik (2017), while deprivation and poverty are associated with a preference for the principles of equality and need. Furthermore, values and political ideology influence the choice of distributional criterion (Rasinski, 1987). Conservatives evaluate the equity

norm as more equitable, while progressives prefer the equity principle (Rasinski, 1987; Skitka & Tetlock, 1992). Previous research has shown that the relationship between ideology and preferences for policies is mediated by the social justice evaluations of an individual (Deutsch, 1975; Feygina, 2013). In normal circumstances those who contribute less, argue that the norm of equity does not apply, thus claiming a share equal to that of others (Leventhal & Anderson, 1970; Messick & Sentis, 1979). However, there are instance were given that time and cognitive resource saving considerations are involved in the choice of a sharing norm, individuals who are systematically involved in sharing problems prefer the norm of equality, even if the application of the norm of fairness would allow them to get a larger share (Mikula, 1980).

Welfare chauvinism as an ideological project entirely relevant to criteria and priorities in the distribution of resources and goods, setting cultural-ethnic integration as a measure of identity, needs to be considered although it is not part of the traditional theorizing of distributive justice, (de Koster et al., 2012; Hjorth, 2016). Welfare chauvinism situates the right to distributism in integration (Careja et al., 2016; Kitschelt & McGann, 1995), sets citizenship, nationality, race, religion as a criterion (de Koster et al., 2012; Kootstra, 2016) and is part of populist radical right narratives, in the context of anti-immigration policies. In terms of intergroup integration, it prioritizes the principle of equality for peers and activates the principle of fairness for different ethnic or national groups (van Oorschot, 2006), which is why it is preferred in countries with liberal and conservative welfare regimes (de Koster et al., 2012).

Given that theoretical concepts, such as norms of distributive justice, directly related to social justice and clearly indicative of ideological position and social identity, are translated into applied contexts of real life, it is reasonable to think that morality, emerges as demarcation and valuation of the social.

Present Study

This research explores the mediating role of moral foundations, moral absolutism, and consistency norm, building on the already known relationship between ideological-worldview perspectives and distributive justice norms. Literature so far studies consistency mostly as an individual difference and has not yet shed enough light on the critical role of the consistency norm, as a social value and sociopsychological concept. Likewise, there is a theoretical and research gap regarding the relationship between morality and consistency norm, so we aim to leverage and extend insight on this regard.

We investigate the moral reasoning of ideology through moral absolutism and interpretations of consistency norm. By capturing the different ideological-worldview perspectives, we hypothesize that ideology and worldview predict specific contents of moral reference, which in turn prescribe the level of moral absolutism and consequently the perception of consistency, which ultimately determines the attitude adopted towards the criteria for the distribution of goods.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Three hundred and thirteen ($N = 313$) questionnaires were collected in March–April 2022 in Greece. A total of 193 women (61.7%), 112 men (35.8%) and 8 gender – selected self– identified (2.6%) responded. Participants were between 18 and 71 years with a mean age of 30.28 years ($SD=13.37$). Participants completed the questionnaires in Greek, using versions validated in this language and were approached individually by researchers. They were asked to reply to a battery of questions related to various social and political issues, that emerge from time to time in public space, and they were presented with a series of statements and were asked to carefully read them and indicate their level of agreement using a seven-point scale from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree.* Table 1 shows sample items, scale scores reliabilities and Cronbach's alpha. To evaluate statistical power, we used Monte Carlo power analysis for indirect effects (Schoemann et al., 2017). The analysis indicated that a sample size of 313 participants in a serial mediation design with two mediators afforded 87% power (α = .05).

Measures

Baseline Measures

Participants self–reported demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender).

Political Self–Positioning

Political self-positioning was measured on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 = *extreme left* to 10 = *extreme right.* Participants were also given the option to refuse positioning on the scale. After recoding the 10–point scale, five groups of political self–positioning were formed: 1 = *Left* (1– 4), 3 = *Center* (5 – 6), 4 = *Right* (7 – 10), 5 = *Refusal.*

Unless otherwise all variables were measured using a seven–point Likert scale with higher numbers indicating higher values on a given measure.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Perceptions of Consistency Norm, Distributive Justice Norms, Progressivism on Morality and Moral Absolutism*

N = 313	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Positive Perception of Consistency	.41 (1.83)	1							
2. Positive Perception of Inconsistency	1.12 (1.58)	−.388**	1						
3. Equity	2.74 (1.58)	−.118*	−.022	1					
4. Needs	5.76 (1.51)	.125*	−.018	.032	1				
5. Welfare Chauvinism	1.68 (1.17)	−.041	−.066	.464**	.015	1			
6. Equality	5.17 (1.94)	.065	.019	−.083	.032	.004	1		
7. Progressivism on Morality	2.35 (1.24)	.021	.060	−.401**	.148**	−.457**	.081	1	
8. Moral Absolutism	2.64 (1.00)	.224**	−.237**	.194**	−.017	.329**	.040	−.416**	1

*Note. *p < .01. **p < .05.*

Ideology

The instrument (Papastamou et al., 2022) was consisted of 16 items representing different perspectives on social order: *Empathy* (single item, "It hurts me when other people suffer"), *Relative Deprivation* (two items; "I often find it difficult to get the things that I and my family need", "I am satisfied with my life" [reversed], r = .21, p < .001), *Legalization of Power Differences* (single item, "In this country, power differences between social groups will never change"), *Social Mobility* (two items, e.g., "In our society, anyone who tries hard succeeds in the end", r = .65, p <. 001), *Dangerous World* (single item, "At this time in our country, life is unpredictable and dangerous"), *Collectivism* (single item, "Only together with others in the same position can one strive to improve one's own"), *Reproduction of Social Order* (single item, "Even if one is qualified, if one does not come from the upper classes, will not succeed"), *Norm of Internality* (single item, "I need to feel that I personally determine my own destiny") and *Politicization* (five items, e.g., "It has always been important for me to publicly express my political views", "No matter what I do I cannot influence anything that happens in politics" [reversed]), α = .81). The item "I make sure I never read or listen to the news" was excluded from *Politicization* index due to reliability reasons.

Competitive Worldview

14 items from Competitive Worldview Scale (Duckitt et al., 2002) were averaged on a single index ("Jungle", α = .77), after reversing the initial scores so that high values correspond to a feeling of the world as a highly competitive environment (e.g., "It is better to be loved than feared" [reversed], "Everyone has a right to the benefit of the doubt", "In life it is more important to have integrity in one's dealings than to have money and power").

Neoliberalism

Four dimensions of neoliberalism (Girerd et al., 2020) were measured: *Free Will* (e.g., "People should take full responsibility for their bad choices.", α = .75), *Hedonism* (e.g., "Life is too short not to enjoy every moment, α = .67), *Need for Uniqueness* (e.g., "My choices in life are naturally oriented toward what is original», α = .76) and *Perceived Personal Control* (e.g., "When I make plans, I'm almost certain that I will accomplish them", α = .45).

Philosophy of Human Nature (PHN)

Positive Philosophy of Human Nature (α = .73) was measured with eight items from Wrightsman Revised Philosophies of Human Nature scale (1964). Example items include the following: "Treat others as you want to be treated", "Most people would lie if they had something to gain from it" [reversed], "Most people would stop and help someone who is stuck with a car", "Most people claim to be honest and ethical, but few actually prove it at the critical moment" [reversed], "Most people would pull over and help someone who's stuck with his/her car".

Consistency Norm

The questionnaire included a series of measures to investigate how participants interpret the different perceptions of the consistency norm (see Papastamou & Prodromitis, 2010). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to confirm the associations between the observed variables and the factors. The four-factor model fit the data acceptably: $\chi^2(14, N = 313) = 26.9$, $p = .02$, $\chi^2/df = 1.92$, SRMS = .04, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .05 [.02, .085]. The endorsement of each perception was measured with two items: *Positive Perception of Consistency* (e.g., "To be consistent and stable, one needs one's actions to always agree with one's ideas and principles", r = .28, p < .001), *Negative Perception of Consistency* (e.g., "When one always behaves according

to one's ideas and opinions, it is a manifestation of rigidity and inability to adapt to the changing world", $r = .52, p < .001$), *Positive Perception of Inconsistency* (e.g., "To behave in a way that does not always agree with one's ideas shows an ability to be flexible and adapt to circumstances", $r = .36, p < .001$) and *Negative Perception of Inconsistency* (e.g., "When a person's actions are not consistent with his previous actions, that person has an unstable personality", $r = .18, p = .002$). Single index *Positive Perception of Consistency* was composed by subtracting Negative Perception of Consistency index from the Positive Perception of Consistency index. Likewise, index *Positive Perception of Inconsistency* was composed.

Progressivism on Morality

The Moral Foundations Questionnaire - Short Version by Graham, Nosek, Haidt, Iyer, Spassena, et al. (2011) was used. Participants were asked to assess, when deciding if something is right or wrong, whether each of the 11 items is relevant to their way of thinking, using a scale from 1 = *Not Relevant at All* to 7 = *Completely Relevant*. They were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed with each of the next 11 items. Harm/care index and fairness/cheating index were averaged on a single index (*"Progressivism"*, α = .70). Loyalty/betrayal index, authority/subversion index and sanctity/degradation index were also averaged on a single index (*"Conservatism"*, α = .84). Single index *Progressivism on Morality* was composed by subtracting *Conservatism* from *Progressivism*.

Moral Absolutism

The Moral Absolutism scale (MAS) by Lauriola et al. (2015) were used to measure moral absolutism. The instrument was consisted of six items (*"Moral Absolutism"*, α = .60). Examples: "There is only one appropriate way to think and act morally", "Right and wrong are not defined in terms of black and white, since there are gradations" [reversed].

Distributive Justice Norms

We asked the participants to indicate the way the Greek Government and European Union's resources should be distributed. The endorsement of each norm was measured with two items: "Proportionate to each person's contribution to society" and "Proportionally to the economic contribution of each member-state" (*"Equity"*, $r = .53, p < .001$), "Proportionate to the needs of each individual" and "According to the needs of each member–state" (*"Need"*, $r = .71, p < .001$), "Equal for all" and "Equally for all member-states" (*"Equality*, $r = .74, p < .001$), "Proportionate to one's national-cultural background" and "Proportionate to their culture" (*"Welfare Chauvinism"*, $r = .53, p < .001$).

Results

Analysis Strategy

Participants were grouped based on their ideological and worldview perception, while also identifying the political profile of each of the three resulting groups. In addition, we tested if there were statistically significant differences by ideological-worldview group in terms of the interpretation of the consistency norm, moral reasoning and the factors that should regulate state benefits. Finally, the serial mediating role of morality, moral absolutism, and the consistency norm interpretation in the relationship between ideological-worldview perspectives and norms of distributive justice was examined.

Preliminary Analysis

Three groups of respondents were formed after subjecting data on ideology, neoliberalism, competitive worldview, and the philosophy of human nature to K-means Cluster Analysis (see Table 2).

Group 1

Moderate Passive Individualists (28.1% of the total sample) express to an intermediate degree, compared to the other two groups, relative deprivation, believe in individual mobility and express the least degree of politicization. They perceive the world as a jungle more in comparison to the other groups, while adopting a relatively positive philosophy about human nature. Their need for uniqueness is not high, and the dimension of hedonism is significantly less preferred than the other groups. They express a neutral attitude towards collective activism, while their "moderately optimistic" view of individual improvability is complemented by their rejection of the social reproduction perspective (individual success due to class origin).

Group 2

Demobilized Collectivists (28.4% of the total sample), believe more than the other groups in the effectiveness of collective action and are more systematically involved in politics. They feel the greatest relative deprivation and assess the possibilities of social mobility as extremely limited. They express, compared to the other groups, the lowest degree of belief in free human will, and seem not to perceive the world as a highly competitive place. In addition, they adopt the least optimistic view of human nature and an intermediate positive attitude towards hedonism. Finally, they are

Table 2. Grouping Participants by Ideological - Worldview Perceptions (K-means Clyster Analysis)

N = 313	Deprived Politicized Collectivists (n = 88)	Moderate Passive Individualists (n = 89)	Neoliberals (n = 136)
Relative Deprivation	3.38	3.63	2.73
Social Mobility	4.31	3.03	5.56
Politicization	2.81	4.40	3.53
Competitive Worldview	2.79	2.25	2.45
Free Will	4.42	4.13	4.97
Hedonism	5.46	5.64	5.99
Need for Uniqueness	4.67	4.77	5.34
Perceived Personal Control	4.26	4.27	4.49
Positive Philosophy of Human Nature	2.89	2.70	3.15
Empathy	6	6	6
Power Difference Legitimacy	5	5	4
Reproduction of Social Order	3	5	2
Collectivism	4	5	3
Dangerous World	5	5	5
Internalization Rule	5	6	6

the group that clearly accepts the social reproduction perspective.

Group 3

Neoliberals (43.5% of the total sample) more than any other group, predisposed each one of the four tenets of neo-liberalism (free will, hedonism, perceived personal control, and need for uniqueness). They believe in the possibility of social mobility, systematically avoid involvement in politics and reject the effectiveness of collective action. They do not perceive the world as unfair or antagonistic, and without feeling a sense of relative deprivation, they maintain a relatively optimistic attitude regarding human nature. Finally, they are less likely than other groups to reproduce views on power differentials.

Political Self–Positioning

Based on the distribution of ideological-worldview groups on the conventional left-right spectrum, clear differences in their political profile are noted, $\chi^2(6, 313)$ = 44.18, $p < .001$. Applying Factorial Correspondence Analysis to a 4 (political groups) x 3 (ideological-worldview groups) table clearly shows that Moderate Passive Individualists are positioned to the left in contrast to Neoliberals who have a clear center-right positioning (see Figure 1). It is the Demobilized Collectivists who mainly refuse to be politically positioned.

Analysis

One way analysis of variance showed statistically significant differences between the three groups,

$F(2, 310) = 3.968$, $p = .02$, on the Positive Perception of Consistency dimension of the Consistency Norm scale (see Table 3). Post hoc analyses using the Bonferroni post hoc criterion for significance indicated that Moderate Passive Individualists ($M = .65$, $SD = 1.87$) were more likely to favor the positive perception of consistency norm in comparison to Demobilized Collectivists ($M = -.044$, $SD = 1.66$) and Neoliberals ($M = .55$, $SD = 1.88$) Statistically significant differences were not observed between the latter two ($p = 1$).

One-way ANOVA, $F(2, 310) = 22.944$, $p < .001$, revealed statistically significant differences between the three groups in relation to the adoption of progressive attitudes to evaluate moral issues while there were no statistically significant differences regarding Moral Absolutism ($p = .381$) (see Table 3). The Multiple Comparisons Bonferroni Test also revealed that Moderate Passive Individualists ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.24$) appeared more progressive in their beliefs about morality compared to both Demobilized Collectivists ($M = 1.48$, $SD = 1.05$) as well as with Neoliberals ($M = 1.39$, $SD = .99$). No statistically significant differences were observed between Neoliberals and Demobilized Collectivists ($p = 1$).

Significant differences were observed when studying norms of distributive justice amongst the three groups. Their views differed significantly regarding Equity, $F(2, 310) = 9.45$, $p < .001$, and Welfare Chauvinism, $F(2, 310) = 9.25$, $p < .001$, (see table 3), but there were no significant differences in their views on Need ($p = .167$) and Equality ($p = .511$). The Multiple Comparisons Bonferroni Test revealed differences when it came to rating Equity and Welfare Chauvinism. Equity was less important to Moderate Passive Individualists ($M = 2.74$,
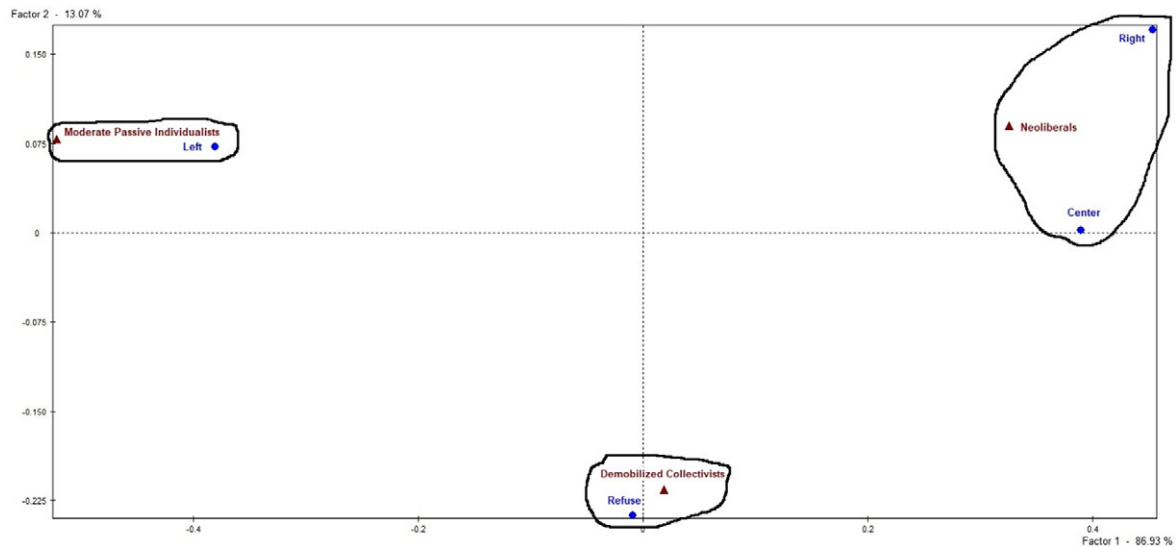
Figure 1. Groups of ideological/worldview perspectives and political self – positioning (Factorial Correspondence Analysis)

Table 3. *Means, Sstandard Deviations and ANOVA Statistics for Perceptions of Consistency Norm, Distributive Justice Norms, Progressivism on Morality and Moral Absolutism by Ideological- Worldview Group*

	Deprived Politicized Collectivists ($n = 88$)		Moderate Passive Individualists ($n = 89$)		Neoliberals ($n = 136$)		ANOVA statistics (F, df, p value, η_ρ^2)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Positive Perception of Consistency	.653[a]	1.87	−.044[b,c]	1.66	.551[a]	1.88	$F(2, 310) = 3.968$, $p < .05$, $\eta_\rho^2 = .025$
Positive Perception of Inconsistency	1.02	1.62	.955	1.38	1.29	1.66	$F(2, 310) = 1.512$, $p = .222$, $\eta_\rho^2 = .01$
Equity	2.74[a]	1.58	3.34[b,c]	1.46	3.62[c]	1.44	$F(2, 310) = 9.453$, $p < .001$, $\eta_\rho^2 = .057$
Needs	5.76	1.51	5.39	1.36	5.45	1.39	$F(2, 310) = 1.798$, $p = .167$, $\eta_\rho^2 = .011$
Welfare Chauvinism	1.68[a]	1.17	2.5[b,c]	1.29	2.24[c]	1.36	$F(2, 310) = 9.258$, $p < .001$, $\eta_\rho^2 = .056$
Equality	5.17	1.94	5.17	1.64	4.94	1.91	$F(2, 310) = .674$, $p = .511$, $\eta_\rho^2 = .004$
Progressivism on Morality	2.35[a]	1.24	1.48[b,c]	1.05	1.39[c]	.99	$F(2, 310) = .22.944$, $p < .001$, $\eta_\rho^2 = .129$
Moral Absolutism	2.64	1.00	2.82	.84	2.79	.94	$F(2, 310) = .969$, $p =. 381$, $\eta_\rho^2 = .006$

Note. [a,b,c] Means that differ in superscripts are significantly different from each other ($p < .05$) according to the simple main effects analysis.

$SD = 1.58$) than it was to Demobilized Collectivists ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.46$) and Neoliberals ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.44$). No statistically significant differences were observed between Neoliberals and Demobilized Collectivists ($p = .508$). The Multiple Comparisons Bonferroni Test also revealed that Moderate Passive Individualists ($M = 1.68$, $SD = 1.17$) appeared less chauvinist compared

to Demobilized Collectivists ($M = 2.5$, $SD = 1.29$) and Neoliberals ($M = 2.24$, $SD = 1.36$), with no statistically significant differences between the last two ($p = .453$).

Serial Mediation Model

Serial mediation was conducted using PROCESS Macro (Model 6) for SPSS to test the sequential mediating role

of progressivism about morality, moral absolutism, and the positive reading of the consistency norm in the relationship between ideological-worldviews and fairness as one of the four norms of distributive justice. Percentile-based, bias-corrected bootstrap CIs were calculated for the indirect effects using 10,000 bootstrap samples. Participants' ideological-worldview grouping was set as a predictor variable, progressiveness on morality, moral absolutism and positive perception of the consistency norm were successively set as mediating factors, and equity as a final variable. Helmert coding was chosen for the predictor variable to test the complex mediating mechanism of the difference in equity and welfare chauvinism between the Moderate Passive Individualists and the Demobilized Collectivists and Neoliberal groups, which are not statistically significantly different from each other (see Table 3).

The study assessed the serial mediation with progressiveness on morality, moral absolutism, and positive perceptions of the consistency norm serially mediating the relationship between ideological/worldview perspectives and equity. The results revealed that (see Figure 2), Moderate Passive Individualists are less likely to prioritize the principle of equity than both Demobilized Collectivists and Neoliberals. Moderate Passive Individualists adopted a more progressive attitude towards issues that are subject to moral framing ($b = -.91, p < .001$) and showed lower levels of moral absolutism ($b = -.35, p < .001$). They possessed a positive perception of the consistency norm ($b = .55, p < .001$) and rejected the norm of equity ($b = -.11, p < .001$; Indirect Effect $= -.20, SE = .010, 95\%$ CI $[-.044, -.002]$).

The same test was conducted to check the sequential mediating role of progressivism on morality, moral absolutism, and the positive perception of the consistency norm in the relationship between ideological-worldviews and welfare chauvinism as the final variable. The results (see Figure 3) revealed that Demobilized Collectivists and Neoliberals adopted a less progressive attitude towards moral judgements ($b = -.91, p < .001$), compared to Moderate Passive Individualist. They had a predilection towards higher levels of moral absolutism ($b = -.35, p < .001$) and they were more

strongly predisposed towards welfare chauvinism, $b = .26, p < .001; IE = .008, SE = .014, 95\%$ CI $[-.018, -.038]$).

Discussion

The starting points for our study were the ideological and worldview perspectives and the well-known relationship between morality and distributive justice. Our research has examined the serially mediating role of progressivism about morality, the belief in the sole objectivity of a particular definition of morality and the perception of the consistency norm. The results of our study identified patterns and confirmed our hypothesis that ideology and worldview predict the preference for specific moral reference contents (Amable, 2011; Cornwell & Higgins, 2013; Hatemi et al., 2019; Pyszczynski & Kesebir, 2012).

Moderate Passive Individualists emerged as the group who adopts the most progressive and inclusive attitude towards moral evaluations and practices (see Progressivism on Morality), while Demobilized Collectivists and Neoliberals maintain a more conservative attitude towards issues that are subjected to moral framing. Moderate Passive Individualists perceive the world as a highly competitive environment, display a potentially dialectical stance and express bona fide humanistic concerns against the discriminatory norms of fairness and chauvinism. They oppose the rationalist reasoning imposed by moral absolutism, acknowledge the positive perspective of the consistency norm, thereby demonstrating in practice their commitment to a genuine and humanistically oriented attitude, and are less predisposed than other groups towards welfare chauvinism and equity.

What is striking is that Collectivists and Neoliberals, identified as apolitical and center-right respectively, end up adopting and invoking common moral reasoning. Demobilized Collectivists, while displaying all those elements that are potentially conducive to a politicized active entity (relative deprivation, collective assertion, high politicization, rejection of the logic of individual mobility), at the same time show adherence to only some elements of the dominant ideology of
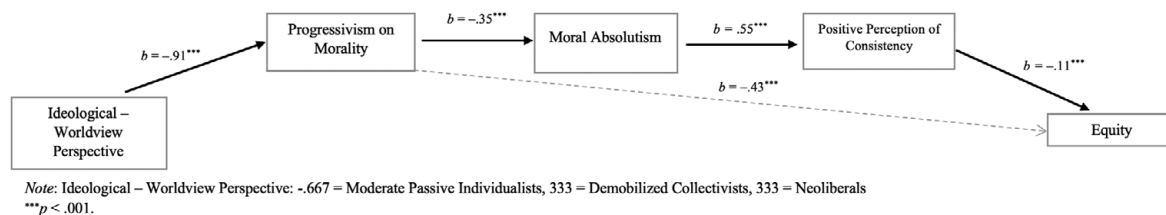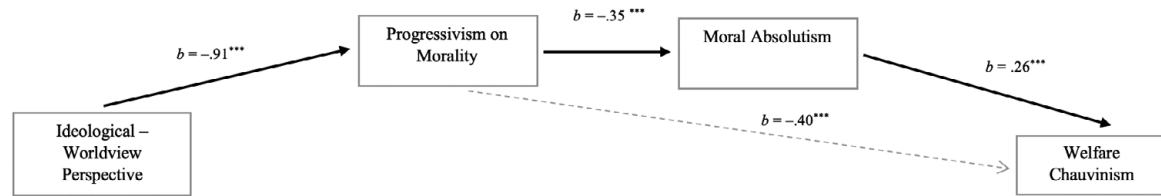

Note: Ideological – Worldview Perspective: -.667 = Moderate Passive Individualists, 333 = Demobilized Collectivists, 333 = Neoliberals
***$p < .001$.

Figure 2. Results of serial mediation analysis with equity as a final variable (Model 6, Hayes, 2018)

Note: Ideological – Worldview Perspective: -.667 = Moderate Passive Individualists, 333 = Demobilized Collectivists, 333 = Neoliberals
***p < .001.

Figure 3. Results of serial mediation analysis with welfare chauvinism as a final variable (Model 6, Hayes, 2018)

neoliberalism (cf. hedonism), while rejecting some others, such as the belief in freedom of the will. At the same time they admit the impenetrability of the upper levels of the social hierarchy (reproduction of the social order). In other terms, Collectivists appear to legitimize the system, and at the same time to accept their position within it, thus displaying elements of frustration and 'demobilization'. In this sense, its similarity with the group of Neoliberals could possibly be explained in terms of common moral reasoning.

Consistent with the existing literature remains the finding that morality is predicted by ideology (Amable, 2011; Cornwell & Higgins, 2013; Hatemi et al., 2019; Pyszczynski & Kesebir, 2012) and worldview (Jensen, 1997) and predicts attitudes toward distributive justice norms (Bauman & Skitka, 2009; Skitka et al., 2016), thus confirming our hypothesis. Likewise, ideology predicts attitudes toward norms of distributive justice (Arsenio, 2015; Folger et al., 2013; Sparkes, 1990). Based on the results, Individualists, while maintaining the most progressive attitude towards moral evaluations and practices (Rasinski, 1987; Skitka & Tetlock, 1992), appear as the least absolute on the issue of defining morality and attribute a positive sign to consistency, invoking the concepts of reliability and stability. When asked to evaluate the criteria for assessing and determining fairness, Individualists do not favor the principle of fairness, and disavow the belief that contribution is initial and ultimate criterion of distribution. Similarly, in the case where welfare chauvinism constitutes the distributive criterion, Individualists again appear as the most progressive and least absolute, rejecting views that ground distributive justice in inclusion and posit cultural and ethnic elements as the measure of selective sensibilities.

To sum up the contribution of the present research, moral absolutism and the reading of the consistency norm emerged as exponents of the adoption of specific moral codes, based on the exploration and mapping of the meaning attributed to the world. In contrast to the previous work, consistency was studied and exploited as socio-psychological concept and social value, rather than as an individual difference. Based on the above, reality seems to be interpreted through the activation of perception schemes regarding social order and human nature. This interpretation affects the attitudes towards morals and implies that morality is a social construct rather than an inherent human characteristic.

The finding that morality should not be inscribed in a single and absolute framework is intriguing and needs to be further shed. The multiple framings and interpretations of the consistency norm constitute evidence for the hypothesis that morality should not be studied and exploited as the super-rule that structures the existence and the meaning-making order of the world.

While we focus on several meaningful antecedents by describing a contextually rich investigation of the moral reasoning of ideology, we are hereby aware of some limitations concerning our research. First, we employed convenience and snowball sampling strategies in this study; this may have contributed to a non-representative sample of the population. Secondly, given that our findings are context–specific, our findings should not be considered as definite. For this reason, the relationship between moral absolutism and the consistency norm needs further examination, as there is evidence of a correlation between the two. Respectively, the relationship between the consistency rule and welfare chauvinism needs to be further examined. Moreover, given the normative and prescriptive role of consistency, future research should investigate its effects on the preference for moral reasoning, particularly when either a positive reading of the consistency or inconsistency becomes salient. Correlational research could also explore the potential moderating role of the consistency norm. Lastly, metaphysical concerns or metrics related to religiosity could possibly be included as worldview parameters.

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