1 Priorization of the morally good depends on self-relevance in perceptual matching

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Abstract

To navigate in a complex social world, our cognitive system are evolved to be sensitive to social information. Among all these social informaiton, morality related information is of special interest. On the one hand, paying attention to other's moral character profitable for ourselves. On the other hand, we need to maitain a moral self-view that fit the soical norm. Though behavioral effects of moral character and moral self-enhancement had been extensively studied in psychology of morality, social perception, and identity, whether the moral character related information can impact low-level perceptual process is unknown. In a series of experiments, we examined the effect of immediately acquired moral character information on perceptual matching. Participants first learned the association between moral character and visual cues (shapes), then performed a perceptual matching task. The results showed that shapes associated with positive moral character were prioritized, as compared to neutral or negative bad moral characters. This pattern was robust after changing the words for moral charachter or using diagnostic behavioral as an proxy of mroal character. Also, this patterns were robust when changing simultaneous presentation to sequential presentation. We then examined two approximate explanations for this effect: value-based prioritization or social-categorization based prioritization. We manipulated the identity of different moral character explicitly and found that the good moral character effect was strong when for the self-referential conditions but weak or non-exist for other-referential condition. We further tested the good-self based social categorization by presenting the identity or moral character information as task-irrelevant stimuli, so that we can distinguish between the unique good-self hypothesis and a more general good-person based social categorization hypothesis. We found that ....., these results suggested that participants are more senstive to the moral valence of self when the valence were task-irrelevant, but less sensitive to the identity of the morally good when the identity were task-irrelvant. These results added new evidence for the social vision and suggested the advantage of moral good depends on the self-relevant in perceptual decision-making task,

43 instead of perspective free.

44   *Keywords:* Perceptual decision-making, Self positivity bias, moral character

45   Word count: X

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Introduction

[sentences in bracket are key ideas]

social vision –> moral vision –> two competing explanations (value-based vs. true-self-based) –> true-self is not perspective free but self-centered.

Will not include experiment 5; stop exploring the correlations.

Our information processing system had been evolved in a way that top-down factor can modulate the low-level processes. There are debates on whether perception can be penetrated by top-down factors.

[Morality is the central of human social life]. People experience a substantial amount of moral events in everyday life (e.g., Hofmann, Wisneski, Brandt, & Skitka, 2014). When experiencing these events, it always involves judging "good" or "bad." By judging "right" or "wrong," people are implicitly judging the moral character of involved parties as "good" vs. "bad" (Uhlmann, Pizarro, & Diermeier, 2015). The central role of moral character also supported by the extensive studies from person perception and social evaluation, where morality is a basic dimension for social evaluation (Abele, Ellemers, Fiske, Koch, & Yzerbyt, 2020; Goodwin, 2015; Goodwin, Piazza, & Rozin, 2014; Willis & Todorov, 2006) and the most important aspect to evaluate the continuity of identity (Strohminger, Knobe, & Newman, 2017).

Given the importance of moral character, to successfully navigate in a social world, a person needs to both evaluate others' moral character and behave in a way that she/he is perceived as a moral person, or at least not a morally bad person. Maintaining a moral self-view is as important as making judgments about others' moral character (Ellemers, Toorn, Paunov, & Leeuwen, 2019). Indeed, previous studies found that people maintain a positive moral self-view even after dishonest behavior (Monin & Jordan, 2009) and that

71 people evaluate themselves as morally superior to others (Klein & Epley, 2016; Tappin &

72 McKay, 2017). Recent theorists further integrated the moral judgment and moral self-view,

73 proposed a person-centered account for moral psychology, which focused on the individuals

74 in moral evaluation instead of acts (Uhlmann, Pizarro, & Diermeier, 2015). Under this

75 framework, previous seemingly contradicting phenomenons can be explained. For example,

76 whether people decide to expose an unethical behavior depends on how their relationship

77 of the target (e.g., Waytz, Dungan, & Young, 2013).

78   To date, however, as Freeman and Ambady (2011) put it, studies in the perception of

79 moral character didn't try to explain the perceptual process, rather, they are trying to

80 explain the higher-order social cognitive processes that come after. Essentially, these

81 studies are perception of moral character without perceptual process. Without knowledge

82 of perceptual processes, we can not have a full picture of how moral character is processed

83 in our cognition. As an increasing attention is paid to perceptual process underlying social

84 cognition, it's clear that perceptual processes are strongly influenced by social factors, such

85 as group-categorization, stereotype (see Bagnis, Celeghin, Mosso, & Tamietto, 2019; Stolier

86 & Freeman, 2016; Xiao, Coppin, & Bavel, 2016). Given the importance of moral character

87 and that moral character related information has strong influence on learning and memory

88 (Carlson, Maréchal, Oud, Fehr, & Crockett, 2020; Stanley & De Brigard, 2019), one might

89 expect that moral character related information could also play a role in perceptual process.

90   To explore the perceptual process of moral character and the underlying mechanism,

91 we conducted a series of experiments to explore (1) whether we can detect the influence of

92 moral character information on perceptual decision-making in a reliable way, and (2)

93 potential explanations for the effect. In the first four experiments, we found a robust effect

94 of good-person prioritization in perceptual decision-making. Then, we explore the potential

95 explanations and tested value-based prioritization versus good-self based prioritization

96 (social-categorization (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Turner, Oakes,

97 Haslam, & McGarty, 1994)). These results suggested that people may categorize self and

98 other based on moral character; in these categorizations, the core self, i.e., the good-self, is

99 always prioritized.

Perceptual process of moral character

101   [exp1a, b, c, and exp2]

102   [using associative learning task to study the moral character's influence on

103 perception] Though it is theoretically possible that moral character related information

104 may be prioritized in perceptual process, no empirical studies had directly explored this

105 possibility. One difficulty of studying the perceptual process of moral character is that

106 moral character is an inferred trait instead of observable feature. Usually, one needs more

107 sensory input, e.g., behavior history, to infer moral character of a person. For example,

108 Anderson, Siegel, Bliss-Moreau, and Barrett (2011) asked participant to first study the

109 behavioral description of faces and then asked them to perform a perceptual detection task.

110 They assumed that by learning the behavioral description of a person (represented by a

111 face), participants can acquire the moral related information about faces, and the

112 associations could then bias the perceptual processing of the faces (but see Stein, Grubb,

113 Bertrand, Suh, and Verosky (2017)). One drawback of this approach is that participants

114 may differ greatly when inferring the moral character of the person from behavioral

115 descriptions, given that notion what is morality itself is varying across population Jones et

116 al. (2021) and those descriptions and faces may themselves are idiosyncratic, therefore,

117 introduced additional variance to the targeted effect.

118   An alternative is to use abstract semantic concepts. Abstract concepts of moral

119 character are used to describe and represent moral characters. These abstract concepts

120 may be part of a dynamic network in which sensory cue, concrete behaviors and other

121 information can activate/inhibit each other (e.g., aggressiveness) (Amodio, 2019; Freeman

122 & Ambady, 2011). If a concept of moral character (e.g., good person) is activated, it

should be able to influence on the perceptual process of the visual cues through the

dynamic network, especially when the perceptual decision-making is about the concept-cue

association. In this case, abstract concepts of moral character may serve as signal of moral

reputation (for others) or moral self-concept. Indeed, previous studies used the moral

words and found that moral related information can be perceived faster Firestone & Scholl

(2015). If moral character is an important in person perception, then, just as those other

information such as races and stereotype (see Xiao, Coppin, & Bavel, 2016), moral

character related concepts also change the perceptual processes.

     To investigate the above possibility, we used an associative learning paradigm to

study how moral character concept change perceptual decision-making. In this paradigm,

simple geometric shapes were paired with different words whose dominant meaning is

describing the moral character of a person. Participants first learn the associations between

shapes and words, e.g., triangle is a good-person. After formed direct associations between

the labels of moral characters and visual cues, participants performed a perceptual

matching task to judge whether the shape-word pair presented on the screen match the

association they learned. This paradigm has been used in studying the perceptual process

of self-concept, but had also proven useful in studying other concepts like social group

(e.g., Enock, Hewstone, Lockwood, & Sui, 2020). By using simple and morally neutral

shapes, we controlled the variations caused by visual cues.

     Our first question is, whether the words used the in the associative paradigm is really

related to the moral character? This assumption is consistent with previous theories,

especially the interactive dynamic theory. To validate that moral character concepts

activated moral character as a social cue, we used four experiments to explore and validate

the paradigm. The first experiment directly adopted associative paradigm and changed

labels from "self," "friend," and "stranger" to "good-person," "neutral-person," and

"bad-person." We further tried semantic labels that have more explicit moral meaning

("kind-person," "neutral-person," and "evil-person"). In the third experiments, as in

150 Anderson, Siegel, Bliss-Moreau, and Barrett (2011), we asked participant to learn the

151 association between three different diagnostic behavior and three different names, and then

152 use the names as moral labels for the associative learning. Finally, we also tested that

153 simultaneously present shape-word pair and sequentially present word and shape didn't

154 change the pattern. All of these four experiments showed a consistent pattern of effect,

155 that is, the visual cues that associated with positive moral character were prioritized.

Morality as a social-categorization?

157 [possible explanations: person-based self-categorization vs. stimuli-based valence] The

158 robust pattern from the first four experiments revealed a novel pattern that needs an

159 explanation. It's novel because it's contradict with the "negative is stronger than positive"

160 hypothesis in social psychology (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001).

161 There are two major alternatives. One possible explanation is the value-based attention,

162 which suggested that valuable stimuli is prioritized in our low-level cognitive processes.

163 Because positive moral character is potentially rewarding, e.g., potential cooperators, it is

164 valuable to individuals and therefore being prioritized. Most empirical evidence for

165 value-based attention are from experiments used monetary reward. However, the monetary

166 reward might be different greatly from the morality in social setting. So far, only a few

167 empirical studies supported the value-based attention in social evaluation. Eiserbeck and

168 Abdel Rahman (2020) and Shore and Heerey (2013) found that neutral faces, after

169 associated with trustworthy behavioral description or trustworthy interaction history,

170 attracted attention more than untrustworthy faces, probably because trustworthy faces are

171 more likely to be the collaborative partners subsequent tasks, which will bring reward.

172 Applying this explanation to the current setting need a further assumption that

173 participants automatically view the moral character related information as self-relevant

174 objects. Only based on the objectified stimuli that we evaluate their value (rewarding or

175 threatening) to us (Juechems & Summerfield, 2019; Reicher & Hopkins, 2016).

Another possibility is that we will perceive those moral character not as objects but as person, and automatic categorize whether they are in-group or out-group, instead of calculating their value to us. This account assumed that moral character served as a way to categorize other. In the first four experiments' situation, the identity of the moral character is ambiguous, participants may automatically categorize morally good people as in-group (as an extension of themselves) and therefore preferentially processed these information.

However, the above four experiments could not distinguish between these two possibilities, because the concept "good-person" can both be rewarding and be categorized as in-group member, and previous studies using associative learning paradigm revealed that both rewarding stimuli (e.g., Sui, He, & Humphreys, 2012) and in-group information (Enock, Hewstone, Lockwood, & Sui, 2020) are prioritized.

[Distinguish two explanations by make self salient, exp3a, 3b, 6b] Though both two the value-based attention and moral-based categorization accounts can explain the positivity effect found in first four experiments (i.e., prioritization of "good-person," but not "neutral person" and "bad person"), they have different prediction if the experimental design include both identity and moral valence where the valence (good, bad, and neutral) conditions can describe both self and other. In this case the identity become salient and participants are less likely to spontaneously identify a good-other as the extension of self, but the value of good-person still exists. Actually, the rewarding value of good-other might be even stronger than good-self because the former indicate potential cooperation and material rewards, but the latter merely confirmed one's personal belief. This means that the social categorization theory predicts participants prioritize good-self but not good-other, while reward-based attention theory predicts participants are both prioritized, or maybe good-other are even more prioritized. Also, as in Hu, Lan, Macrae, and Sui (2020), people may also only identify with good-self instead of bad self. That is, people will show a unique pattern of self-identification: only good-self is identified as "self" while all the others categories were excluded.

203   We introduced identity (self vs. other) as an addition independent variable in exp 3a,

204 3b, and 6b. Now the moral valence is orthogonal to the identity. We found that (1)

205 good-self is always faster than neutral-self and bad-self, but good-other only have weak to

206 null advantage to neutral-other and bad-other. which mean the social categorization is

207 self-centered. (2) good-self's advantage over good other only occur when self- and other-

208 were in the same task. i.e. the relative advantage is competition based instead of absolute.

209 These three experiments suggest that people more like to view the moral character stimuli

210 as person and categorize good-self as an unique category against all others. A three-level

211 Bayesian generalized linear mixed effect model showed that there was no effect of valence

212 when the identity was other. This results showed that value-based attention was not likely

213 the mechanism behind the pattern we observed in first four experiments. However, it is

214 still unclear Why good-self was prioritized. Besides the social-categorization explanation,

215 it's also possible that good self is so unique that it is prioritized in all possible situation

216 and therefore is not social categorization *per se.*

217   [what we care? valence of the self exp4a or identity of the good exp4b?] We go

218 further to disentangle the good-self complex: is it because the special role of good-self or

219 because of social categorization. We designed two complementary experiments. in

220 experiment 4a, participants only learned the association between self and other, the words

221 "good-person," "neutral person," and "bad person" were presented as task-irrelevant

222 stimuli, while in experiment 4b, participants learned the associations between

223 "good-person," "neutral-person," and "bad-person," and the "self" and "other" were

224 presented as task-irrelevant stimuli. These two experiment can be used to distinguish the

225 "good-self" as anchor account and the "good-self-based social categorization" account. If

226 good-self as an anchor is true, then, in both experiment, good-self will show advantage over

227 all other stimuli. More specifically, in experiment 4a, where only the self-relevance is

228 task-relevant, there will be advantage for good as task-irrelevant condition than the other

229 two self conditions; in experiment 4b, in the good condition, there will be an advantage for

self as task-irrelevant condition over other as task-irrelevant condition. If good-self-based social categorization if true, then, the prioritization effect will depends on whether the stimuli can be categorized as the same group of good-self. More specifically, in experiment 4a, there will be good-as-task-irrelevant stimuli than other condition in self conditions, this prediction is the same as the "good-self as anchor" account; however, for experiment 4b, there will be no self-as-task-irrelevant stimuli than other-as-task-irrelevant condition.

[Good self in self-reported data] As an exploration, we also collected participants' self-reported psychological distance between self and good-person, bad-person, and neutral-person, moral identity, moral self-image, and self-esteem. All these data are available (see Liu et al., 2020). We explored the correlation between self-reported distance and these questionnaires as well as the questionnaires and behavioral data. However, given that the correlation between self-reported score and behavioral data has low correlation (Dang, King, & Inzlicht, 2020), we didn't expect a high correlation between these self-reported measures and the behavioral data.

[whether categorize self as positive is not limited to morality] Finally, we explored the pattern is generalized to all positive traits or only to morality. We found that self-categorization is not limited to morality, but a special case of categorization in perpetual processing.

Key concepts and discussing points:

Self-categories are cognitive groupings of self and some class of stimuli as identical or different from some other class. [Turner et al.]

Personal identity refers to self-categories that define the individual as a unique person in terms of his or her individual differences from other (in-group) persons.

Social identity refers to the shared social categorical self ("us" vs. "them").

Variable self: Who we are, how we see ourselves, how we define our relations to others (indeed whether they are construed as 'other' or as part of the extended 'we' self) is

different in different settings.

Identification: the degree to which an individual feels connected to an ingroup or includes the ingroup in his or her self-concept. (self is not bad;)

Morality as a way for social-categorization (McHugh, McGann, Igou, & Kinsella, 2019)? People are more likely to identify themselves with trustworthy faces (Verosky & Todorov, 2010) (trustworthy faces has longer RTs).

What is the relation between morally good and self in a semantic network (attractor network) (Freeman & Ambady, 2011)? The psychological essentialism account proposed that the moral good self is perspective independent, i.e., there is a moral good self in all. This perspective free effect is not exist in our effect.

How to deal with the *variable self* (self-categorization theory) vs. *core/true/authentic self* vs. *self-enhancement*

Limitations: The perceptual decision-making will show certain pattern under certain task demand. In our case, it's the forced, speed, two-option choice task.

in experiment 4a and 4b, we didn't have a baseline condition where there is no word inside the shape?

Disclosures

We reported all the measurements, analyses, and results in all the experiments in the current study. Participants whose overall accuracy lower than 60% were excluded from analysis. Also, the accurate responses with less than 200ms reaction times were excluded from the analysis.

All the experiments reported were not pre-registered. Most experiments (1a ~ 6b, except experiment 3b) reported in the current study were first finished between 2014 to 2016 in Tsinghua University, Beijing, China. Participants in these experiments were

recruited in the local community. To increase the sample size of experiments to 50 or more (Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2013), we recruited additional participants in Wenzhou University, Wenzhou, China in 2017 for experiment 1a, 1b, 4a, and 4b. Experiment 3b was finished in Wenzhou University in 2017. To have a better estimation of the effect size, we included the data from two experiments (experiment 7a, 7b) that were reported in Hu, Lan, Macrae, and Sui (2020) (See Table S1 for overview of these experiments).

All participant received informed consent and compensated for their time. These experiments were approved by the ethic board in the Department of Tsinghua University.

General methods

Design and Procedure

This series of experiments studied the perceptual process of moral character, using the social associative learning paradigm (or tagging paradigm)(Sui, He, & Humphreys, 2012), in which participants first learned the associations between geometric shapes and labels of person with different moral character (e.g., in first three studies, the triangle, square, and circle and good person, neutral person, and bad person, respectively). The associations of the shapes and label were counterbalanced across participants. After remembered the associations, participants finished a practice phase to familiar with the task, in which they viewed one of the shapes upon the fixation while one of the labels below the fixation and judged whether the shape and the label matched the association they learned. When participants reached 60% or higher accuracy at the end of the practicing session, they started the experimental task which was the same as in the practice phase.

The experiment 1a, 1b, 1c, 2, and 6a shared a 2 (matching: match vs. nonmatch) by 3 (moral character: good person vs. neutral person vs. bad person) within-subject design. Experiment 1a was the first one of the whole series studies and found the prioritization of stimuli associated with good-person. To confirm that it is the moral character that caused

305 the effect, we further conducted experiment 1b, 1c, and 2. More specifically, experiment 1b

306 used different Chinese words as label to test whether the effect only occurred with certain

307 familiar words. Experiment 1c manipulated the moral valence indirectly: participants first

308 learned to associate different moral behaviors with different neutral names, after

309 remembered the association, they then performed the perceptual matching task by

310 associating names with different shapes. Experiment 2 further tested whether the way we

311 presented the stimuli influence the effect of valence, by sequentially presenting labels and

312 shapes. Note that part of participants of experiment 2 were from experiment 1a because we

313 originally planned a cross task comparison. Experiment 6a, which shared the same design

314 as experiment 2, was an EEG experiment which aimed at exploring the neural correlates of

315 the effect. But we will focus on the behavioral results of experiment 6a in the current

316 manuscript.

317   For experiment 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 6b, 7a, and 7b, we included self-reference as another

318 within-subject variable in the experimental design. For example, the experiment 3a directly

319 extend the design of experiment 1a into a 2 (matchness: match vs. nonmatch) by 2

320 (reference: self vs. other) by 3 (moral valence: good vs. neutral vs. bad) within-subject

321 design. Thus in experiment 3a, there were six conditions (good-self, neutral-self, bad-self,

322 good-other, neutral-other, and bad-other) and six shapes (triangle, square, circle, diamond,

323 pentagon, and trapezoids). The experiment 6b was an EEG experiment extended from

324 experiment 3a but presented the label and shape sequentially. Because of the relatively

325 high working memory load (six label-shape pairs), experiment 6b were conducted in two

326 days: the first day participants finished perceptual matching task as a practice, and the

327 second day, they finished the task again while the EEG signals were recorded. Experiment

328 3b was designed to separate the self-referential trials and other-referential trials. That is,

329 participants finished two different types of block: in the self-referential blocks, they only

330 responded to good-self, neutral-self, and bad-self, with half match trials and half

331 non-match trials; in the other-reference blocks, they only responded to good-other,

neutral-other, and bad-other. Experiment 7a and 7b were designed to test the cross task robustness of the effect we observed in the aforementioned experiments (see, Hu, Lan, Macrae, & Sui, 2020). The matching task in these two experiments shared the same design with experiment 3a, but only with two moral character, i.e., good vs. bad. We didn't include the neutral condition in experiment 7a and 7b because we found that the neutral and bad conditions constantly showed non-significant results in experiment $1 \sim 6$.

Experiment 4a and 4b were design to explore the mechanism behind the prioritization of good-self. In 4a, we used only two labels (self vs. other) and two shapes (circle, square). To manipulate the moral valence, we added the moral-related words within the shape and instructed participants to ignore the words in the shape during the task. In 4b, we reversed the role of self-reference and valence in the task: participant learnt three labels (good-person, neutral-person, and bad-person) and three shapes (circle, square, and triangle), and the words related to identity, "self" or "other," were presented in the shapes. As in 4a, participants were told to ignore the words inside the shape during the task.

E-prime 2.0 was used for presenting stimuli and collecting behavioral responses, except that experiment 7a and 7b used Matlab Psychtoolbox (Brainard, 1997; Pelli, 1997). For participants recruited in Tsinghua University, they finished the experiment individually in a dim-lighted chamber, stimuli were presented on 22-inch CRT monitors and their head were fixed by a chin-rest brace. The distance between participants' eyes and the screen was about 60 cm. The visual angle of geometric shapes was about $3.7° \times 3.7°$, the fixation cross is of $0.8° \times 0.8°$ visual angle at the center of the screen. The words were of $3.6° \times 1.6°$ visual angle. The distance between the center of the shape or the word and the fixation cross was $3.5°$ of visual angle. For participants recruited in Wenzhou University, they finished the experiment in a group consisted of $3 \sim 12$ participants in a dim-lighted testing room. Participants were required to finished the whole experiment independently. Also, they were instructed to start the experiment at the same time, so that the distraction between participants were minimized. The stimuli were presented on 19-inch CRT monitor. The

³⁵⁹ visual angles are could not be exactly controlled because participants' chin were not fixed.

³⁶⁰ In most of these experiments, participant were also asked to fill a battery of

³⁶¹ questionnaire after they finish the behavioral tasks. All the questionnaire data are open

³⁶² (see, dataset 4 in Liu et al., 2020). See Table S1 for a summary information about all the

³⁶³ experiments.

Data analysis

³⁶⁵ We used the `tidyverse` of r (see script `Load_save_data.r`) to exclude the practicing

³⁶⁶ trials, invalid trials of each participants, and invalid participants, if there were any, in the

³⁶⁷ raw data. Results of each experiment were then analyzed in two Bayesian approaches and

³⁶⁸ reported in supplementary materials.

³⁶⁹ ***Bayesian hierarchical model.*** We first tested the effect of experimental

³⁷⁰ manipulation using Bayesian hierarchical model. More specifically, we used the Bayesian

³⁷¹ hierarchical model (BHM, or Bayesian generalized linear mixed model, BGLMM) to model

³⁷² the reaction time and accuracy data. We used Bayesian hierarchical model because BHM

³⁷³ provided three advantages over the classic NHST approach (repeated measure ANOVA or

³⁷⁴ *t*-tests): first, BHM estimate the posterior distributions of parameters for statistical

³⁷⁵ inference, therefore provided uncertainty in estimation (Rouder & Lu, 2005). Second,

³⁷⁶ BHM, as generalized linear mixed models, can use distribution that fit the distribution of

³⁷⁷ real data instead of using normal distribution for all data. Using appropriate distributions

³⁷⁸ for the data will avoid misleading results and provide better fitting of the data. For

³⁷⁹ example, Reaction times are not normally distributed but right skewed, and the linear

³⁸⁰ assumption in ANOVAs is not satisfied (Rousselet & Wilcox, 2019). Third, BHM provided

³⁸¹ an unified framework to analyze data from different levels and different sources, avoid the

³⁸² information loss when we need to combine data from different levels.

³⁸³ We first used the `r` package `BRMs` (Bürkner, 2017), which used Stan (Carpenter et al.,

384 2017) to sample from the posterior, to build the model for RTs and accuracy separately.

385 Using the Bayesian hierarchical model, we can directly estimate the over-all effect across

386 similar experiments with similar experimental design, instead of using a two-step approach

387 where we first estimate parameters, e.g., d' for each participant, and then use a random

388 effect model meta-analysis to synthesize the effect (Goh, Hall, & Rosenthal, 2016). We also

389 we used HDDM to model RTs and accuracy data together using drift diffusion model as

390 the data generative model.

391   *Accuracy.*   We followed practice of previous studies (Hu, Lan, Macrae, & Sui, 2020;

392 Sui, He, & Humphreys, 2012) and used signal detection theory approach to analyze the

393 accuracy data. More specifically, the match trials are treated as signal and the non-match

394 trials are noise. As we mentioned above, we estimated the sensitivity and criterion of SDT

395 by BHM (Rouder & Lu, 2005). Because the BHM can model different level's data using a

396 single unified model, we used a three-level HBM to model the valence effect, which include

397 five experiments: 1a, 1b, 1c, 2, and 6a. Also, we modelled the experiments with both

398 identity and moral valence with a three-level HBM model, which includes 3a, 3b, and 6b.

399 For experiment 4a and 4b, we used two-level models for each separately. However, we

400 compared the posterior of parameters directly because we have full posterior distribution of

401 the effect and can directly compare the posteriors.

402   We used the Bernoulli distribution to model the accuracy data. For a single

403 participant, we assume that the accuracy of ith trial is Bernoulli distributed (binomial with

404 1 trial), with probability p_i that $y_i = 1$.

$$y_i \sim Bernoulli(p_i)$$

405 and the probability of choosing "match" p_i at the ith trial is a function of the trial type:

$$\Phi(p_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 IsMatch_i$$

therefore, the outcomes y_i are 0 if the participant responded "nonmatch" on the ith trial, 1

if they responded "match." We then write the generalized linear model on the probits

(z-scores; Φ, "Phi") of ps. Φ is the cumulative normal density function and maps z scores

to probabilities. In this way, the intercept of the model (β_0) is the standardized false alarm

rate (probability of saying 1 when predictor is 0), which we take as our criterion c. The

slope of the model (β_1) is the increased probability of responding "match" when the trial

type is "match," in z-scores, which is another expression of d'. Therefore, $c = $ -zHR $=$

$-\beta_0$, and $d' = \beta_1$.

In our experimental design, there are three conditions for both match and non-match

trials, we can estimate the d' and c separately for each condition. In this case, the criterion

c is modeled as the main effect of valence, and the d' can be modeled as the interaction

between valence and match, and we explicitly removed the intercept:

$$\Phi(p_i) = 0 + \beta_0 Valence_i + \beta_1 IsMatch_i * Valence_i$$

In each experiment, we had multiple participants. We can estimate the group-level

parameters by extending the above model into a two-leve model, where we can estimate

parameters on individual level and the group level parameter simultaneously. The

probability that the jth subject responded "match" ($y_{ij} = 1$) at the ith trial p_{ij}. In the

same vein, we have

$$y_{ij} \sim Bernoulli(p_{ij})$$

The the generalized linear model can be re-written to include two levels:

$$\Phi(p_{ij}) = 0 + \beta_{0j} Valence_{ij} + \beta_{1j} IsMatch_{ij} * Valence_{ij}$$

We again can write the generalized linear model on the probits (z-scores; Φ, "Phi") of ps.

425   The subjective-specific intercepts ($\beta_0 = -zFAR$) and slopes ($\beta_1 = d'$) are describe

426   by multivariate normal with means and a covariance matrix for the parameters.

$$\begin{bmatrix} \beta_{0j} \\ \beta_{1j} \end{bmatrix} \sim N(\begin{bmatrix} \theta_0 \\ \theta_1 \end{bmatrix}, \sum)$$

427   For experiments that had 2 (matching: match vs. non-match) by 3 (moral character:

428   good vs. neutral vs. bad), i.e., experiment 1a, 1b, 1c, 2, 5, and 6a, the formula for accuracy

429   in BRMs is as follow:

430   `saymatch ~ 0 + Valence + Valence:ismatch + (0 + Valence +`

431   `Valence:ismatch | Subject), family = bernoulli(link="probit")`

432   For experiments that had two by two by three design, we used the follow formula for

433   the BGLM:

434   `saymatch ~ 0 + ID:Valence + ID:Valence:ismatch + (0 + ID:Valence +`

435   `ID:Valence:ismatch | Subject), family = bernoulli(link="probit")`

436   In the same vein, we can estimate the posterior of parameters across different

437   experiments. We can use a nested hierarchical model to model all the experiment with

438   similar design:

$$y_{ijk} \sim Bernoulli(p_{ijk})$$

439   the generalized linear model is then

$$\Phi(p_{ijk}) = 0 + \beta_{0jk} Valence_{ijk} + \beta_{1j} IsMatch_{ijk} * Valence_{ijk}$$

440   The outcomes y_{ijk} are 0 if participant j in experiment k responded "mismatch" on trial i, 1

441   if they responded "match."

$$\begin{bmatrix} \beta_{0jk} \\ \beta_{1jk} \end{bmatrix} \sim N(\begin{bmatrix} \theta_{0k} \\ \theta_{1k} \end{bmatrix}, \sum)$$

442   and the experiment level parameter mu_{0k} and mu_{1k} is from a higher order

443   distribution:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \theta_{0k} \\ \theta_{1k} \end{bmatrix} \sim N(\begin{bmatrix} \mu_0 \\ \mu_1 \end{bmatrix}, \sum)$$

444   in which mu_0 and mu_1 means the population level parameter.

445   *Reaction times.* For the reaction time, we used the log normal distribution

446   (https://lindeloev.github.io/shiny-rt/#34_(shifted)_log-normal) to model the data. This

447   means that we need to estimate the posterior of two parameters: μ, σ. μ is the mean of the

448   `logNormal` distribution, and σ is the disperse of the distribution. Although the log normal

449   distribution can be extended to shifted log normal distribution, with one more parameter:

450   shift, which is the earliest possible response, we found that the additional parameter didnt'

451   improved the model fitting and therefore used the logNormal in our final analysis.

452   The reaction time of the jth subject on ith trial is a linear function of trial type:

$$y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} * IsMatch_{ij} * Valence_{ij}$$

453   while the log of the reaction time is log-normal distributed:

$$log(y_{ij}) \sim N(\mu_j, \sigma_j)$$

454   y_{ij} is the RT of the ith trial of the jth participants.

$$\mu_j \sim N(\mu, \sigma)$$

$$\sigma_j \sim Cauchy()$$

455   Formula used for modeling the data as follow:

456   `RT_sec ~ Valence*ismatch + (Valence*ismatch | Subject), family =`

457 `lognormal()`

458   or

459   `RT_sec ~ ID*Valence*ismatch + (ID*Valence*ismatch | Subject), family =`

460 `lognormal()`

461   we expanded the RT model three-level model in which participants and experiments

462 are two group level variable and participants were nested in the experiments.

$$log(y_{ijk}) \sim N(\mu_{jk}, \sigma_{jk})$$

463   y_{ijk} is the RT of the ith trial of the jth participants in the kth experiment.

$$\mu_{jk} \sim N(\mu_k, \sigma_k)$$

464

$$\sigma_{jk} \sim Cauchy()$$

465

$$\mu_k \sim N(\mu, \sigma)$$

466

$$\theta_k \sim Cauchy()$$

467   *Effect of moral character.*   We synthesized effect size of d' and RT from experiment

468 1a, 1b, 1c, 2, 5, and 6a for the effect of moral character. We reported the synthesized the

469 effect across all experiments that tested the valence effect, using the mini meta-analysis

470 approach (Goh, Hall, & Rosenthal, 2016).

471   *Effect of moral self.*   We further synthesized the effect of moral self, which included

472 results from experiment 3a, 3b, and 6b. In these experiment, we directly tested two

473 possible explanations: moral self as social categorization process and value-based attention.

⁴⁷⁴   *Implicit interaction between valence and self-relevance.*   In the third part, we focused

⁴⁷⁵ on experiment 4a and 4b, which were designed to examine two more nuanced explanation

⁴⁷⁶ concerning the good-self. The design of experiment 4a and 4b are complementary.

⁴⁷⁷ Together, they can test whether participants are more sensitive to the moral character of

⁴⁷⁸ the Self (4a), or the identity of the morally Good (4b).

⁴⁷⁹   Finally, we explored correlation between results from behavioral results and

⁴⁸⁰ self-reported measures.

⁴⁸¹   For the questionnaire part, we are most interested in the self-rated distance between

⁴⁸² different person and self-evaluation related questionnaires: self-esteem, moral-self identity,

⁴⁸³ and moral self-image. Other questionnaires (e.g., personality) were not planned to

⁴⁸⁴ correlated with behavioral data were not included. Note that all questionnaire data were

⁴⁸⁵ reported in (Liu et al., 2020).

⁴⁸⁶   For the behavioral task part, we used three parameters from drift diffusion model:

⁴⁸⁷ drift rate (v), boundary separation (a), and non decision-making time (t), because these

⁴⁸⁸ parameters has relative clear psychological meaning. We used the mean of parameter

⁴⁸⁹ posterior distribution as the estimate of each parameter for each participants in the

⁴⁹⁰ correlation analysis. We used alpha = 0.05 and used bootstrap by `BootES` package (Kirby

⁴⁹¹ & Gerlanc, 2013) to estimate the correlation.

⁴⁹²   ***Hierarchical drift diffusion model (HDDM).***   To further explore the

⁴⁹³ psychological mechanism under perceptual decision-making, we used a generative mode

⁴⁹⁴ drift diffusion model (DDM) to model our RTs and accuracy data. As the hypothesis

⁴⁹⁵ testing part, we also used hierarchical Bayesian model to fit the DDM. The package we

⁴⁹⁶ used was the HDDM (Wiecki, Sofer, & Frank, 2013), a python package for fitting

⁴⁹⁷ hierarchical DDM. We used the prior implemented in HDDM, that is, weakly informative

⁴⁹⁸ priors that constrains parameter estimates to be in the range of plausible values based on

⁴⁹⁹ past literature (Matzke & Wagenmakers, 2009). As reported in Hu, Lan, Macrae, and Sui

500 (2020), we used the stimulus code approach, match response were coded as 1 and

501 nonmatch responses were coded as 0. To fully explore all parameters, we allow all four

502 parameters of DDM free to vary. We then extracted the estimation of all the four

503 parameters for each participants for the correlation analyses. However, because the

504 starting point is only related to response (match vs. non-match) but not the valence of the

505 stimuli, we didn't included it in correlation analysis.

Part 1: Perceptual processing moral character related information

507 In this part, we report results from five experiments that tested whether an

508 associative learning task, including 192 participants. Note that for both experiment 1a and

509 1b, there were two independent samples with different equipment, trials numbers and

510 testing situation. Therefore, we modeled them as independent samples. These five

511 experiments revealed a robust effect of moral character on perceptual matching task.

512 For the d prime, we found robust effect of moral valence. Shapes associated with

513 positive moral valence ("good person," "kind person" or a name associated with morally

514 good behavioral history) has higher sensitivity (mean = , 95% HDI =) than shapes

515 associated with neutral condition (mean = , 95% HDI =), but we did not find differences

516 between shapes associated with negative moral label (mean = , 95% HDI =) and neutral

517 condition.

518 For the reaction times, we also found robust effect of moral valence. Shapes

519 associated with positive moral valence has faster responses (mean = , 95% HDI =) than

520 shapes associated with neutral condition (mean = , 95% HDI =). We also found that the

521 responses to shapes associated with negative moral valence (mean = , 95% HDI =) were

522 slower as compared to the neutral condition. See Figure 1.

Part 2: interaction between valence and identity

In this part, we report three experiments (3a, 3b, and 6b) that aimed at testing whether the moral valence effect found in the previous experiments is modulated by self-referential processes. These three experiments included data from 108 participants.

See Figure 2.

Part 3: Implicit binding between valence and identity

In this part, we reported two studies in which the moral valence or the self-referential processing is not task-relevant. We are interested in testing whether the task-relevance will eliminate the effect observed in previous experiment.

For the task relevant part, we found self-related conditions were performed better than other-related conditions, on both d prime and reaction times.

Most importantly, we found evidence, albeit weak, that task-irrelevant moral valence also played an role. The d prime is greater when shapes were associated with good self condition than with neutral self (BF = 4.4) or bad self (3.1), but shapes associated with bad self and neutral self didn't show differences. In contrast the d prime was smaller when shapes were associated with good other than with neutral other or bad other. See Figure 3.

In this task, we found shapes associated with good person conditions were performed better than other-related conditions, on both d prime and reaction times.

Most importantly, we found evidence, that task-irrelevant self-relevance also played an role. For shapes associated with good person, the d prime was greater when shapes had an "self" inside as task-irrelevant stimuli than with "other" inside (mean_diff = 0.14, 95% credible intervals [-0.02, 0.31], BF = 12.07, p = 0.92), but this effect did not happen when the target shape where associated with "neutral" (mean_diff = 0.04, 95% CI [-.11, .18]) or "bad" person (mean_diff = -.05, 95% CI[-.18, .09]). The same trend appear for the RT

547 data. For shapes associated with good person, an "self" inside will reduce the RTs as

548 compared with when a "other" inside the shape (mean_diff = -55 ms, 95%CI[-75, -35], p <

549 0.0001), but this effect did not occure when the shapes were associated neutral (mean_dfiff

550 = 10, 95% CI [1, 20]) or bad (mean_diff = 5, 95%CI [-16, 27]) person. See Figure 3.

Self-reported personal distance

552   See Figure **??**.

Correlation analyses

554   The reliability of questionnaires can be found in (Liu et al., 2020). We calculated the

555 correlation between the data from behavioral task and the questionnaire data. First, we

556 calculated the score for each scale based on their structure and factor loading, instead of

557 sum score (McNeish & Wolf, 2020). Then, we used SEM to estimate the correlation

558 because it can include measurement model and statistical model in a unified framework.

559   To make sure that what we found were not false positive, we used two method to

560 ensure the robustness of our analysis. first, we split the data into two half: the data with

561 self and without, then, we used the conditional random forest to find the robust correlation

562 in the exploratory data (with self reference) that can be replicated in the confirmatory data

563 (without the self reference). The robust correlation were then analyzed using SEM

564   Instead of use the exploratory correlation analysis, we used a more principled way to

565 explore the correlation between parameter of HDDM (v, t, and a) and scale scores and

566 person distance.

567   We didn't find the correlation between scale scores and the parameters of HDDM,

568 but found weak correlation between personal distance and the parameter estimated from

569 Good and neutral conditions.

First, boundary separation (a) of moral good condition was correlated with both Self-Bad distance ($r = 0.198$, 95% CI [], $p = 0.0063$) and Neutral-Bad distance ($r = 0.1571$, 95% CI [], $p = 0.031$). At the same time, the non-decision time is negatively correlated with Self-Bad distance ($r = 0.169$, 95% CI [], $p = 0.0197$). See Figure **??**.

Second, we found the boundary separation of neutral condition is positively correlated with the personal distance between self and good distance ($r = 0.189$, 95% CI [], $p = 0.036$), but negatively correlated with self-neutral distance($r = -0.183$, 95% CI [], $p = 0.042$). Also, the drift rate of the neutral condition is positively correlated with the Self-Bad distance ($r = 0.177$, 95% CI [], $p = 0.048$).a. See figure **??**

We also explored the correlation between behavioral data and questionnaire scores separately for experiments with and without self-referential, however, the sample size is very low for some conditions.

Discussion

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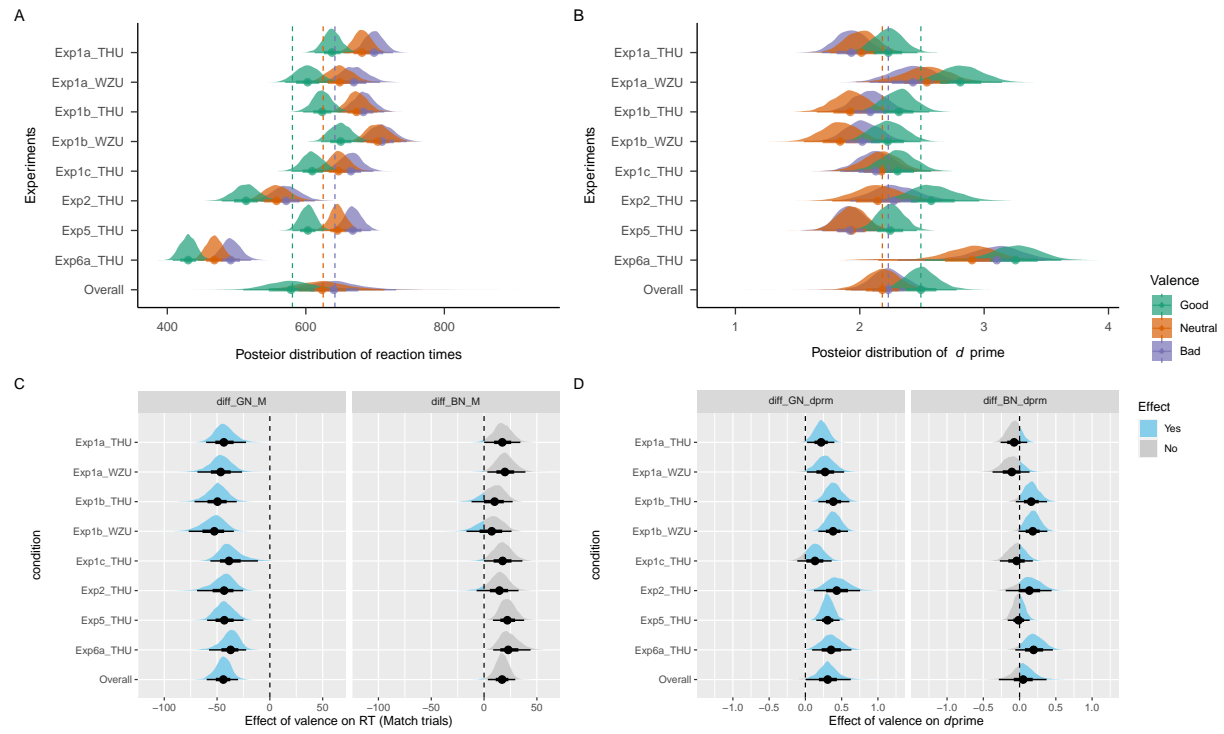
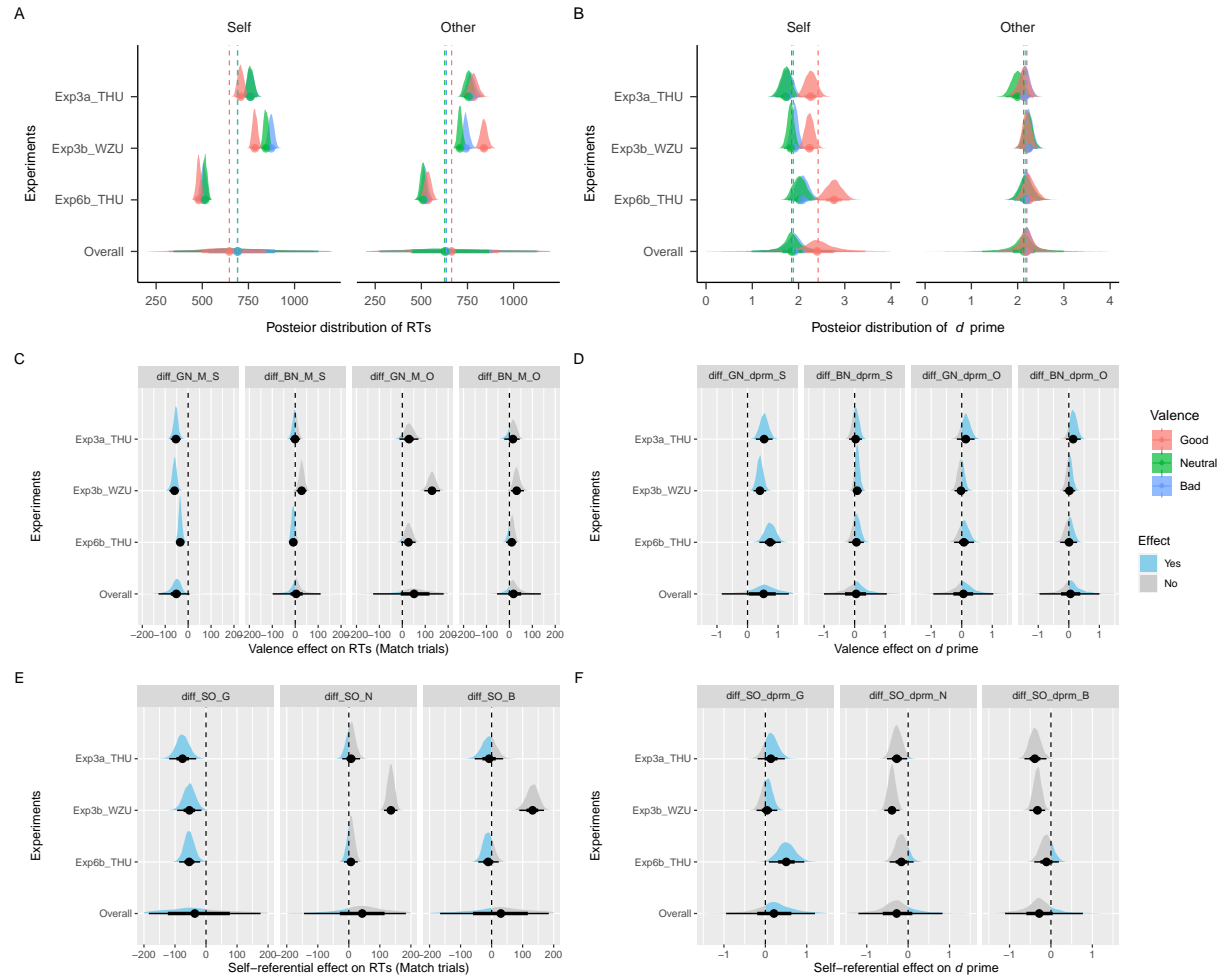*Figure 1.* Effect of moral valence on RT and d'
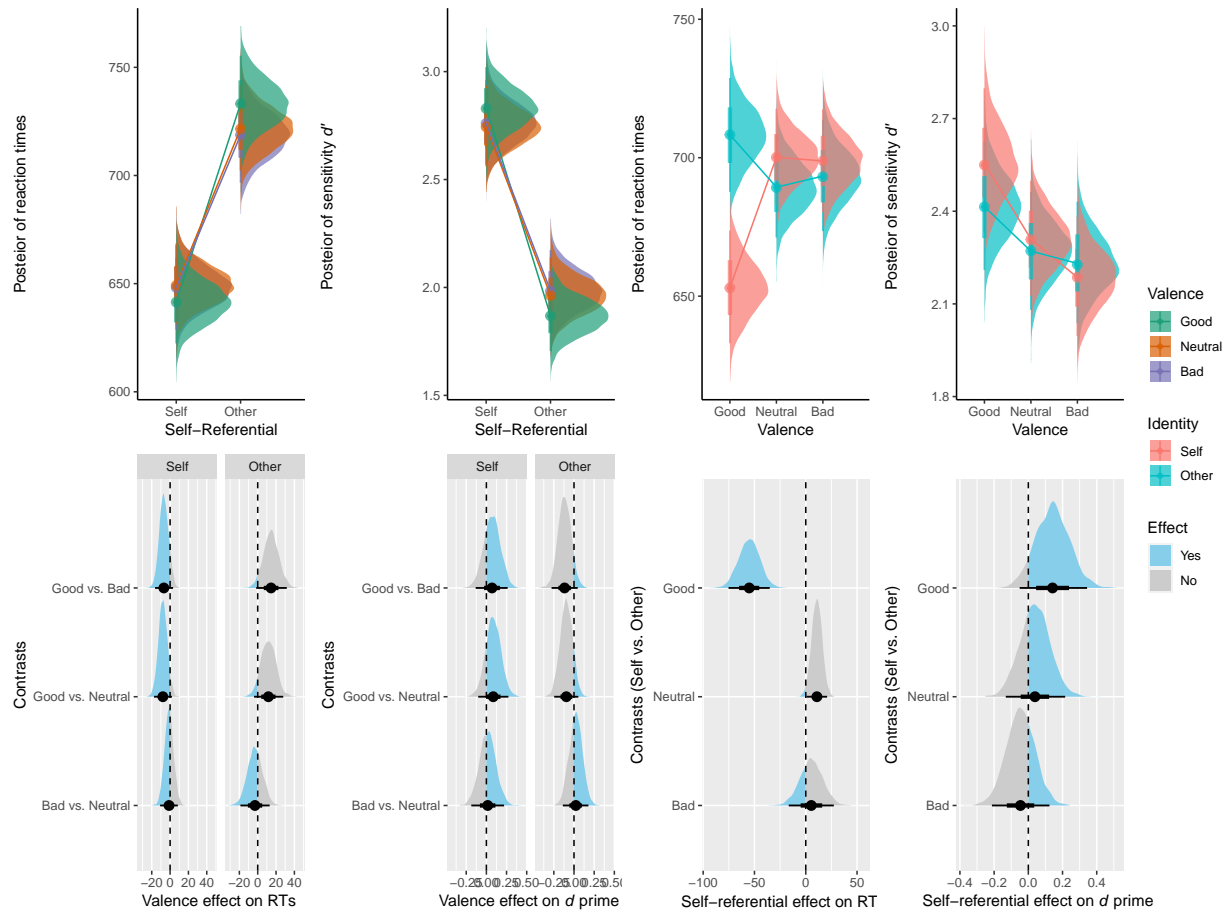
Figure 2. Interaction between moral valence and self-referential

Figure 3. exp4: Results of Bayesian GLM analysis.