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Do Bad People Deserve Empathy?

Selective Empathy Based on Targets' Moral Characteristics

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Abstract

The relation between empathy and morality is a widely discussed topic. However, previous discussions mainly focused on whether and how empathy influences moral cognition and moral behaviors, with limited attention to the reverse influence of morality on empathy. This review summarized how morality influences empathy by drawing together a number of hitherto scattered studies illustrating the influence of targets' moral characteristics on empathy. To explain why empathy is morally selective, we discuss its ultimate cause, to increase survival rates, and five proximate causes based on similarity, affective bonds, the appraisal of deservingness, dehumanization, and potential group membership. To explain how empathy becomes morally selective, we consider three different pathways (automatic, regulative, and mixed) based on previous findings. Finally, we discuss future directions, including the reverse influence of selective empathy on moral cognition, the moral selectivity of positive empathy, and the role of selective empathy in selective helping and third-party punishment.

Keywords: empathy, morality, justice, selective prosociality

1   **Do Bad People Deserve Empathy?**

2   **Selective Empathy Based on Targets' Moral Characteristics**

3   Imagine the following scenarios and think about how you would feel: a

4 basketball player, famous for his flagrant fouls, accidentally sprains his ankle in a

5 game; a selfish co-worker, who always takes advantage of others' contributions, is

6 getting a divorce; a prisoner who has sexually assaulted dozens of children is

7 suffering from an incurable disease. When observing others suffer misfortune, people

8 usually show empathy toward them. However, if immoral people suffer – as in the

9 above scenarios – do people still show empathy?

10   Empathy is usually perceived as a moral virtue (e.g., Goldstein et al., 2014;

11 Nussbaum, 1996), and equal empathy for all people (regardless of whether the target

12 is socially distant or close) is attributed greater moral value than selective empathy

13 (Bloom, 2017; Fowler et al., 2021). However, in the above scenarios, both intuition

14 and rationality might lead us to show less empathy for immoral people. In other words,

15 it is widely accepted that empathy is selective depending on targets' moral

16 characteristics (Cameron et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2019). Indeed, a recent study found

17 that showing empathy towards a negative target (e.g., a White supremacist) would

18 bring the empathizer less respect and liking, compared with not showing empathy

19 (Wang & Todd, 2021).

20   Although such selective empathy is ubiquitous in daily life, there is a lack of

21 comprehensive research and no theoretical model to explain this phenomenon. In this

22 paper, we provide, for the first time, a comprehensive overview of selective empathy

based on targets' moral characteristics. We draw together a number of hitherto

scattered studies illustrating this phenomenon and explain why and how empathy

becomes selective in response to the moral characteristics of targets. Previous

discussion has mainly focused on the way that empathy influences moral cognition

and moral behavior (for reviews, see Decety & Cowell, 2014; Eisenberg, 2000;

Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Hoffman, 1987, 2001). By contrast, this review focuses on

the influence of moral cognition on empathy and points to new directions for research.

Before discussing whether individuals show varied empathic responses

towards moral and immoral individuals, we need to clarify what counts as moral vs.

immoral behavior. Although variation within and across cultures makes it hard to

provide a completely consistent definition, there is a consensus about what acts (and

agents) are considered moral or immoral (Atari et al., 2022; Brambilla & Leach, 2014;

Brambilla et al., 2011; Curry et al., 2019; Fiske et al., 2007; Graham et al., 2013, 2011;

Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Schein & Gray, 2018), and these

societal values emerge early in life (Decety & Cowell, 2018; Hamlin et al., 2007;

Surian et al., 2018; Ting & Baillargeon, 2021).

What Is Empathy?

Empathy refers to the process of sharing and understanding the feelings of

others (Cohen & Strayer, 1996; Decety & Jackson, 2004; Decety & Lamm, 2006;

Singer & Lamm, 2009). It is generally seen as an important, moral emotion (Decety &

Cowell, 2014; Eisenberg, 2000; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Hoffman, 2001; Hume,

1896; Slote, 2007; Smith, 2010). With increasing research on empathy, the concept

has been variously defined by different researchers (for a review, see Cuff, 2016).

Given the complexity of these definitions, more and more researchers recommend a

focus on specific sub-concepts or components when discussing empathy, rather than

relying on the word empathy in general (Decety & Cowell, 2014; Hall & Schwartz,

2019; Weisz & Cikara, 2021). Here, we focus on three components of empathy in

discussing responses based on the moral characteristics of targets.

The emotional component of empathy refers to the process of sharing another

person's emotion, also called *emotional contagion* or *emotional matching* (e.g.,

feeling sad when seeing others feeling sad or feeling happy when seeing others

feeling happy; Hatfield et al., 1994). The cognitive component of empathy refers to

the understanding of others' emotions, also called *affective perspective-taking* (Decety

& Cowell, 2014; Decety & Jackson, 2004). The motivational component of empathy

refers to concern about sufferers, including the motivation to alleviate their pain (de

Waal, 2008; de Waal & Preston, 2017) – often called *empathic concern* or compassion

or sympathy by some researchers (Batson et al., 1983; Davis, 1983; Eisenberg, 2000;

Goetz et al., 2010; Hoffman, 2001; Klimecki, 2019; for the claim that compassion and

sympathy are different, see Dutton et al. 2006). When seeing others suffer, individuals

usually exhibit one or more of these three components of empathy (emotional sharing,

affective perspective-taking, and empathic concern).

Yet people do not always show empathy toward another's misfortune. Indeed,

sometimes, people feel pleasure at another's misfortune, defined as *Schadenfreude*, a

form of *counter-empathy* (Lanzetta & Englis, 1989; Portmann, 2000; Takahashi et al.,

2009). Counter-empathy can be viewed as the opposite of empathy. Research has

shown that people often show counter-empathy toward competitors, superiors, or

immoral individuals (Cikara et al., 2014; Lanzetta & Englis, 1989; Singer et al., 2006;

Takahashi et al., 2009).

Evidence for Selective Empathy Based on Targets' Moral Characteristics

Behavioral, physiological, and neural studies all demonstrate that empathy is

selective, depending on targets' moral characteristics. Behavioral studies have found

that when watching an immoral person experience bad things, people feel less

empathic than when watching a moral person experience the same things. By

manipulating the description of characters' moral traits (such as honesty, sincerity, and

trustworthiness) or morally-related acts (such as helping or harming), researchers

have found that individuals report less compassion or more pleasure when learning

that immoral others experience a misfortune as opposed to learning that moral others

experience a misfortune (Brambilla & Riva, 2017; Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020).

Individuals perceive the social pain of immoral others as less painful than that of

moral or neutral others (Riva et al., 2016). Furthermore, individuals feel happier at the

punishment of a person who has committed multiple immoral acts than at the

punishment of a person who has committed a single immoral act, and individuals'

evaluation of the person's moral characters plays a mediating role in this process

(Berndsen & Tiggemann, 2020). These findings confirm that others' moral

characteristics can modulate adults' empathy, and that the influence of others' morally

related acts on empathy is mediated by the evaluation of their moral character.

Additionally, studies of "moral circles" have found that individuals often place

"villains" outside the scope of moral concern (Crimston et al., 2016, 2018), in line

with the above findings that individuals show reduced empathy or even

counter-empathy towards immoral people.

However, it should be acknowledged that social desirability can also influence

people's self-reported feelings. Under the pressure of the norm of not showing

empathy towards negative targets (Wang & Todd, 2021), people may actually feel

equally empathic, but report feeling less empathic toward immoral as compared to

moral others. Accordingly, self-report in combination with physiological recordings or

brain imaging can provide more convincing evidence for whether individuals show

varied empathy towards moral and immoral others.

Stellar et al. (2014) compared people's emotional and physiological responses

when they learned of the misfortune of a moral or immoral target. The targets' moral

behaviors were manipulated by giving the participants messages describing the

targets' selfish or cooperative behaviors. Then, participants watched a video clip of the

target talking about his or her misfortunes, and participants' physiological responses

were recorded as they watched. Participants reported feeling less compassionate and

showed physiological responses indicating less compassion (greater heart rate and

reduced respiratory sinus arrhythmia activity, Stellar et al., 2015) toward the selfish

target than toward the cooperative target.

Event-related potential (ERP) studies were also conducted to compare

individuals' empathy towards moral and immoral others. Cui et al. (2016) compared

1   individuals' brain responses toward painful or non-painful pictures (i.e., bodies with

2   wounded or non-wounded parts, such as a finger cut or not cut by scissors) of blood

3   donors, killers, or unidentified targets. Painful pictures elicited larger amplitude of N2

4   than non-painful pictures when the target was a blood donor or was unidentified.

5   However, this difference disappeared when the target was a killer. The difference in

6   N2 to painful vs. non-painful pictures was localized in the ventral medial prefrontal

7   cortex (vmPFC) and the rostral anterior cingulate cortex (rACC) areas. Given that N2

8   is believed to reflect individuals' emotional arousal (Fan & Han, 2008), these findings

9   imply that individuals showed less emotional sharing towards immoral others than to

10   moral others.

11   Li et al. (2018) compared individuals' brain responses when watching painful

12   and non-painful pictures of different targets. Unlike the study by Cui et al. (2016),

13   participants were asked to imagine the body part in the picture as that of a moral or

14   immoral person. Although N2 responses did not differ for moral as compared to

15   immoral targets, the responses of P3 did differ, with a larger amplitude for painful

16   pictures than nonpainful pictures when the target was imagined as moral but no

17   amplitude difference when the target was imagined as immoral. Given that P3 is

18   believed to reflect attention redistribution driven by the top-down regulation of

19   empathy (Cheng et al., 2014; Cheng et al., 2012; Coll, 2018; Fan & Han, 2008), these

20   findings suggest that targets' moral characters influence the top-down regulation of

21   empathy. More specifically, participants may reduce their attention to painful stimuli

22   when imagining the target as an immoral person (MacNamara et al., 2009).

1   There are two plausible explanations for the contrasting findings of Cui et al.

2   (2016) and Li et al. (2018). First, whether the identity of the target is specified or

3   imagined broadly can influence the modulation of empathy. In Cui et al. (2016), the

4   identity of the target was specified as a blood donor or a killer, leading to more direct

5   selectivity at the early stage of empathy. In Li et al. (2018), participants needed to

6   imagine the target as moral or immoral themselves, and each participant might have

7   chosen different prototypes for moral or immoral others, leading to selectivity at a

8   later stage of empathy. Second, the gravity of target immorality might influence the

9   modulation of empathy. A killer is usually perceived as extremely immoral, whereas a

10   general description of "immoral" can refer to various transgressions, including minor

11   wrongdoings, such as taking advantage of others. More extreme immorality might

12   lead to a more immediate selectivity of empathy during the early emotion arousal

13   process without top-down modulation, as in Cui et al. (2016).

14   Additionally, a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) study

15   demonstrated that males (but not females) showed less empathy towards an unfair

16   confederate who had damaged their benefits as compared to a fair confederate who

17   ensured their benefits (Singer et al., 2006). Males' empathy-related activation in

18   pain-related brain areas (fronto-insular and anterior cingulate cortices) was weaker,

19   and their brain activation in reward-related areas (left ventral striatum and nucleus

20   accumbens) was stronger, towards unfair as compared to fair confederates. The

21   gender effect found in this study also suggested that males might be more likely to

22   show reduced empathy towards immoral others than females, a possibility that

1   warrants further examination.

2   Taken together, using self-report, physiological, and brain imaging measures,

3   prior research has found that the three components of adult empathy are all influenced

4   by targets' moral characteristics. More specifically, individuals are less likely to share

5   the feelings of immoral as compared to moral targets (Berndsen & Tiggemann, 2020;

6   Brambilla & Riva, 2017; Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020), tend to perceive the social

7   pain of immoral targets as less painful than that of moral targets (Riva et al., 2016),

8   and show less empathic concern for immoral as compared to moral targets (Berndsen

9   & Tiggemann, 2020; Brambilla & Riva, 2017; Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020; Stellar

10   et al., 2014). Furthermore, the ERP findings suggest that the influence of targets'

11   moral characteristics on empathy can be achieved either at the emotional arousal stage

12   (Cui et al., 2016) or via the top-down regulation of empathy (Li et al., 2018),

13   depending on the specific context.

14   The above studies were all conducted with adults. Studies on children have

15   also found that their empathy is selective, depending on targets' moral characteristics.

16   When presented with picture-stories, 4- to 8-year-old children reported feeling more

17   pleasant and less sorry for a protagonist's misfortune when the protagonist intended to

18   harm rather than to help others, and this effect was more pronounced among older

19   children (Schindler et al., 2015; Schulz et al., 2013). Another study examined

20   children's facial expressions when watching the punishment of an antisocial puppet

21   who tricked them and a prosocial puppet who gave toys to them (Mendes et al., 2018).

22   Whereas 4- and 5-year-olds mainly produced frowns when watching either puppet

being hit, six-year-olds produced more smiles with frowns when watching the

antisocial puppet being hit than when watching the prosocial puppet being hit. By

implication, 6-year-olds showed selective empathy based on targets' moral

characteristics.

Overall, we see that the evidence mainly supports the selectivity of empathy

based on targets' moral characteristics that are related to the violation of harm/care

(e.g., Cui et al., 2016; Schindler et al., 2015; Schulz et al., 2013) and

fairness/reciprocity principles (e.g., Berndsen & Tiggemann, 2020; Brambilla & Riva,

2017; Riva et al., 2016; Singer et al., 2006; Stellar et al., 2014). It remains unclear

whether targets' violation of moral values in other domains, such as ingroup/loyalty

and purity/sanctity, can also influence empathy towards them. For example, it is

unclear whether individuals will show reduced empathy towards a man who is fired

for disclosing the secrets of his own company to competitors or a man who has a

stomachache after eating his dead pet dog.

Justice in a Broad Sense

One important basis for the moral selectivity of empathy is the evaluation of

how much the target deserves to suffer (Gibbs, 2019; Goetz et al., 2010; Hein &

Singer, 2008; Simpson et al., 2014). Justice in a broad sense refers to the principle that

people receive what they deserve (Lerner, 1980). More specifically, bad things happen

to immoral people, and good things happen to moral people. Driven by such justice

beliefs (Hafer & Rubel, 2015; Lerner, 1980; Vermunt, 2014), individuals tend to

believe that immoral targets deserve to suffer, thereby showing reduced empathy (for

1   more details on this process, see the deservingness-appraisal account in the next

2   section). When the targets' suffering is linked to their immoral behavior, for example,

3   a murderer is sentenced to death for murder, it is widely accepted that the murderer's

4   suffering is what he or she deserves, and that people will show less empathy for the

5   murderer. However, if the targets' suffering is not linked to their immoral behaviors,

6   for example, a murderer suffers from cancer, how far will people respond with

7   empathy?

8   A recent study of way that empathizers are evaluated provides a preliminary

9   answer. People showed less respect or liking towards empathizers who expressed

10   empathy towards a negative target whose suffering was causally linked to the target's

11   negative behaviors (e.g., a White supremacist suffered from the stress of working in

12   an organization peddling racist views), whereas people showed more respect or liking

13   towards empathizers who expressed empathy towards a negative target whose

14   suffering was not linked to the target's negative behaviors (e.g., a White supremacist

15   suffering from cancer) (Wang & Todd, 2021). These findings demonstrate that the

16   way in which third-party observers evaluate empathizers is influenced by the causal

17   links between the targets' negative characteristics and the targets' suffering. However,

18   things might be different when people are empathizers themselves.

19   Indeed, previous findings suggested that individuals show less empathy

20   towards immoral targets than moral targets, regardless of whether the targets'

21   misfortune was directly brought about by their immoral behaviors (e.g., Berndsen &

22   Tiggemann, 2020; Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020; Schindler et al., 2015; Schulz et al.,

2013), or by accidents unrelated to their immoral behaviors (e.g., Brambilla & Riva,

2017; Stellar et al., 2014). Limited empathy for targets' suffering, even when the

suffering was unrelated to their immoral characteristics, might indicate a kind of

broad justice belief, namely that bad people deserve bad outcomes anyhow. This kind

of justice belief may not be rational, but it is widespread. However, given that

previous studies did not directly compare the moral selectivity of empathy when

targets' morally-related acts are related or unrelated to their misfortunes, future

studies should explore this issue more systematically.

Person-based or Act-based selectivity

Previous studies suggest that the selectivity of empathy can be either

person-based (i.e., a response towards targets' moral characters) or act-based (i.e., a

response towards targets' moral behaviors). Some studies manipulated the description

of characters' moral traits (such as honesty, sincerity, and trustworthiness) and found

that individuals show less empathy towards targets described as immoral than targets

described as moral (Brambilla & Riva, 2017; Li et al., 2018; Riva et al., 2016). Other

studies manipulated targets' morally related acts (such as helping or harming) without

directly describing the targets as moral or immoral and found that individuals show

less empathy towards targets who have behaved immorally than targets who have

behaved morally (Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020; Singer et al., 2006; Stellar et al.,

2014). Therefore, both the moral character and the morally-related acts of a target can

influence empathy, which is also why we frame our paper as a review of selective

empathy based on targets' moral characteristics, rather than on moral character or

1   moral behavior.

2   The person-based selectivity and act-based selectivity of empathy are not

3   completely independent. A target's moral character can be inferred from the target's

4   moral behavior. More specifically, the severity and frequency of a target's immoral

5   behavior can lead to different assessments of immoral character, which further

6   impacts the level of empathy. For example, one study manipulated the frequency of

7   targets' immoral acts and found that individuals feel happier about the punishment of

8   a person who has committed multiple immoral acts as compared to a single immoral

9   act (Berndsen & Tiggemann, 2020). Moreover, individuals' evaluation of the person's

10   moral characters mediated the influence of the frequency of immoral acts on

11   individuals' Schadenfreude. These findings suggest that the act-based selectivity of

12   empathy might come from a person-based inference regarding morally-related acts.

13   Differences also exist between the person-based and act-based selective

14   empathy. When the target's moral character is described as immoral in general,

15   individuals might be more likely to show reduced empathy towards the immoral target,

16   regardless of whether the target's misfortune is linked to their immorality or not,

17   driven by the broad justice belief mentioned in the above section. In contrast, when a

18   target's immoral behavior is described, empathy might be more influenced by whether

19   or not the target's misfortune is linked to that immoral behavior. More studies are

20   needed to examine these possibilities.

21   However, the belief in a just world can also lead to some unreasonable

22   attributions in daily life. People might be likely to blame a victim based on their

beliefs that "good things usually happen to good people" and that "bad things usually

happen to bad people" (Lerner, 1980). For example, when watching a target suffering

from painful electric shocks due to their errors in a learning task, participants tended

to reject and devalue the target when they could not avoid seeing the target suffer

(Lerner & Simmons, 1966). In this way, people rationalized the target's suffering and

no longer needed to feel empathy for the target. In such circumstances, people's

reduced empathy towards innocent victims may redound on their evaluation of the

victims (for more details, see the future direction part).

Why Empathy Is Morally Selective?

The previous section has summarized findings of selective empathy based on

targets' moral characteristics. In general, individuals tend to show less empathy

towards immoral targets than towards moral targets. This section will consider why

selective empathy is morally based from both ultimate and proximate perspectives,

based on previous theories and models of selective empathy. The ultimate cause may

be consistent with that of selective prosociality. On this view, the moral selectivity of

empathy is the product of evolution and can increase survival rates at the individual

and group levels. The proximate causes may be more diverse. Below, we summarize

five different accounts of proximate causes: the perceived-similarity account, the

affective-link account, the deservingness-appraisal account, the dehumanization

account, and the potential group-membership account.

Ultimate Causes

Empathy entails both cognitive and emotional costs. When feeling empathic

towards others, individuals experience a cognitive struggle (Cameron et al., 2019) and

risk experiencing personal distress (Cameron et al., 2016). Indiscriminate empathy

might cause fatigue and/or financial costs (Cameron et al., 2019). The moral

selectivity of empathy ensures that individuals spend more empathy-related resources

on moral targets and less on immoral targets, which could increase the survival rates

of both individuals and groups. For individuals, such selectivity is likely to prevent

resources being wasted on undeserving persons and gives empathizers more

opportunities to build reciprocal relationships with moral, rather than immoral, others

who are less likely to reciprocate when the empathizers need help. The selectivity of

empathy is broadly consistent with the approach-avoidance tendency to approach

rewarding and avoid threatening stimuli (Kaldewaij et al., 2017).

For groups, the moral selectivity of empathy can promote indirect reciprocity

within a group by shaping targets' behaviors. More prosocial behaviors based on

empathy directed at moral rather than immoral targets can encourage moral behaviors

and discourage immoral behaviors by both targets and other observers (Van de

Vondervoort et al., 2018). This can increase indirect reciprocity within a group. For

example, C is more likely to empathize with A after learning that A is a daily helper.

Then C will be more likely to help A, even though C has not been directly helped by

A before. After receiving positive feedback from C, A will also become more likely to

continue helping others, including C. Such indirect reciprocal relationships can

promote prosociality and cooperation within a group and further increase the survival

rates of the whole group (Nowak, 2006; Nowak & Sigmund, 2005; Van de

1 Vondervoort et al., 2018). In other words, selective empathy based on targets' moral

2 characteristics serves as a signal of moral standards within a group. This also explains

3 why individuals make more negative evaluations of people who empathize with

4 negative targets (e.g., White supremacist) than people who empathize with positive

5 targets (e.g., children's hospital worker) (Wang & Todd, 2021); empathizing with

6 negative targets indicates tolerance of such behaviors.

7 Overall, the moral selectivity of empathy could increase the survival rates of

8 both individuals and groups, which may be its ultimate cause.

9 **Proximate Causes**

10 We propose the five accounts below to tentatively explain why empathy

11 becomes morally selective in specific situations.

12 *Perceived-similarity account*

13 The extent to which individuals perceive similarity between themselves and

14 targets is an important modulator of empathy (for a review, see Preston & de Waal,

15 2002). The Perception-Action Model (PAM) of empathy proposes that individuals'

16 perception of the state of a target can activate corresponding representations and

17 further activate somatic and autonomic responses, leading to emotional sharing with

18 the target (Preston & de Waal, 2002). According to this model, the more similar

19 empathizers and targets are, the more similar empathizers' and targets' representations

20 are, which leads to more similarity in state-matching (Preston & de Waal, 2002).

21 Variation in the perceived similarity of moral and immoral targets might

22 provide one proximate explanation for the influence of targets' moral characteristics

1 on empathy. Individuals may perceive moral persons as more similar to themselves

2 than immoral persons, given that individuals tend to view themselves as more moral

3 than others (e.g., Allison et al., 1989). In this way, individuals would show more

4 empathy toward moral persons than immoral persons. Riva et al. (2016) were the first

5 to explore the possible role of perceived similarity in selective empathy towards moral

6 and immoral targets. However, they failed to find a significant mediating role for the

7 perceived similarity of the target's moral standing (moral versus immoral) and

8 evaluations of the target's social pain, an indicator of cognitive empathy. It remains to

9 be seen whether perceived similarity could play a mediating role between the moral

10 characteristics of the target and other components of empathy, such as empathic

11 concern. In another perspective on the issue of mediation, some researchers have

12 argued that perceived similarity is actually based on liking or disliking the target (e.g.,

13 Batson et al., 2005). Individuals show more empathy toward similar others because

14 they like them more than dissimilar others. Therefore, affective links between

15 empathizers and targets may play a more important role in the moral selectivity of

16 empathy than perceived similarity in itself.

17 *Affective-link account*

18 The liking or disliking of targets is an important factor that can influence

19 individuals' emotional reactions to targets' misfortune (Singer et al., 2006; Smith &

20 van Dijk, 2018). According to the balance theory of emotion, "three-element units are

21 balanced when all relations between the elements are positive or two are negative"

22 (Smith & van Dijk, 2018, p.295). More specifically, when individuals dislike a person

1   (a negative element), the person's negative feelings about his or her misfortune (a

2   negative element) will be balanced by the observer's positive feelings about the

3   misfortune (a positive element). In this way, individuals tend to show reduced

4   empathy or counter-empathy towards the misfortune of those they dislike.

5   With respect to the influence of targets' moral characteristics on empathy,

6   Singer et al. (2006) were the first to propose that individuals' affective links with

7   moral or immoral others can explain the selectivity of empathy. This view was

8   initially used to explain selective empathy in a second-party situation where immoral

9   others directly undermined participants' benefits and were disliked by participants. A

10   similar logic could also apply to a third-party moral situation. Individuals prefer

11   persons who have behaved morally toward others, because these persons may also

12   benefit them in the future; meanwhile, individuals dislike persons who have done

13   immoral things to others, because these persons are more likely to hurt them or

14   undermine their benefits in the future (e.g., Brambilla & Leach, 2014; Hamlin et al.,

15   2011). In this way, individuals' dislike of immoral persons and the negative

16   experience of immoral persons can be balanced by individuals' positive feelings

17   towards the negative experience of immoral persons, leading to reduced empathy or

18   even counter-empathy towards them. One study provided direct evidence for this

19   affective-link account. Participants' relative dislike of the immoral target as compared

20   to the moral target mediated the relation between the manipulation of targets' moral

21   characteristics and Schadenfreude at their misfortune (Brambilla & Riva, 2017).

22   It is important to note that the affective-link account is based on the premise

that empathizers value morality. However, how much individuals value morality can

vary, as reflected in a person's moral identity. Moral identity refers to "the degree to

which being a moral person is important to an individual's identity" (Hardy & Carlo,

2011, p212). If a person has a high moral identity, the person will perceive moral

targets as more similar to themselves and prefer moral targets over immoral targets,

thereby showing less empathy towards immoral targets than moral targets. However,

if a person has a low moral identity, meaning that the person does not care to be moral

or might be immoral themselves, the perceived-similarity account might not be able to

explain their selective empathy, and the person might not even show selective

empathy towards moral and immoral targets.

Deservingness-appraisal account

Deservingness is also widely believed to modulate the level of empathy, or

more specifically, it influences the motivational component of empathy, namely

compassion or empathic concern (for reviews, see Gibbs, 2019; Goetz et al., 2010;

Hein & Singer, 2008; Simpson et al., 2014). Before showing compassion, individuals

tend to evaluate how much the target deserves compassion. Simpson et al. (2014)

summarized four rules used to determine whether the suffering person is worthy of

compassion. If the person is "(1) responsible for their suffering; (2) had prior

knowledge of the risk or danger; (3) has the means to address the situation; and/or (4)

their distress has no valid organizational or social explanation" (Simpson et al., 2014,

p.480), then the person deserves to suffer and is not worthy of compassion. By

implication, when the misfortune is beyond the sufferer's control, individuals feel

empathic toward the sufferer's misfortune. However, when the misfortune is the fault

of the sufferer, individuals feel less empathic or even show counter-empathy (Gibbs,

2019). For example, individuals showed more empathy towards patients who

contracted AIDS through blood transfusion than those who contracted AIDS through

drug-abuse (Decety et al., 2010).

The influence of deservingness also applies to morally charged situations.

Driven by a belief in justice, individuals tend to believe that bad people deserve bad

consequences (Hafer & Rubel, 2015; Lerner, 1980; Vermunt, 2014). Such

expectations were confirmed by a recent ERP study. Rodriguez-Gomez et al. (2020)

compared individuals' ERP responses when reading sentences describing a fortunate

or unfortunate outcome for agents previously described as prosocial or antisocial.

They found that the brainwaves related to semantic fit (N400) were stronger when

participants read sentences stating that antisocial agents met an unfortunate outcome

as compared to when prosocial agents did so. This suggests that individuals expect

misfortune to befall antisocial rather than prosocial agents.

When a person who has harmed others suffers, the belief that this person

deserves this misfortune can reduce empathy. Such a reaction is quite common in

everyday life. For example, when a serial murderer is sentenced to death, most people

do not care about the murderer's negative feelings and may even feel happy about the

ending of his life. This deservingness-appraisal account of the moral selectivity of

empathy is supported by previous findings. Participants' evaluation of the

deservingness of targets' misfortune mediated the relation between the manipulation

of targets' moral characteristics and Schadenfreude at their misfortune (Brambilla &

Riva, 2017). In addition, dislike of targets mediated the relation between the

manipulation of moral characteristics and the evaluation of deservingness (Brambilla

& Riva, 2017), suggesting that the deservingness-appraisal process can also be

influenced by affective link (Smith & van Dijk, 2018).

Dehumanization account

Dehumanization is another factor that might explain the moral selectivity of

empathy. When people perceive less humanity in targets, they are less likely to protect

the targets' moral rights (Bandura, 1999; Bastian et al., 2011; Castano & Giner-Sorolla,

2006) and show less empathy toward the targets' misfortune (Cehajic et al., 2009).

Individuals who engaged in immoral behaviors are usually perceived as showing less

humanity (Bastian et al., 2011). Given the negative relation between empathy and

dehumanization (Cehajic et al., 2009), people might show less empathy toward

immoral others due to their perception of less humanity in immoral as compared to

moral others.

The dehumanization account was supported by Riva et al. (2016). They found

that participants' dehumanization of targets mediated the relation between the

manipulation of targets' moral characteristics and participants' evaluation of targets'

social pain. Future studies could examine whether dehumanization can explain the

moral selectivity of other components of empathy, such as emotional sharing and

empathic concern.

Potential group-membership account

1   Group membership is also a widely studied modulator of empathy. People show

2   greater empathy and empathy-related brain responses towards ingroup members than

3   outgroup members (for reviews, see Cikara et al., 2014; Eres & Molenberghs, 2013;

4   Montalan et al., 2012; Vanman, 2016; Vollberg & Cikara, 2018). The modulation of

5   empathy by group membership might explain the moral selectivity of empathy.

6   Individuals tend to cooperate with prosocial others and avoid cooperating with

7   antisocial others (for reviews, see Kurzban et al., 2015; Nowak, 2006; Nowak &

8   Sigmund, 2005). Therefore, moral persons can be viewed as potential ingroup

9   members, while immoral persons can be viewed as potential outgroup members. For

10   example, after watching someone help others on several occasions, we will form a

11   good moral impression of this person and also want to be the person's friend. By

12   contrast, after watching someone harm others on several occasions, we will form a

13   bad moral impression of this person and view the person as a potential enemy. Given

14   that individuals usually have more empathy towards ingroup members than outgroup

15   members, moral targets (potential ingroup members) might provoke more empathic

16   feelings than immoral targets (potential outgroup members). However, more evidence

17   is needed for this assumption.

18   In addition, the group membership of targets might interact with targets' moral

19   characteristics to influence empathy. It would be interesting to examine empathy

20   responses when there is a conflict between the group membership of targets and their

21   moral characteristics. For example, researchers could compare individuals' empathy

22   for the suffering of an ingroup member who engaged in immoral acts and the

suffering of an outgroup member who engaged in moral acts (for a similar design, see

Meidenbauer et al., 2018).

The five accounts above explain the proximate causes of moral selectivity of

empathy from different perspectives. The affective-link account, the dehumanization

account, and the potential group-member account can explain the selectivity of all

three components of empathy, including emotional arousal, cognitive empathy, and

empathic concern or compassion. The other accounts focus more on a particular

component. The deservingness account explains the selectivity of empathic concern

or compassion (Gibbs, 2019; Goetz et al., 2010; Hein & Singer, 2008; Simpson et al.,

2014), and the similarity account explains the selectivity of emotional arousal

(Preston & de Waal, 2002). The relative importance of these five accounts for the

moral selectivity of empathy remains unclear. Affective links may play a more

fundamental role in the moral selectivity of empathy because they mediate the effects

of perceived similarity and deservingness appraisal (Batson et al., 2005; Brambilla &

Riva, 2017). It is also possible, however, that the importance of different accounts

varies across situations and individuals. Future research could examine these accounts

of the moral selectivity of different components of empathy. These accounts also

provide several possible ways to link the moral selectivity of empathy with other

types of selective empathy.

How Does Empathy Become Morally Selective?

In this section, we discuss in more detail the process by which empathy

becomes selective in response to targets' moral characteristics. Decety and Meyer

1   (2008) propose a dual-processing model in which empathy involves both an automatic,

2   affective, bottom-up process and a controlled, cognitive, top-down process. First,

3   individuals automatically share the feelings of others by matching their perception of

4   others' feelings with their own feeling-related reactions via a bottom-up process. Then,

5   self-other awareness enables individuals to distinguish their own feelings states from

6   those of others. Next, individuals take the perspective of the other and regulate their

7   empathic levels through executive control and emotion regulation via a top-down

8   process. This latter regulation process may be closely related to empathic concern

9   (Decety & Meyer, 2008). Based on previous findings and the dual-processing model,

10 we propose three possible explanations for the process of selective empathy:

11 *automatic*, *regulative*, and *mixed*.

12 **An Automatic Pathway**

13   The *automatic* explanation is that individuals automatically show less empathy

14 for antisocial targets than prosocial targets without going through some top-down

15 regulation. If empathy becomes morally selective through this automatic route,

16 individuals will show less emotional arousal towards antisocial targets than prosocial

17 targets, following by less empathic concern and cognitive empathy. This pathway is

18 supported by the ERP findings of Cui et al. (2016) that N2, an early ERP component

19 indicating emotional arousal, showed larger amplitude for painful pictures than

20 non-painful pictures when the target was a blood donor or was unidentified, but

21 showed no difference for painful as compared to non-painful pictures when the target

22 was a killer. The selective empathic responses appearing at around 200 ms after the

1   appearance of the stimuli suggest that the selectivity of empathy is quick and thus

2   very likely to be automatic (for a similar logic in deciding whether a response is

3   automatic, see Kahneman, 2011).

4   However, this automatic explanation cannot explain all the findings of

5   selective empathy based on targets' moral characteristics. For example, it cannot

6   explain why the P3 component, the indicator of top-down regulation of empathy,

7   showed varied responses towards moral and immoral targets (Li et al., 2018). A

8   pathway that can deal with more complex situations is needed.

9   **A Regulative Pathway**

10   With the gradual deepening of empathy research, more and more researchers

11   view the production of empathy from a regulative perspective (Cameron, 2018;

12   Cameron et al., 2022; Gross, 2015; Thompson et al., 2019; Zaki, 2014). Previous

13   studies have found that people can regulate their empathy and show insensitivity to

14   others' suffering (Cameron et al., 2011). Such a process is similar to the regulation of

15   other emotions (for a review, see Tamir, 2006). Similarly, in the case of the moral

16   selectivity of empathy, it is possible that individuals might first show equal levels of

17   empathy for both moral and immoral targets, and then down-regulate their empathy

18   for antisocial targets.

19   Empathy is usually modulated in three different ways: via situation selection,

20   attention modulation, and appraisal. Each type of modulation can help to explain

21   individuals' selective empathy towards moral vs. immoral people. The first way to

22   modulate empathy is via situation selection (Gross, 1998). Individuals can avoid or

increase empathy by avoiding or approaching empathy-inducing cues (Cameron, 2018;

Thompson et al., 2019; Zaki et al., 2014). If people do not want to show empathy for

immoral targets, they might be more likely to leave situations that could arouse their

empathy for immoral targets. For example, we might be less willing to listen to a

selfish colleague's complaint about his divorce from his wife than to listen to a kind

colleague's similar complaint.

The second way to modulate empathy is via attention modulation. People can

regulate their empathy by modulating their attention to empathy-inducing cues

(Cameron, 2018; Thompson et al., 2019; Todd et al., 2012; Zaki et al., 2014).

Individuals might allocate less attention to the misfortune of immoral as compared to

moral targets. The ERP study by Li et al. (2018) provided some support for this

proposal. The late ERP component of empathy (P3) showed larger amplitude towards

painful pictures than nonpainful pictures when the target was imagined as moral but

showed no such amplitude difference when the target was imagined as immoral. P3 is

believed to be associated with the top-down processing of stimulus significance

(MacNamara et al., 2009). Although the pictures of suffering were actually the same

sets of pictures of wounded body parts, participants viewed the suffering of an

immoral person as less significant than that of a moral person, suggesting that

attention modulation happens during the processing of painful pictures of immoral

targets.

If individuals have attended to the suffering of targets, they can still modulate

their empathy via reappraisal, the third way to modulate empathy. Reappraisal has

1   three different forms (Zaki et al., 2014). First, modulation of empathy can occur by

2   changing the perception of targets' feelings. When processing others' suffering,

3   individuals might shift their beliefs about the extent of an immoral target's suffering.

4   For example, when listening to your selfish colleague's sad story about his divorce,

5   you might think that he is not actually as sad as he claims to be. This type of

6   reappraisal is supported by previous findings that individuals tend to perceive the

7   social suffering of an immoral person as less acute than that of a moral person (Riva

8   et al., 2016), suggesting that individuals' perception of antisocial targets' feelings have

9   shifted. This interpretation might also explain why the perception of the physical pain

10   of an immoral as compared to a moral person does not differ (Riva et al., 2016).

11   Beliefs about physical pain based on objective descriptions are likely harder to shift.

12   Second, appraisal processes might operate via a re-evaluation of the deservingness of

13   the target's misfortune. Individuals show less empathy when they believe that the

14   sufferers are responsible for their own suffering, or in other words, they deserve their

15   suffering (Bloom, 2017; Geotz et al., 2010; Zaki, 2014). By reappraising the

16   misfortune of immoral persons, people come to believe that immoral persons deserve

17   their misfortune, which is possibly driven by the justice-based belief that those who

18   behave antisocially will be punished and that those who behave prosocially will be

19   rewarded (Hafer & Rubel, 2015; Lerner, 1980). One study supporting this

20   deservingness explanation found that targets' moral characteristics influenced

21   participants' feelings about the misfortune of targets via the mediation of participants'

22   evaluation of whether those misfortunes were deserved (Brambilla & Riva, 2017).

1 Apart from changing the perception of targets' feelings and deservingness appraisal,

2 another form of reappraisal is to reconstruct views of the misfortune itself and come

3 to view it as a good thing (Zaki, 2014). When immoral persons suffer, people can

4 view the immoral persons' misfortune as a lesson to them, teaching them not to do

5 bad things in the future. Even if the immoral persons cannot receive or benefit from

6 the lesson, observers can be led to believe that doing bad things brings misfortune,

7 such that empathizers have fewer negative feelings about the misfortunes of immoral

8 targets.

9   In sum, through a reappraisal of the misfortunes of immoral targets (by

10 changing the perception of the targets' feelings, via a deservingness appraisal, or by

11 constructing a positive view), individuals can reduce their empathy towards immoral

12 targets. Each of the above processes (situation selection, attention modulation, and

13 reappraisal) can explain how empathy can be modulated. Some evidence supports the

14 attention-modulation and appraisal explanations, but more evidence is needed for the

15 situation-selection explanation.

16   The specific context might also influence the process by which empathy is

17 modulated. When individuals already have a stable impression of the moral character

18 of a target and can choose the situation themselves, their selective empathy might be

19 more likely to occur via situation selection. When individuals only know some

20 morally-related acts of a target, they might need more time to reappraise the target's

21 misfortune. In the course of gradually forming a stable impression of a target's

22 immoral character, empathy regulation might gradually change from reappraisal to

1   attention modulation and to situation selection. Finally, it remains unclear whether

2   different components of empathy are regulated in different ways (Weisz & Cikara,

3   2021), an issue that warrants further investigation.

4   **A Mixed Pathway**

5   Empathy modulation might not be necessary for the moral selectivity of

6   empathy. Individuals' reduced empathy towards antisocial targets might be the *mixed*

7   product of empathy and schadenfreude. Individuals show equal levels of empathy for

8   both prosocial and antisocial targets, but meanwhile they also feel happy (or more

9   specifically, schadenfreude) at the misfortune of antisocial targets. This mixture of

10   empathy and schadenfreude explains the outcomes of reduced empathy for antisocial

11   targets. This potential pathway is hard to verify based on current findings because

12   most studies only measured the outcomes of individuals' empathic responses, such as

13   asking them to report on their feelings after learning about the misfortunes of

14   antisocial or prosocial targets (Berndsen & Tiggemann, 2020; Brambilla & Riva, 2017;

15   Riva et al., 2016), without focusing on individuals' negative and positive responses at

16   the same time.

17   However, one observational study of children provides some suggestive

18   evidence for this pathway. Mendes et al. (2018) coded children's facial expressions

19   when watching the punishment of an antisocial puppet who tricked them and a

20   prosocial puppet who gave toys to them. Six-year-olds produced more smiles with

21   frowns when watching the antisocial puppet being hit than when watching the

22   prosocial puppet being hit. Children's frowns might reflect their empathic responses

1   towards the suffering of targets, while their smiles were presumably signs of

2   Schadenfreude. Their smiles with frowns suggest that they felt both empathic and

3   schadenfreude at the antisocial puppets' suffering, supporting the mixed route.

4   Overall, we have proposed three ways to explain how empathy becomes

5   morally selective. The first is that individuals automatically show less empathy for

6   antisocial targets than prosocial targets. The second is that individuals need to regulate

7   their empathy for targets with different moral characteristics via situation selection,

8   attention modulation, or reappraisal. The third is that selective empathy is a mixture

9   of empathy and schadenfreude. Each pathway has its supporting evidence. These three

10   pathways might apply to different situations or age groups. When the immoral targets

11   are extremely immoral (e.g., killer), individuals might show selective empathy

12   automatically with little regulation. When the immoral targets are not so evil but still

13   bad (e.g., people who take advantage of others), individuals might need to regulate

14   their empathy towards such immoral targets. For children whose abilities to integrate

15   their moral evaluation of targets and their empathy are still limited, their selective

16   empathy is more likely to be a mixed response of empathy and schadenfreude, such as

17   smiles with frowns (Mendes et al., 2018). Adults whose moral evaluation is well

18   developed and who can regulate their empathic responses are more likely to show

19   selective empathy automatically towards extremely immoral others or show selective

20   empathy via top-down regulations.

21   **Future directions**

22   We provide the first comprehensive review of the influence of targets' moral

1   characteristics on empathy. The sections above draw together a number of hitherto

2   scattered studies on the moral selectivity of empathy and explain why and how

3   empathy becomes selective in response to the moral characteristics of targets. It

4   enriches our understanding of the functions of selective empathy and opens up several

5   avenues to further address the relation between empathy and morality.

6   **The reverse influence of selective empathy on moral cognition**

7   When reviewing the influence of targets' moral characteristics on empathy, we

8   mainly focused on situations where the targets' moral characteristics are easy to

9   identify and quite objective. However, moral judgments in daily life can be more

10   complicated than the situations in experimental studies. When the moral evaluation of

11   targets is uncertain, individuals' moral evaluation might be influenced by the states of

12   their empathy. For example, when people do not want to feel empathy, they might

13   project immorality onto a target, just to rationalize their feelings.

14   This reverse pathway from (lack of) empathy to moral cognition is apparent in

15   previous work on victim blaming (Johnson et al., 2002). For example, when a person

16   surfs the Internet and finds a news report that a girl was sexually assaulted at a party,

17   instead of empathizing with the girl, the person might comment that girls should pay

18   attention to their clothes at a party or that the girl behaved provocatively, thereby

19   implying that the victim was responsible for the sexual assault. Malicious comments

20   like this might be the product of failed empathy. When the person cannot empathize

21   with the victim, or feels that it would be burdensome to empathize, the person might

22   rationalize their callous reactions by evaluating the victim as immoral or negative. It

1   is conceivable that such unfeeling responses are more common in today's society. The

2   information explosion on the Internet, and more specifically, the explosion of reports

3   of suffering and brutality, might deplete people's empathic resources. To rationalize

4   their reduced empathy towards others' misfortunes, people may make inaccurate

5   inferences about the character of victims. More studies are needed to examine this

6   plausible reverse influence of selective empathy on moral cognition and to find ways

7   to avoid such rationalization of empathy depletion.

8   Such vilification of victims is similar to the process of dehumanization of victims

9   in contexts of moral disengagement. To feel less responsible for their immoral

10   behaviors, people tend to change how they view the victims of those behaviors

11   (Bandura et al., 1996, 1999). For example, when an army brutally executes enemy

12   civilians, they tend to view them as less than human, rather than as ordinary

13   individuals with feelings and families.

14   **The moral selectivity of positive empathy**

15   All the studies reviewed above focused on empathy for the misfortune of

16   others, but individuals can also share in the good fortune of others. Positive empathy

17   refers to the sharing and understanding of others' positive emotions (Morelli et al.,

18   2015). Different from negative empathy, it activates brain regions associated with

19   positive affect (e.g., ventromedial prefrontal cortex) (Morelli et al., 2014). Similar to

20   negative empathy, it also promotes prosocial behaviors (Morelli et al., 2015; Telle &

21   Pfister, 2016) and is modulated by many factors such as group membership, degree of

22   liking, and justice (Smith & van Dijk, 2018). Corresponding to Schadenfreude, there

is a concept called Gluckschmerz, which refers to pain at others' good fortune (Smith

& van Dijk, 2018). Both Schadenfreude and Gluckschmerz reflect counter-empathy

for others' experiences.

Several findings suggest that individuals' positive empathy also depends

selectively on targets' moral characteristics. For example, adults were found to

express less happiness and more anger towards an antisocial person's good fortune

than that of a prosocial person (Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020). Additionally, 4- to

9-year-old children tend to evaluate antisocial targets as less happy than prosocial

targets even when both antisocial and prosocial targets are described as having

similarly happy experiences (Yang et al., 2021). Indeed, positive empathy might be

more selective in terms of targets' moral characteristics than negative empathy.

Previous studies found that individuals would share the negative feelings of both

strangers and ingroup members, but only share the positive feelings of ingroup

members, implying that positive empathy is more sensitive to targets' group identity

(Molenberghs et al., 2014; Motomura et al., 2015).

The asymmetrical selectivity of positive and negative empathy might also

reflect individuals' biased responses to positive and negative information (i.e., a

negativity bias, for reviews, see Peeters & Czapinski, 1990; Rozin & Royzman, 2001).

More specifically, negative information is usually more salient than positive

information for individuals. Based on this logic, negative experiences of targets might

draw more attention from empathizers than positive experiences of targets. Given that

others' negative experiences can also be a danger signal (Schulz, 2017), empathic

1 responses towards negative experiences may be less selective than towards positive

2 experiences because the negative experiences of others can signal potential danger no

3 matter whether they are moral or immoral. More research is needed to examine the

4 moral selectivity of positive empathy and compare the moral selectivity of empathy

5 for positive and negative events.

6   Finally, it is important to note that individuals' reduced empathy or

7 counter-empathy towards the fortune of immoral others might also stem from, or be

8 mixed, with envy or jealousy. Envy refers to a painful feeling caused by the good

9 fortune of others, and usually results from social comparisons (Crusius et al., 2020).

10 Immoral targets are usually perceived as inferior in morality. The good fortune of

11 immoral targets might provoke a sense of conflict, making individuals experience

12 greater envy towards the good fortunes of immoral as compared to moral targets.

13 These varied feelings of envy might also influence the selectivity of positive empathy.

14 **The Role of Selective Empathy in Selective Helping and Third-party Punishment**

15   Previous studies of third-party punishment and selective helping found that

16 individuals were more likely to punish immoral others (e.g., Fehr & Gächter, 2002;

17 Jordan et al., 2014; Kenward & Östh, 2015; McAuliffe et al., 2015; Yudkin et al.,

18 2019) or avoid helping immoral as compared to moral others, even though their own

19 benefits and wellbeing were not impacted by others' immoral behaviors (e.g., Dahl et

20 al., 2013; Malti et al., 2016; Vaish et al., 2010; Van de Vondervoort et al., 2018;

21 Wedekind & Milinski, 2000). Given the positive role of empathy in prosocial

22 behaviors (de Waal, 2008; Eisenberg, 2000; Hoffman, 2001), selective empathy may

1   be the emotional precursor of selective helping and third-party punishment. Previous

2   studies have found that children's Schadenfreude and compassion played a mediating

3   role between the targets' moral characteristics and children's willingness to help them

4   (Schindler et al., 2015; Schulz et al., 2013), thereby providing evidence for a

5   mediating pathway from selective empathy to selective helping.

6   Meanwhile, a change in empathy may not be the only explanation for

7   individuals' selective behaviors toward prosocial and antisocial others. Social norms

8   and inhibitory control abilities can also influence third-party punishment (Krueger &

9   Hoffman, 2016; Su et al., 2019). Nevertheless, selective empathy is likely to play a

10   key role in situations involving emotion expression, such as helping others in distress

11   or punishing others to make them feel pain.

12   **Conclusion**

13   This paper has reviewed evidence for selective empathy based on targets'

14   moral characteristics from the perspectives of three components of empathy

15   (emotional arousal, perspective taking, and empathic concern). It then discussed why

16   empathy is morally selective with both ultimate and proximate causes and how it

17   becomes morally selective via three possible pathways. We also discussed the

18   possible bi-directional relation between selective empathy and the moral evaluation of

19   targets (which can explain victim blaming) and the possible role of morally selective

20   empathy in selective prosociality. A graphic summary of our review can be seen in

21   Figure 1.

22   Previous studies of the selectivity of empathy have mainly focused on how it

1   can be biased and irrational, i.e., selective empathy based on racial or group bias (de

2   Vignemont & Singer, 2006; Decety, 2021; Han, 2018; Montalan et al., 2012).

3   However, by documenting the impact of moral considerations on empathy, this paper

4   highlights a more positive aspect of selective empathy, More generally, the paper

5   enriches our understanding of the relation between morality and empathy and should

6   inspire future research on the moral functions of empathy from new perspectives.

7

8

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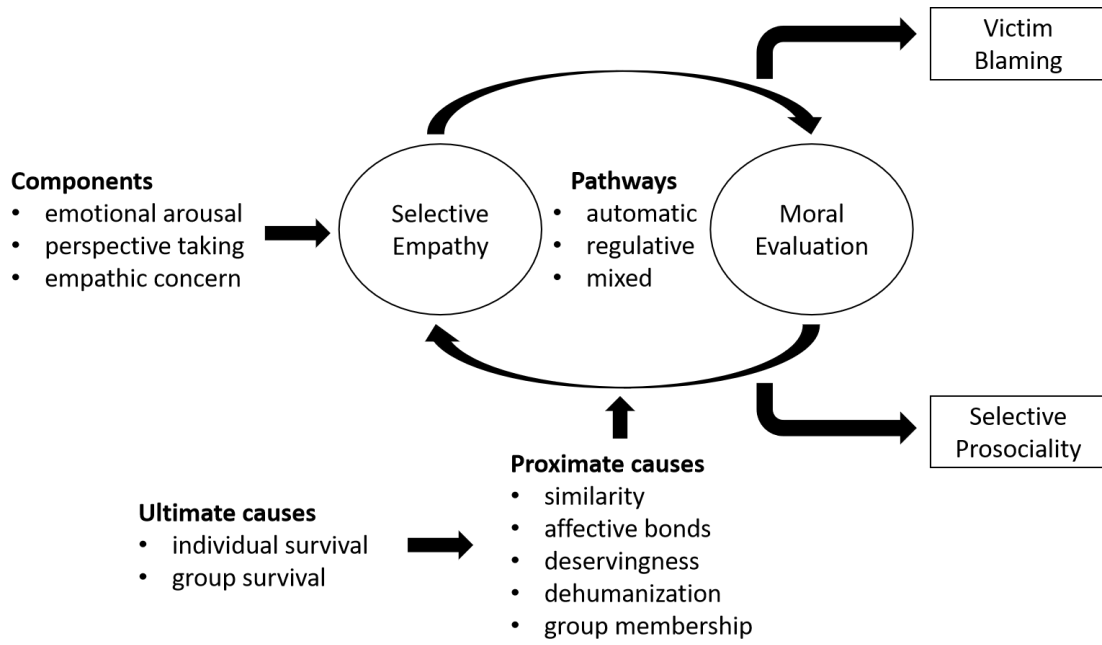
1   **Figure 1**

2   *The Relation Between Selective Empathy and Moral Evaluation*

3

4

5