# Moral Anger and Disgust: Recipient vs. Initiator Focus in Moral Transgressions

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# Moral transgressions

## CAD hypothesis

Rozin *et al.* (1999)

- **Community**: violation of group solidarity
- **Autonomy:** violation of individual rights
- **Divinity**: violation of bodily or spiritual integrity

## Autonomy violations

**UNFAIRNESS**

**HUMILIATION**

**(PHYSICAL) HARM**

# Appraisal tendency framework

## Emotions

**Anger**:

- Easily **reversed** (by apologizing)
- Lasts **shorter**
- More indicative of **actions**
- **Decreases** moral condamnation (Ugazio *et al.*, 1999; Seidel & Prinz, 2013).

**Disgust**:

- **Harder** to undo, most damaging
- Lasts **longer**
- More indicative of a person's **character** (Hareli & Hess, 2010)
- **Increases** moral condamnation (Ugazio *et al.*, 1999; Seidel & Prinz, 2013).

## Attentional focus

**Initiator**:

- Focusing on the bad moral character of perpetrators mostly triggers disgust (Giner-Sorolla *et al.,* 2017)

**Recipient** (action):

- Focusing on the negative aspect of the violation leads to increased anger (Giner-Sorolla *et al.*, 2017)

**Moral appraisal**:

- Process of **evaluating** or **assessing** the moral aspects or ethical dimensions of a **situation**, **action**, **behavior**, or **decision**
  - *e.g. which emotion(s) seem(s) relevant to a particular situation)*
- **Situational** and **individual** factors → **combination** of emotions

# Objectives

## What?

Testing whether inducing participants' attention towards the agent or recipient of a moral violation would elicit different emotional responses.

## How?

Evaluating how participants judge the appropriateness of single third-party emotional expressions (using pictures of facial affect) in relation to moral content.

## Why?

Understanding which and how emotions are elicited depending on the attentional focus of a event (how you tell a story).

# Method

## Participants

- N = **139** (73 females, 66 males)
- **18–75** years (*M* = 40.65 years; *SD* = 13.8)
- Prolific platform (online)
- $3 compensation

## Design

- 2 **Focus** (Initiator vs. Recipient; between-subject) x 4 **Emotions** (anger, disgust, sadness, neutral; within-subject) mixed subject-design
- Sex-matched stimuli task

## Stimuli

- Vignettes (Clifford *et al.*, 2015) of **unfairness**, **humiliation**, and **harm**, adapted for each attentional focus:

| Initiator Focus | Recipient Focus |
| --- | --- |
| A person trips someone on the street | A person is tripped by someone on the street |

- **FACES** database (Ebner *et al.*, 2007)

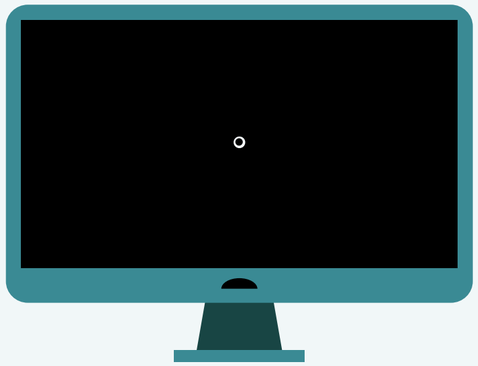
# Procedure

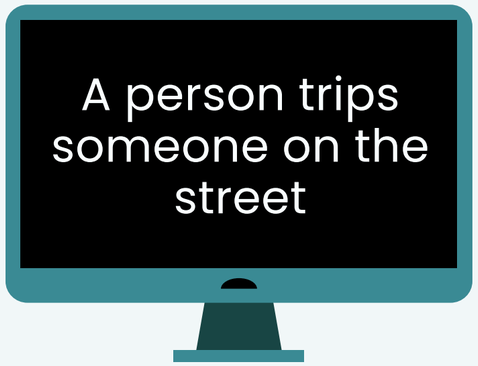
**Fixation dot**
*500ms*

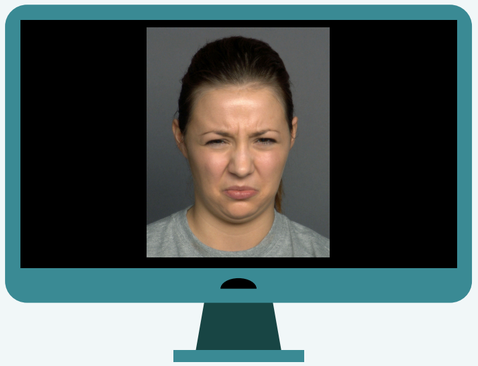
**Scenario**
*4000ms*

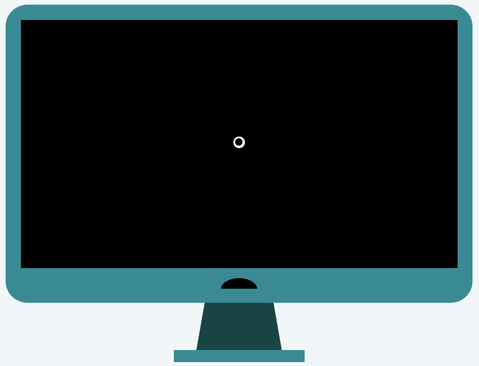
**Decision**
*expected “Z” or not “M”*

**Fixation dot**
*500ms*



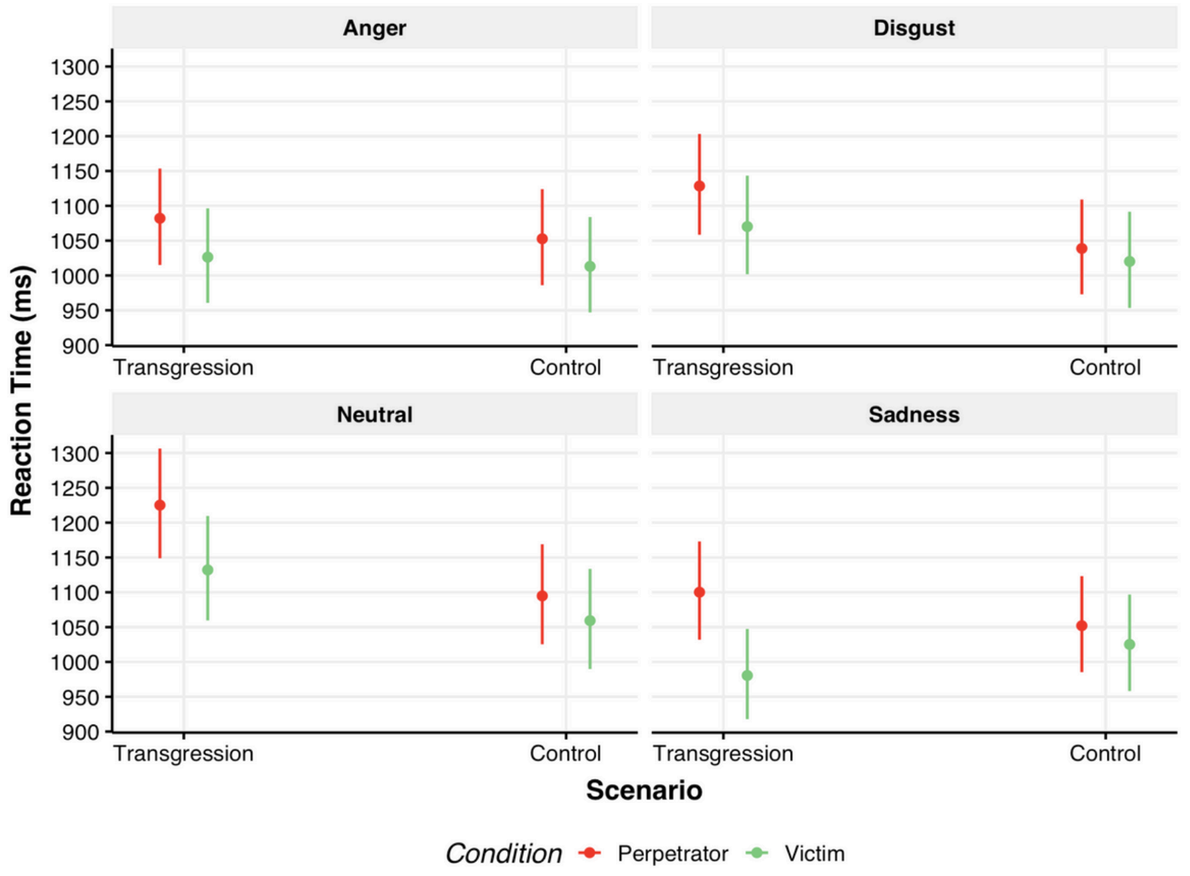




# Results

## Reaction Time (RT)

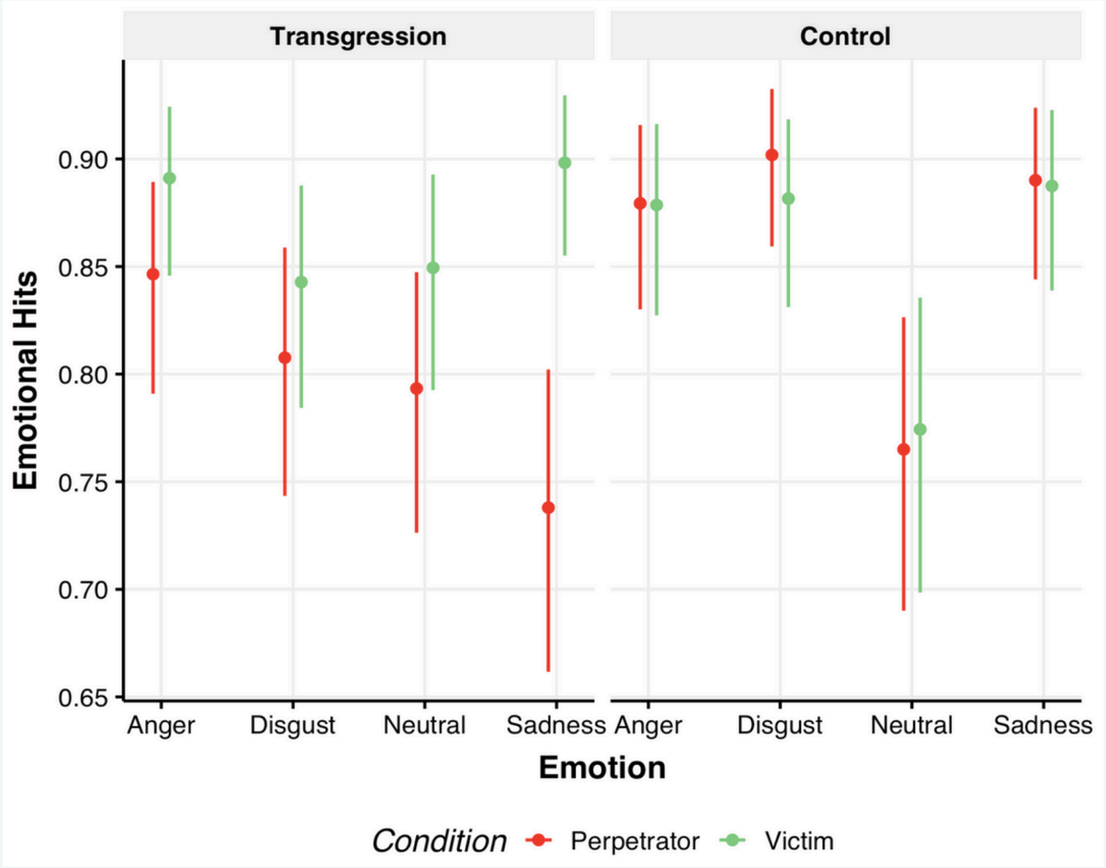



- Main effect of ***Emotion***
  - $\chi2(3) = 58.033, p < .001$)
- Interaction between ***Condition*** and ***Emotion***
  - $\chi2(3) = 8.263, p = .041$).
- Interaction between ***Emotion*** and ***Scenario***
  - $\chi2(1) = 13.005, p = .005$

# Results

## (In)appropriatness rating

- Main effect of ***Emotion***
  - $\chi2(3) = 28.664$, $p < .001$
- Interaction between ***Condition*** and ***Emotion***
  - $\chi2(3) = 25.5640$, $p < .001$
- Interaction between ***Emotion*** and ***Scenario***
  - $\chi2(3) = 46.5627$, $p < .001$
- Three-way interaction between ***Emotion***, ***Condition*** and ***Scenario***
  - $\chi2(3) = 10.002$, $p = .019$



# Discussion

## Conclusion

- **Recipient focus**: quicker and more frequent selection of angry expressions compared to disgust
- **Initiator focus**: preference for disgust, and importance of sadness

## Limitations

- Caucasian faces and same-sex and stimuli

## Take away message

Attentional **focus** can influence **emotional**, and therefore moral reaction to an **event**

→ must be taken into account in **Criminal Justice Settings** (CJS)

# Thank you!

## Any question? suggestion?

Contact me!

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