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Prejudice Against Migrants: An Individual or a Group-level Social Phenomenon?

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to theories that on the one side account for individual factors and on the other side account for social factors in explaining the origins and maintenance of prejudice against migrants. The theories have neglected the possibility to integrate these two strands of factors, a shortcoming that is addressed in this thesis. The series of studies conducted for this thesis seek to understand how the need for cognitive closure, moral foundations, threat perception, national identification, and situational uncertainty could determine prejudice against migrants. By conducting four correlational studies, two of which are cross-cultural, in two different European Union states, I set out to understand the role of these factors and their relationship with prejudice against migrants. These studies indicate that the need for epistemic certainty, binding morality, threat perception, and in-group identification are related and together explain prejudice against migrants.

These studies were conducted with the aim of enabling both academics and policy makers/public speakers to better understand the nuances of prejudice formation against migrants. The significance of this thesis is that it informs our theoretical understanding of how different theories that have been related to prejudice against migrants can be integrated and linked to the body of knowledge on prejudice.

CHAPTER 1

1.0 General Introduction

This Ph.D. dissertation focuses on prejudice against migrants. Social psychologists are not the only academics who have researched this area of study. Over the years, political studies, sociologists, and other scholars have also contributed to this theoretical knowledge around this issue. From a social psychological perspective, prejudice has been traditionally described as an intergroup phenomenon (Ashmore, 1970) and as “an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization” (Allport, 1954, p.9). Generally, prejudice is described as a negative or a hostile attitude towards a particular group and is formed based on incomplete, incorrect, or misguided information (Aronson, 2012). Allport (1954) argues that prejudiced individuals have generalized prejudice against different groups, so for example, a person can be simultaneously prejudiced against blacks, migrants, and LGBTIQ individuals. In effect, research has found that prejudice against various targets is significantly correlated (Ekehammar & Akrami, 2003; Akrami, Ekehammar & Bergh, 2010).

According to Allport (1954), the nature of prejudice depends on the prejudice-prone cognitive style, which motivates individuals to “urge for quick and definite answers” (p. 403) and to be narrow-minded and intolerant of ambiguity. These characteristics resonate with the concept of the need for cognitive closure (Kruglanski, 1989; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; see also Roets, Kruglanski, Kossowska, Pierro & Hong, 2015), which has been defined as the desire for a firm and stable answer on a given topic – any answer – in order to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994).

This dissertation aims to add to the social-psychological theoretical knowledge by investigating the relationship between the Need for Cognitive

Closure, Moral Foundations, Perceived Threats, National Identification, Uncertainty and Prejudice against migrants by explicitly addressing the following research questions:

Previous studies found that binding morality relative to domains of loyalty, authority, and sanctity, contribute to increased levels of prejudice against out-group members (e.g., Baldner & Pierro, 2019, Kugler, Jost & Noorbaloochi, 2014; Low & Wui, 2016; Van de Vyer, Houston, Abrams & Vasiljevic, 2016). Additionally, previous studies have established that out-groups are perceived as threatening but these studies have not examined the role of the perceived threats in the relationship between binding moral foundations and prejudice against migrants and whether this can lead to prejudice and discrimination towards migrants and refugees (e.g., Croucher, Galy-Badenas & Routsalainen, 2014). With the aim of filling this gap I hypothesize that (i) individuals who endorse the moral duties of loyalty to the in-group, respect for authority, and sanctity (i.e., binding moral foundations) are more likely to perceive migrants (migrants and refugees) as posing realistic and symbolic threats and consequently to be more prejudiced. Furthermore, seeking to corroborate what already exists in literature about the negative relationship between individualizing moral foundations and prejudice against migrants (Hadarics & Kende, 2017; Kugler et al., 2014; Low & Wui; Van de Vyer et al., 2016) I hypothesize that (ii) individuals with high individualizing moral foundations more likely to perceive less threats from migrants and therefore be less prejudiced against them.

Several studies have found that a relation between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice (Baldner & Pierro, 2018; Roets & Van Hiel, 2006). Moreover, the mediation effect of the binding moral foundations on this relationship was found in a study conducted by Baldner and Pierro (2019). Other studies found that individuals who endorse binding morality and weakly

endorse individualizing morality are more prone to perceive culturally different out-groups as more threatening. Therefore, confirming what already is found in literature I hypothesize that:

(iii) individuals with a high need for cognitive closure will be prejudiced against migrants; and add that:

(iv) individuals under a strong need for cognitive closure who strongly endorse binding foundations should conceptually protect the in-group and thus perceive out-groups as posing realistic and/or symbolic threats to in-group social order and morality;

(v) individuals with high need for cognitive closure will endorse binding morality, perceive higher threats, and be more socially distant from different ethnic groups.

Several previous studies examined the relation between national identification and prejudiced attitudes against migrants and literature indicates that national identification increases negative attitudes towards out-groups (Hopkins, 2001; Kunovich, 2009; Pehrson, Brown & Zagefka, 2009). However, a link between the need for cognitive closure, national identification, binding morality, the perception of threat from migration and how these effect prejudiced attitudes towards migrants has not been tested. With the aim of filling this gap I hypothesized that (vi) the need for cognitive closure is related to high social identification with the in-group (nationality), which in turn is associated with binding moral foundations.

Uncertainty theories such as Uncertainty Identity Theory (Hogg, 2007), Uncertainty Management Model (Van den Bos, 2009; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002), and Terror Management Theory (TMT; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1999) posit that uncertainty is the underlying phenomenon that motivates intergroup orientations. Since the emergence of COVID-19 greater feeling of uncertainty has been experienced (Vos, 2020). Following existing

literature on the relationship between uncertainty caused by COVID-19 and prejudice against migrants, and aiming to fill the gap in literature on how situational uncertainty, the need for cognitive closure and binding morality effects prejudiced attitudes towards migrants, I predict that the need for cognitive closure and binding morality might mediate the relationship between COVID-19 uncertainty and prejudice against migrants. I therefore hypothesize that (vii) individuals with stronger COVID-19 concern will perceive migrants as a greater threat and show prejudice towards them, indirectly through the mechanism of need for cognitive closure and the three binding moral foundations (in-group loyalty, authority, and purity).

The questions and the research conducted to investigate these hypothesis are addressed and described in detail in chapters seven to ten of this dissertation.

The main findings from this series of studies are:

- (i) Individuals who are loyal to their community, support authority, and endorse purity (i.e., binding moral foundations) are more likely to be prejudiced against migrants, as binding morality increases the perception that migrants pose a realistic and symbolic threat to the in-group.
- (ii) Individuals who are more prone to care about and to be fair with others (i.e., who endorse individualizing moral foundations) and, thus, disapprove of harming others, are less likely to perceive migrants as a threat and be prejudiced against them.
- (iii) Perceived realistic threat is strongly associated with prejudice and social distance against several groups of migrants.
- (iii) The need for cognitive closure is significantly related to prejudice against migrants.

- (iv) The relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants is sequentially mediated through binding moral foundations and perceived threats (realistic and symbolic) from migrants.
- (iv) The relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants increases further when mediated through national identification, binding moral foundations, and perceived threat from migrants.
- (vi) The relationship between situational uncertainty caused by COVID-19 concern and prejudice against migrants is stronger when mediated through the need for cognitive closure and binding morality, with the authority foundation seeming to be the most consistent predictor of the outcome.

1.1 Terms and Scope

Today, one out of every three migrants worldwide lives in a European country. Thus, both Eastern and Western European countries have seen a rapid increase in migrants in the last four decades (World Bank, 2019). A few European countries' geographic positions, such as Italy and Malta, attract migrants from Northern Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East (IOM, 2020).

In literature, and likewise, in this study, the term “migrants” is used for indicating various categories, such as immigrants and refugees or asylum seekers (IOM, 2019). During the course of my Ph.D. I conducted studies in two countries: Malta and Italy. Malta has the second-highest percentage of migrants per capita living on the island (16.9% according to Eurostat, 2019), while Italy in 2019 placed thirteenth amongst all European states (8.7% according to Eurostat, 2019). However, Italy had a higher rate of non-European Union migrants living

on its territory than Malta in 2018(69.9% vs. 39%). There are no official statistics for non-European Union migrants living in Malta for 2019 and 2020. These high numbers of international migration bring several challenges for acceptance and tolerance among hosting communities (Simonovits, 2016). Significant numbers of migrants could constitute a threat for host community members, who might fear that their culture and privileges may be damaged or endangered (Esses, Dovidio & Hodson, 2002).

The choice of conducting research in Malta and Italy stems from a personal interest in both countries. Being Maltese and having lived in Malta for over 40 years, I have witnessed a significant influx of foreigners coming to the island. With this, I have also started noticing, both in the media and in conversation with acquaintances, more and more prejudiced attitudes against migrants. Having moved to Italy 3 years ago to commence this academic journey, I perceived a similar situation. This fuelled my motivation to study theories and factors that may increase prejudiced attitudes against migrants. I started reading about this social phenomenon and noticed that, although both migration and prejudice have been extensively researched, there are still a few literature gaps. The research questions delineated above aim to fill some of these gaps.

1.2 Ontological and Epistemological Positioning

The question “What contributes to prejudiced attitudes against migrants?” informs the ontology of this series of studies conducted during my Ph.D. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), every research paradigm needs to include three questions:

1. the ontological question
2. the epistemological question
3. a methodological question.

So with the ontological question in place, I proceeded to decide on which epistemological approach to embrace.

Believing that reality exists independently from the observer (Newman & Benz, 1998; Sale, Lonfeld & Brazil, 2002), the most natural epistemological stance to embrace was positivism. I opted for a method wherein my role as a researcher would not influence the research participants' perception of reality, so meaningful reality is the research participant's inherent truth and could be understood using parsimonious and comprehensive theory. This because, as Friedman (2003) argues, theory is the tool that allows us to ask questions about how we behave. He argues that theory helps us to identify and describe goals, and theory also creates the possibility of contemplating predictable changes to reach these goals, as it is a tool that allows us to ask questions about our behaviour. Theory also helps us to identify and describe goals, and gives us the possibility of contemplating predictable changes to reach these goals (Friedman, 2003). I employed a deductive thought process throughout these studies, which is the basis for any positivist/quantitative study (Neuman, 2000).

1.3 Brief Description of Methodology

Based on the philosophical assumptions discussed above, I deemed a quantitative method as most suitable for this series of studies. The quantitative approach assumes that there exists only one single reality, which cannot be influenced by the researcher in any way (Mujis, 2010). For this series of studies, I chose questionnaires, as they are practical, easy to disseminate also during pandemic times, and inexpensive (Kelley, Clark, Brown & Sitzia, 2003). A detailed description of the participant recruitment, dissemination, and data collection process and data analysing process for each study conducted is described in several chapters of this dissertation (Chapters 7,8,9 and 10).

I used random sampling in all of the studies. Participants in Malta were recruited through a message posted on my page on Facebook and for the studies conducted in Italy, a portion of the Italian participants was recruited from a pool of students attending an introductory course in Social Psychology at Sapienza Università di Roma. Participation was voluntary. Students who opted to participate were asked to distribute a number of questionnaires. They received course credits in return. At the beginning of the questionnaire, informed consent was asked and emphasis on the anonymity of the survey was made. The scales were presented in fixed sequence order. Respondents were allowed to review what they had completed but could not move forward unless all questions were responded. However, participants were not forced to participate in any way and could abstain from participation at any moment. Upon submitting their responses, the completed questionnaire was recorded anonymously. For each survey, an electronic questionnaire in English, for Maltese participants (English being one of the official languages in Malta), and in Italian, for Italian participants was composed.

All the data collected in all four studies were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25 and PROCESS (Hayes, 2017).

1.4 Concepts and Variables Used

This section will briefly describe the variables and concepts used in this series of studies. Each concept or variable is reviewed in more detail in the following chapters.

1.4.1. Prejudice

Separating people into different groups pervades human social life. This division often results in prejudiced beliefs and attitudes (Duckitt, 1994).

Prejudice, as a concept of social psychological interest, emerged in the 1920's (Samelson, 1978; Vaughan, 1988). Throughout the following years, prejudice started attracting more attention; however, it was only after World War II that interest escalated (Fairchild & Gurin, 1978). Gordon Allport's work on prejudice, published in 1954, was potentially the first in-depth insight into the social phenomenon of prejudice. The causes of prejudiced attitudes and beliefs have since been attributed to various factors, such as conflict of interest, scapegoating, economic threat, fear/dislike of strangers, the lack of contact experiences with out-groups, and its members, etc.

Several different definitions of prejudice have since then emerged. For instance, for Ashmore (1970), prejudice is an undesirable human condition: "a negative attitude toward a socially defined group and towards any person perceived to be a member of a group" (Ashmore, 1970, p.253).

A more detailed review of different definitions of prejudice and prejudice theories will be presented in the following chapter.

1.4.2 Perceived Threat (Studies 1,2,3 and 4)

The perception of threat has been linked to prejudice by several scholars (e.g., Blumer, 1958; Quillian, 1995; Stephan & Stephan, 2000) and attributed to different factors. Quillian (1995), in Group Threat Theory, states that the size of a given minority has a direct bearing on anti-immigrant attitudes amongst the majority. This hypothesis has been shown to have some merit, especially in the USA. However, it has been disavowed in other studies (e.g., Hjern, 2007; Pottie-Sherman & Wilkes, 2015). Based on data from the European Social Survey, Pottie-Sherman and Wilkes (2015) conclude that neither actual nor perceived size predicts well anti-immigrant attitudes in Europe.

Successively, Stephan and collaborators proposed two theories: Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) and Intergroup Threat

Theory (Stephan, Ybarra & Rios, 2009) to delineate the components of perceived threat that led to prejudiced beliefs. Stephan and collaborators(2009) argue that perceived threats include all types of threat that members of the dominant group believe they are experiencing, regardless of whether a threat exists or not (Stephan et al., 2009). I have reviewed both of these theories in more detail in the third chapter of this dissertation.

1.4.3 Moral Foundations(Studies 1,2,3 and 4)

Moral Foundation Theory was formulated by Haidt and collaborators and popularized in Haidt's book '*The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Dived by Politics and Religion*'(2002).This theory suggests that innate and universal psychological systems are at the heart of morality, and therefore serve as the foundations of each culture. However, then, each culture ensembles its narratives, virtues, and institutions upon these foundations, thereby creating unique, and at times conflicting, moralities. They proposed five foundations, which are described in more detail in chapter 4:

1. Care/Harm
2. Fairness/Cheating
3. Loyalty/Betrayal
4. Authority/Subversion
5. Sanctity/Degradation

These are divided in two larger dimensions: individualizing and binding moral foundations. Several studies showed that these foundations, in particular binding moral foundations, predict various negative social phenomenon, among which also prejudice (e.g., Baldner & Pierro, 2018, 2019).

1.4.4. The Need for Cognitive Closure(Studies 2,3 and 4)

The need for closure motivates individuals to find answers in any ambiguous, confusing, or uncertain situation. In social psychology, the need for cognitive closure (NCC) or, as often referred to, the need for epistemic certainty, is considered a relatively stable dispositional characteristic but can be affected by some situational factors.

According to Kruglanski (1989), two intertwining threads work together in people with a high need for cognitive closure. Firstly, individuals with high NCC 'seize' any information available, with the aim of finding a response and achieving closure as soon as possible. Once this is achieved, they move onto the 'freezing' phase, intending to preserve knowledge acquired. This freezing tendency also happens in the face of adverse and conflicting information. Both tendencies render people with a high need for closure more susceptible to harbouring stereotypical views and to have prejudiced attitudes. In contrast, people with a low need for closure are more open to new ideas and have more fluidity in their opinions, and less prejudiced attitudes.

1.4.5 National Identification(Study 3)

Nationalism is of interest across several disciplines, and has been conceptualized in various ways. The main concern for psychologists is usually individuals' identification with a national group to which they belong (e.g., Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001). It is still unclear how in-group identification, in general, is related to prejudice, even though this has been of interest to social scientists for over a century (Allport, 1954; Brewer, 1999; Brown & Zagefka, 2005; Sumner, 1906). Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) should be read to understand the mechanisms underlying the relationship between in-group identification and prejudice. Evaluating out-groups less positively than the in-group is one way to achieve positive

distinctiveness (Brewer, 1991; Turner, 1999). However, this is not the same as actual negativity towards an out-group, which Social Identity Theory is less able to explain (Brown, 2000). Meanwhile, Reicher and Hopkins (2001) criticize any attempt to establish a generic relationship between in-group identification and prejudice as misguided because such attempts ignore the particular definitions and content of social identities.

1.4.6 COVID-19 concern(Study 4)

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to a global situation of extreme uncertainty. Economic and financial uncertainty, health, affective relationships, and individuals' general life direction have been tainted with uncertainty. In these uncertain situations, individuals struggle to understand what is happening and have difficulty making coherent sense and interpretation of their reality (Chater, 2020). Very few studies have so far explored how COVID-19 concern could impact inter-group attitudes and relationships.

1.5 General Layout

Chapter 1 delineates a general introduction to the dissertation. The main research questions and findings are briefly described, the ontological and epistemological positioning explained, and a brief introduction to the different variables and literature that frames this series of studies is outlined.

In Chapter 2, a detailed literature review is presented about the concept of prejudice, and various theoretical approaches and studies are reviewed, especially concerning prejudice against migrants.

In Chapter 3, a review of theories and studies about perceived threats is described. Here again, the focus is perceived threats from migrants.

An overview of the Theory of Moral Foundations and studies that explore the roles of moral foundations in inter-group attitudes is presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 delineates the need for cognitive closure and its relationship with out-group prejudice, and studies relating to this are reviewed.

The migration context in Malta and Italy is presented in the last chapter of this literature review, Chapter 6. In this chapter I have briefly mapped the migrant situation in both countries, giving an insight to the backdrop within which these studies have been conducted.

The first study of this research is presented in Chapter 7. The relationship between moral foundations and prejudice against migrants is explored. More specifically, the mediating role of perceived realistic and perceived symbolic threats in this relationship was studied comparatively in two European countries: Malta and Italy. This study was submitted for publication.

In Chapter 8, the mediating role of binding moral foundations and perceived realistic/symbolic threats in the relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants was tested. This study was conducted in Italy and has also been submitted for publication.

The third study is presented in Chapter 9. The sequentially mediating role of national identification, endorsement of binding moral foundations, and the perception of threat on the relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants were explored. This study was conducted in Malta, the smallest country in the European Union with a strong ethnic identity. This study was accepted for publication in the *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*.

Finally, the last study is presented in Chapter 10. The current global pandemic inspired this study, and data were gathered during the ongoing

pandemic. The mediating roles of the need of cognitive closure and binding moral foundations on the relationships between COVID-19 concern and prejudice against migrants were explored. This study is a comparative analysis between two countries: Malta and Italy, and has been published in the Journal of Social Psychology.

A general discussion of the findings, together with conclusions and a general summary of the studies, is presented in the final chapter, Chapter 11.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 Defining Prejudice

Over the years, prejudice has been defined in various ways, with several social psychologists agreeing that prejudice is an attitude. However, disagreement about what components constitute an attitude emerges in literature (Duckitt, 1994). Earlier psychologists, such as Thurstone and Chave (1929), took a unidimensional approach to attitude, defining it as "a general evaluation or feeling of favourability or unfavorability towards an object" (p.12). During the '40s and '50s, a broader three-dimensional definition of attitude emerged. This included cognitive, affective, and behavioural components (Katz & Stotland, 1959; Krech & Crutchfield, 1948; Lambert & Lambert, 1964). For example, Brown (2010) defined prejudice as "any attitude, emotion or behaviour towards members of a group, which directly or indirectly implies some negativity or antipathy towards that group" (p.7). Allport (1954) also adopted this three-dimensional approach. He argued that individuals with prejudiced attitudes often see the world in terms of in-groups that people need to be submitted to and out-groups that can be a threat to the in-group.

Therefore, prejudiced individuals view out-groups as categorically different from their own in-group, turning all out-group members in potential enemies to the in-group. This hatred and hostility towards out-group members are rationalized, and therefore, all negative characteristics attributed to the out-group become justifiable (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson & Sanford, 1950). These negative and/or hostile attitudes against particular groups are based on incorrect, incomplete, or misguided information (Aronson, 2012), and on the perception of threats from the out-groups and their members (Adorno et al., 1950; Allport, 1954).

In describing the "prejudice-prone individuals", Allport (1954) argues that these individuals need clear cut situations even if they limit or narrow their

opportunities. He adds that they usually have a preference for order, in general, and feel reassured when they have answers to questions or situations they find themselves in, as they have a low tolerance for ambiguity. He adds that 'prejudice-prone individuals' are narrow-minded and fail to consider all the facets of a problem.

Still, other psychologists proposed a two-component view of attitude, suggesting that attitudes consist of cognitive and affective components. For example, Levin and Levin (1982) define prejudice as "a learned disposition consisting of... (1) negative beliefs or stereotypes (the cognitive component), and (2) negative feelings of emotions (affective component)" (p.66).

More specifically, racial and ethnic prejudice is a set of negative attitudes, beliefs, and judgments about groups of people, and individual members of these groups, because of their perceived race and/or ethnicity. Racism is associated with the belief that certain racial or ethnic groups are inferior to one's race. Racial and ethnic stereotypes that simplify and make mistaken generalizations about individuals because of their race or ethnicity, often fuel prejudice and racism.

Prejudice has been attributed to various factors: historical contexts, personality traits (Allport, 1954; Ashmore, 1970; Condor & Brown, 1988; Hardling, Proshansky, Kutner & Chein, 1969; Simpson & Yinger, 1985; Stephan, 2008; Tajfel, 1982), political and socio-economic motives (Greeley & Sheatsley, 1971), social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism (Dovidio et al., 2010; Mc Farland, 2010; Stephan, 2008). Several theories have been proposed in an attempt to explain the origins of stereotypes and prejudice and general inter-group relations in social psychology. Some of these theories are outlined in the following sections.

2.2 Theories of Origins of Prejudice

Where do racial and ethnic prejudices originate, and why are some individuals more prejudiced than others? Since the mid-1940s, when the horrors of Nazism were still fresh in people's minds, several scholars attempted to answer these questions. Theories of prejudice fall under two categories, social-psychological and sociological. I will first outline social-psychological explanations and then proceed with the sociological explanations.

2.3 Social-Psychological Explanations

Many theories have focused on the psychological fundamental of prejudice. These theories seek to identify universal psychological processes that are common and underlie the formation of prejudice and could be distinguished into two categories: individual-level explanations and group-level explanations (Brown, 2010).

2.4 Individual-Level Explanations

Individual-level explanations of prejudice can be divided into those that attempt to change individuals' prejudiced attitudes and those attempting to change particular aspects of individuals that make them more prone to adopt prejudiced attitudes (Duckitt, 2001). For the purpose of this dissertation, I shall be reviewing the 'Authoritarian Personality Theory' and 'Frustration and Scapegoat Theory'.

2.4.1 Authoritarian Personality Theory

Early social-psychological explanations of prejudice cited the authoritarian personality as being at the core of prejudiced people as this makes individuals more prone to the prevailing fascist or racist ideas in any given context or time (Adorno et al., 1950). According to Adorno and his colleagues

(1950), authoritarian personalities develop in childhood in response to parents who practice harsh discipline and are overly concerned with moral codes. Being brought up in this environment, children displace their frustration onto others and scapegoat individuals who they deem weaker than themselves. This upbringing also instils a simplistic and rigid way of thinking, lending itself to the adoption of stereotypes about social groups. Therefore, individuals with authoritarian personalities have a preference for obedience, adherence to rigid rules, and low acceptance of out-groups. Several studies have examined the relationship between authoritarianism and mental rigidity and found that ethnocentrism correlates with high mental rigidity (Adorno et al., 1950; Rokeach, 1948). However, these studies were contested. For example, in a study conducted by Brown (1953), the link between rigidity and authoritarianism only emerged when the participants felt strongly about the testing situation they were presented with. Other studies investigated the link between authoritarianism and prejudice and found high correlations between ethnocentrism and prejudice (Adorno et al., 1950), and in a sample of students in the United States, a link between authoritarianism and xenophobia towards Blacks, Jews, Japanese, English and Mexican people was found (Campbell & McCandles, 1951). In the Netherlands, Melon, Hagendoorn, Raaijmakers and Visser (1988) reported correlations between authoritarianism and ethnocentrism. Notwithstanding this research, there still are doubts about the robustness of these links. Correlations were not always very strong, indicating the possibility of other factors (Brown, 2010). Occasionally zero correlations have been reported between authoritarian, and out-group rejection (e.g., Forbes, 1985), and various methodological faults have been highlighted – for example, in Adorno's and colleagues' (1950) study, although the sample was rather large (two thousand participants), it was not representative. Moreover, the wording

of the scale they developed, the F-scale, was worded in such a way that agreement with the items indicated authoritarian response.

Altemeyer (1996) tried to rectify the F-scale and developed the Right-Wing Authoritarian scale. In this scale, he included three important aspects of the authoritarian personality: submission to authority, aggressiveness towards the out-group member's deviants, and conventionalism. Altemeyer (1996) argues that authoritarianism traits do not lie in the parent-child dynamic but in social learning experiences leading to adolescence. Although Altemeyer's scale is deemed superior to the F-Scale (Brown, 2010), it was also criticized as some items are double or triple-barrelled (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991).

Finally, both scales were criticized on one common issue: although authoritarianism conceptually refers to the right-wing political ideology, individuals with other political ideologies could still have authoritarian traits, implying that prejudice could also be a trait of individuals from different political orientations (Shils, 1954).

2.4.2 Frustration and Scapegoat Theory

Frustration-aggression Theory (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939) depicts aggression as a response to external circumstances that hold individuals back from attaining their goals and not as an innate drive. This theory focuses on what Allport called the "complementary projection", in which feelings are explained by projecting a complementary sense onto others (e.g., If I am afraid, then you must be scary). Since the source of frustration is external to the individual, then repression is not necessary. Individuals or groups are blamed for these frustrations and all misfortunes. Several psychology experiments tested the link between frustration and prejudice. In one particular experiment, college students were asked to solve a puzzle but purposely not given enough time to accomplish the task. This experiment showed higher levels of prejudice after the experiment (Cowen, Landes, & Schaet, 1959).

Therefore, while both the psychodynamic approach and frustration-aggression theories view scapegoating as irrational and agree that 1. aggression is displaced towards others who are deemed weaker and unable to retaliate; 2. that aggression against the real source of frustration is inhibited; and 3. that negative stereotypes of scapegoated groups are rationalizations or projections that hide the real reasons for hostility against them, the main difference between them lies in whether frustration is caused by internal psychodynamic conflicts or in external sources that block goal-directed behaviour.

In history, mass level scapegoating has happened over and over. From medieval times in Europe, Jews were often blamed and persecuted every time an economic crisis occurred or when countries were losing wars. Soon after the bubonic plague, which killed one-third of Europeans, the Jews were blamed for either directly spreading the plague or causing God's wrath for not being Christians. Fast forward to post-World War 1 in Germany, the Jews were again scapegoated, and anti-Semitism helped fuel Nazism and Hitler's rise to power (Litvinoff, 1988).

Staub (1989) theorizes that mass killings and genocides require general collective conditions that frustrate a large number of conditions (e.g., safety, sense of belonging, and physical well-being). This brings me to consider group-level explanations of prejudice.

2.5 Group-Level Explanations

Several group-level theories have shaped our understanding of intergroup relations, prejudice, and discrimination. For the purpose of this dissertation, I shall be focusing on the following four theories: Social Identity perspective, 'Behaviours from Intergroup Affect and Stereotypes' map,

Aversive Racism Theory, System Justification Theory, and Social Learning Theory.

2.5.1 Social Identity Theory

The first theoretical framework that I outline is the Social Identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This theory delineates the psychological process that brings people to perceive themselves as group members through processes such as self-categorization (Turner, Hogg, Oaks, Reicher & Witherell, 1987), which makes them act on behalf of their group by internalizing the in-group's beliefs, norms, and values. This process encourages people to act in ways that are beneficial to their in-group.

Social Identity Theory also explains how group members strive to maximize the relative advantage for their in-group even when this interferes with achieving maximum outcomes for individual members of the group (Brewer, 1979; Brewer & Kramer, 1985). The need to achieve positive social identity can result in discrimination, which is expressed as direct harm to the out-group, or more commonly and spontaneously, as giving preferential treatment to the in-group, a phenomenon known as in-group bias. Minimal group paradigm studies (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) have illustrated how mere categorization as a group member can lead to in-group bias, favouring in-group members over the out-group members in evaluations and allocation of resources (Turner, 1978). Several experimental studies have demonstrated that when identification with the group occurs, what is favourable to the in-group is generally exaggerated and emphasized while what is advantageous for the out-group is either minimized or ignored (e.g., Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy & Flament, 1971). Studies investigating categorization conclude that negative evaluations of the out-group (Dovidio, Gaertner & Validzic, 1988), stereotyping (Smith, 1999), and absence to allocate resources to out-group members

(Sidanius, Pratto & Mitchell, 1944) result from this categorization process. Furthermore, social categorization is sufficient to create discriminatory treatment, often motivated by in-group favouritism. Also, direct competition between groups exacerbates this bias, typically generating responses directly to disadvantage the out-group (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood & Sherif, 1961).

As Tajfel (1981) and others (Billig, 1976; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) argue the degree to which individual's express in-group favouritism and its implications for out-group attitudes and behaviour is determined by characteristics of the actual intergroup context. These characteristics include social factors and situational cues that influence the importance of intergroup categorization, the existence of status and power differences between groups, perceived rights and stability of these differences, and types of conflicts. These factors are crucial in changing in-group favouritism into out-group hostility or prejudice (Van Knippenberg & Van Oers, 1984).

Social identity is also a key factor that causes people to perceive threats from out-groups. This is supported by several studies that have found a positive correlation between social identity strength with the in-group and perceived threats to the in-group which may bring about hostility and expressions of denigration towards the out-group (Steinmayr, 2016). Often in-group identification is conceptualized as how essential or central the notion of the in-group is to individuals (Rios, Sosa & Osborn, 2018). Stephan and Renfro (2002) suggested that, the more important group membership is to the in-group members' sense of identity, the more likely they will feel threatened and uncomfortable when interacting with other groups. In fact, highly in-group identified individuals consider the in-group as a central component of their self-identification. Self-categorization can exaggerate the perceived similarity within groups, as well as perceived differences between groups (Turner & Oakes, 1989). This process encourages high identifiers to view out-groups and

in-groups as real groups with discrete normative standards, propelling strongly identified people to experience greater feelings of threat from out-group members (Le Vine & Campbell, 1972; Sherif, 1966; Stephan & Stephan, 2000) and have a less positive attitude towards out-group members (Hodson, Dovidio & Esses, 2003; Mummendey et al., 2001; Reynolds et al., 2007). Whereas Social Identity Theory examines basic processes leading to intergroup discrimination, the BIAS map (Behaviours from Intergroup effect and Stereotypes; see Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2007), described hereunder, offers insights into the specific ways that individuals discriminate against members of particular types of groups.

2.5.2 Behaviours from Intergroup Affect and Stereotypes (BIAS)

The BIAS map, which extends on the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002), is built on the notion that bias is composed of three distinct components: cognitive, affective, and behavioural (Esses & Dovidio, 2002; Fiske, 1998) and on the three principles: 1. biases change according to context and social environment, and often responses are both subjective and negative (Mackie & Smith, 2002); 2. the affective, cognitive, and behavioural components of biases work together in specific social situations; and 3. emotions are strongly and directly related to behaviour more than cognition. On the base of these, BIAS proposes that warmth and competence stereotypes originate in the potential benefit or harm of the target group goals (out-group goals) and the degree to which these goals can be achieved. The SCM suggests which groups are most likely to be scapegoated. For example, high status or powerful minorities are perceived as competitors and are stereotyped as lacking warmth and easily become subjected to envious prejudice while groups that are perceived as cooperative are labelled as warm and less likely to be targeted as scapegoats (Glick, 2002). This has been

confirmed by several studies across a vast array of groups (e.g., races, religions, occupations, nationalities, gender, etc.) (See: Cuddy et al., 2006; Eckes, 2002; Fiske & Cuddy, 2006).

The warmth dimension of stereotypes, which carries greater weight in social encounters (Cuddy et al., 2007; Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994; Vonk, 1999; Wojciszke, Bazinska & Jaworski, 1998), predicts active behavioural tendencies, such as supporting institutional racism or voting for anti-immigration political parties while the secondary dimension of competence predicts more passive tendencies (e.g., ignoring another's presence, not making eye contact with them, excluding members of certain groups from getting opportunities). Therefore, discriminatory behaviours can either be subtle or overt, and the particular views that we have about each out-group determine the manifestation of discrimination.

2.5.3 Aversive Racism Theory

The third theory to consider is Aversive Racism Theory (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). This theory complements Social Identity Theory which suggests intergroup discrimination's pervasiveness, and the BIAS map (which helps identify manifestation or inhibition of discrimination).

Averse racism is estimated to effect a "substantial portion of well-educated and liberal whites in the United States" (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000, p.315). In fact, the aversive racism framework essentially evolved to understand the psychological conflict regarding racial attitudes that afflicts many White Americans. Societal norms increasingly prohibit prejudice and discrimination towards minority and other stigmatized groups (Crandall, Eshleman & O'Brien, 2002). Averse racists have been described to: *"sympathize with the victims of past injustice; support public policies that, in principle, promote racial equality and ameliorate the consequences of racism; identify with a more liberal political agenda; regard*

themselves as non-prejudiced and non-discriminatory; but, almost unavoidably, possess negative feelings and beliefs about blacks”(Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986 p.62)

Research in the United States demonstrates that many White Americans are averse to appearing racist (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Katz & Hass, 1988; McConahay, 1986) not only in terms of their public image but also their self-concept. However, many individual and societal factors continue to reinforce stereotypes and negative evaluative biases (which are partly rooted in biases identified by Social Identity Theory), which result in continued expression of discrimination. Equality norms give rise to considerable psychological conflict in which people perceive prejudice as offensive and unjust. However, notwithstanding this, they are still not able to entirely suppress their own biases. This makes ethnic and racial attitudes more complex than ever.

The aversive racism framework holds that people resolve this conflict by upholding egalitarian norms and simultaneously maintaining subtle or automatic forms of prejudice, believing themselves to be unprejudiced. Specifically, people generally do not discriminate in situations in which right and wrong are clearly identifiable as discriminatory by self or others, as aversive racists would not want to be or to appear discriminatory. However, aversive racists systematically discriminate when appropriate behaviours are not clearly prescribed or when their actions can be justified on the basis of some factor other than race. They discriminate ambiguously and indirectly, and their actions can be rationalized as something other than racial discrimination (e.g., Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). The pervasiveness of discrimination is systematic, and often subtle expression shapes society in ways that perpetuate inequities.

Aversive Racism Theory also predicts that White Liberal individuals actually favour Black people, when societal cues suggest that to act otherwise could appear to be discriminatory (Rodenborg & Boison, 2013). For example,

Aberson and Ettlin (2004) found evidence that African Americans received positively biased treatment when societal norms were explicit and negatively biased treatment when norms were ambiguous.

2.5.4 Realistic Group Conflict Theory

The last group-level theory that I shall be reviewing is the Realistic Group Conflict Theory. Although Campbell (1965) originated the name "realistic group conflict theory," the processes delineated in this theory were formulated and established in social psychology much earlier following a series of experiments by Muzafer Sherif and colleagues (Sherif, 1954; Sherif et al., 1961; Sherif & Sherif, 1953). Since then, other theorists have supported and validated this theory (ex: Bobo, 1983; Diab, 1970). Following Sherif's (1954) experiments with children, Rabbie and Horwitz (1969) found that competition between groups is the most essential condition for adolescents' increased hostile behaviour. This finding was further corroborated by Blake and Mouton (1962), who found the same result in experiments conducted with adults.

This theory proposes that out-groups posit "a threat to real resources and accepted practices [of the dominant group]" (Bobo, 1983, p.1197). This theory identifies three basic forms of intergroup conflict: (a) intergroup competition, (b) intergroup domination and exploitation, and (c) intergroup scapegoating. It proposes that intergroup hostility is the result of competition and is reduced by mutually desired goals that can only be achieved through intergroup cooperation (Jackson, 1993).

Realistic Group Conflict Theory suggests that when members of one group perceive or experience threat from an out-group, their prejudices towards out-group member's increases. This, together with other dysfunctional consequences for the out-group, has been established by research (e.g., Taylor, 1988). This theory also posits that when in-group identification increases, it

becomes more important for individuals to internalize and express normative attitudes. This lends itself to an increased likelihood of intergroup conflict (Jackson, 1993).

Conflict or competition over scarce resources has been researched and empirically shown to be an essential contributor to intergroup hostility by sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists alike. This theory contrasts with Blumer's (1958) sociological theory (which I shall review in more detail in Chapter 5), as it proposes that prejudice in the dominant group arises as a response to collective threats against the real interests of this same group, and attributes prejudice to relationships between groups which involve real conflicts of interest and competition over scarce material resources rather than as a result of perceptions of dominant group interests that might have no connection to any real group interests.

Realistic Group Conflict Theory is one of the most influential theories on intergroup relations (Jackson, 1993). Sherif's findings about the influence of superordinate goals have inspired numerous practical adaptations in various intergroup settings (e.g., industry, education, and international politics) (Goldstein, 1984).

While these theories underlying prejudice are by no means exhaustive of the social psychological literature, I believe that these approaches help explain why, how, and when prejudice occurs and how it is perpetuated over time.

2.6 Sociological Explanations

Traditionally, both before and after Adorno and collaborators (1950), there has been a tendency to focus on the psychological determinants to explain racial prejudice. A shift in perspective soon followed, where sociological variables and situational circumstances started being given more importance

and put under the spotlight (Richmond, 1961). I shall be reviewing the Group Threat Theory (Blumer, 1958).

2.6.1 Group Threat Theory

Group Threat Theory is based on the works of Blumer (1958) and Blalock (1967), which I shall be reviewing in more detail in Chapter 5, and emphasizes economic and political competition (Hughes & Tuch, 2003; Quillian, 2006). This theory argues that the larger the out-group's size, the more threatening to the in-group interests it becomes. Therefore, competition over jobs and other resources and disagreement over various political issues propel in-group members to have more negative attitudes against the out-groups (Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010). The conflict between groups over these issues creates hostility, which provides fertile ground for prejudiced attitudes. Building on this notion, Susan Olzak's (1992) proposed the Ethnic Competition Theory. This theory holds that when two or more groups are at loggerheads over jobs, housing, and other essential issues, ethnic prejudice and conflict increase.

This competition explanation is the macro or the structural equivalent of the Frustration/Scapegoat Theory discussed earlier in this chapter. Much of the scapegoating against Jews discussed earlier stemmed unfortunately from concerns that Jews, throughout the ages, were a threat to different life aspects. Similarly, mob violence against Chinese migrants in the 1870's by the white community started when the railroad construction employing many Chinese slowed down, pushing the Chinese to look for employment elsewhere. Fear that the Chinese would rob Whites of employment opportunities lead to attacks against the Chinese community. Several Chinese individuals were killed during these assaults. This situation prompted Congress's passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 that prohibited Chinese immigration (Dinnerstein & Reimers, 2009). Today, several countries have experienced increased anti-

immigrant prejudice because of the growing numbers of migrants arriving at their shores (Bauer, 2009).

Several studies have supported this theory (Dixon & Rosenbaum, 2004; Eitle & Taylor, 2008; Kanas, Scheepers & Sterkens, 2015). Studies conducted in Europe corroborate this theory, showing that socio-economic and political standing are the main variables that contribute to threat from the out-group (Garcia-Faroldi, 2017). In conclusion, as argued by Wilson (2001), Group Threat Theory is a general perspective that implies that the “dominants’ threat perceptions and their attitudes toward subordinates should apply to attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policies “(Wilson, 2001, p. 486).

2.7 Correlates of Prejudice

The individual correlates of prejudice started being investigated in the 1940’s (Stangor, 2009). Different correlates that help test these theories described above have been examined. Age, socioeconomic status, education, gender, race and religiosity, personality factors, and emotions are just a few of these tested correlates (e.g. Manstead, 2018; Potter et al., 2019). To give a few examples, if frustration produces prejudice, then it follows that people who feel frustrated with different aspects of their lives should be more prejudiced (Grossarth-Maticek, Eysenck & Vetter, 1989). Another example is the correlation of authoritarian personality with prejudice. If the authoritarian personality's strict hierarchical tendency does produce prejudice, then individuals with this personality type should be more prejudiced (Brown, 1965; Whitley, 1999). A few of the findings are surprising, for instance, gender. Although women are generally thought to be more empathic than men and therefore less likely to hold prejudiced attitudes, recent research contradicts this. It indicates that two genders are equally prejudiced (Hughes & Tuch, 2003). Findings on education are not at all surprising. Again focusing on whites, research indicates that less-

educated white people are usually more racially prejudiced than better educated white people (Krysan, 2000; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997).

As for individual factors, research confirms that prejudice is associated with poor psychological adjustment and low self-esteem (Ehrlich, 1973), political and religious belief systems (Allport, 1954; Glock, Wuthnow, Piliavin & Spencer, 1975), cognitive factors (Rokeach, Smith & Evans, 1960), social/experiential factors (Hyman & Wright, 1979), neuroticism (McFarland, 2010), authoritarianism (Adorno et al., 1950), and the need for cognitive closure (Jost, Kruglanski & Simon, 1999; Pierro & Kruglanski, 2008; Roets & Van Hiel, 2011).

2.8 The Changing Nature of Prejudice

Although racial and ethnic prejudice still exists worldwide, during the past half-century, its nature has changed. In America, studies have investigated the changes in perception of whites towards African Americans. Before the 1940's overt racism, also known as *Jim Crow* racism (or *traditionally* called '*old-fashioned* racism'), prevailed. This prevalence was not just in the Southern United States but across the entire nation. The manifestation of this type of racism involves blatant bigotry, rigid beliefs in the need for segregation, and the belief that blacks were biologically inferior to whites. For example, during the early 1940s, the majority of whites thought that blacks were less intelligent, segregation in public transportation was favoured by more than half of the whites, more than two-thirds of the whites favoured segregated schools, and again the majority of whites believed that in employment hiring they should receive preference over blacks (Schuman et al., 1997).

The Nazi experience and the civil rights movement in the United States both influenced these perceptions, and together they led whites to reconsider their views. In fact, by the early 1970's, several researchers discerned a notable

change in Jim Crow racism's prejudiced attitudes and gradual wane (Duckitt, 1994; Fiske, 1998; Jones, 1997). Noticing these changes, several scholars agree that Jim Crow racism has been replaced by a subtler form of racial prejudice. This subtler form of racism is called '*laissez-faire*,' *symbolic*, or *modern* racism (Sears & Kinder, 1971; Sears & Mc Conahay, 1973). This form of prejudice amounts to a "kinder, gentler, anti-black ideology" (Bobo, Kluegel, & Smith, 1997, p. 15) that avoids notions of biological inferiority (Bobo, 1988; Quillian, 2006; Sears, 1988). Modern racism involves two distinct features. Firstly, it rightly rejects the principle of old-fashioned racism. For example, it rejects segregation, endorses egalitarianism, and rejects supremacy. Secondly, it paradoxically also rejects African-Americans or any other out-group. This happens because of firm individualistic values (Walker, 2001). In effect, this new form of prejudice blames African Americans for their low socioeconomic standing and involves such beliefs that they simply do not want to work hard.

Most of the research conducted on modern racism focuses on the relations between European Americans and African-Americans. This concept has, however, been adopted in other intergroup context, namely: gender relations (Swim, Aikin, Hall & Hunter, 1995; Tougas, Crosby, Joly & Pelchat, 1996), 'race' relations in the United Kingdom (Brown, 2010), in South Africa (Duckitt, 1991) and in Australia (Pederson & Walker, 1997).

Several criticisms have been made about the theories of modern racism (Bobo, 1988; Schuman, Steeh & Bobo, 1985; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993). The most frequent criticisms are that scholars proposing modern racism very often rely on empirical evidence to support their proposition (Walker, 2001). Another criticism is that although, as suggested by Sear and Mc Conahay (1973), modern racism is supposed to rely on the anti-black affect and violation of deep-seated norms, numerous studies, however, neglect effects and instead focus on cognitive judgments (Walker, 2001). Another criticism is that modern racism

theory fails to explain how and why racism has changed from being hot, blatant, and supremacist to cool and egalitarianism racism (Walker, 2001).

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have delineated the different definitions of prejudice and described how prejudice impacts both thinking and behaviour. I have also presented both psychological and sociological theoretical approaches that explain how prejudice dominated social scientific inquiry during different approaches of the twentieth century. As discussed, these different approaches emerged in specific historical and social circumstances that raised specific questions about the origins and nature of prejudice, especially in intergroup relations. As my interest lies specifically in the relationship between the psychological function of the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants, the next chapter is dedicated to reviewing the theory and research conducted about the need for cognitive closure in relation to prejudice against out-groups.

CHAPTER 3

3.0 Motivation and Social Cognition

Since cognitive processes directly impact all our social interactions and also impacts how knowledge is formed, over the years, the study of social cognition has attracted attention from various researchers within the field of psychology. Different paradigms have been used to understand this epistemic process (e.g., impression formation, casual attributions, attitude formation) (Kruglanski, Orehek, Dechesne & Pierro, 2010).

Kruglanski (2001), in his paper '*Motivation and Social Cognition: Enemies or a Love Story*', argues that to understand cognition well, it is important to study motivation closely. He presents the relationship between motivation and cognition as a series of four acts. In the first act, he proposes that motivation and cognition are antagonists in a power struggle over the human mind. In the second act, a split occurs. Intense and mild motivational processes take different routes to form judgments. The third act assumes that motivation operates on relevant cognition without a priori prejudice or restrictions, and finally, in the fourth act, motivation and cognition become one. Motivation here is 'considered a type of cognition rather than a separate non-cognitive entity' (2001, p.35).

From this point of departure in social cognitive theory, Kruglanski (1990) proposed the Lay Epistemic Theory (*LET*), which provides a conceptual framework to understand the process of how knowledge is acquired. This theory posits that individuals actively try to make sense of the world around them, and to achieve this, they continuously employ a process of hypothesis generation and hypothesis testing or validation in response to their interactions with the real world. Previously, similar generation and validation models have been proposed in literature (e.g., Bruner, 1951; Gregory, 1970; Popper, 1972).

However, LET, proposes a different approach to how hypothesis generation and validation are conducted. According to LET, hypotheses are tested using evidence that is specifically relevant to the situation at hand. This process is predetermined by pre-existing inference rules that translate into an 'if-then' rule in individuals' minds. Since, in principle, individuals could keep generating and testing an infinite number of hypotheses to any given situation, to avoid a scenario which would be time consuming, potentially disabling and distressing, individuals usually figure a way how to make judgments quickly based on the information they already have (Kruglanski et al., 2010).

Kruglanski (1990) argues that individuals' epistemic state is the guiding force behind searching for knowledge and cognitive activity. This state can be divided into two dimensions: The disposition towards cognitive closure occurs when individuals are either seeking closure with a desire to quickly acquire answers, or avoiding closure and trying to keep the knowledge building process going. In the first scenario individuals decide that any answer is suitable, while in the second individuals decide that there exists more than one correct answer that has yet to be determined (Kruglanski et al., 2010).

3.1 The Need for Cognitive Closure (NCC)

Originating in the domain of lay epistemics (Kruglanski, 1990), the Need for Cognitive Closure (NCC) is a motivational construct developed by Kruglanski and colleagues (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Four decades of empirical research has found the NCC in various social psychological phenomena, for example, primacy effects (Webster, Richter & Kruglanski, 1996), fundamental attribution error (Webster, 1993), stereotype reliance (Dijksterhuis, Van Knippenberg, Kruglanski & Schaper, 1996; Kruglanski & Freund, 1983), right-wing authoritarianism (Roets & Van Hiel, 2006), political conservatism (Kossowska & Van Hiel, 2003), dogmatism (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), autocratic leadership styles (Pierro, Mannetti, De Grada, Livi,

& Kruglanski, 2003) and prejudice against out-groups (Baldner & Pierro, 2019) amongst others.

The NCC is defined as the desire for clear answers and aversion towards ambiguity and confusion (Kruglanski, 1990; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Mannetti, Pierro, Kruglanski, Taris & Bezinovic, 2002; Mayseless & Kruglanski, 1987; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). It simplifies what otherwise would be intricate knowledge, with the aim of avoiding feeling uncertain in circumstances when individuals find difficulty assimilating or understanding complex issues. Therefore, an epistemic process starts every time individuals need to understand an issue to which they do not have an answer. This process terminates when answers are finally reached, or individuals stop seeking answers (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996).

Two intertwined actions occur when individuals make judgments and construct knowledge. Firstly, the urgency tendency propels the need for achieving closure in individuals with a high NCC, which is achieved by seizing readily available information that provides fast answers. Secondly, the permanence tendency during which individuals freeze this attained knowledge to preserve the obtained closure even in the face of contradictory information (Roets & Van Hiel, 2007, 2011). In the seizing phase, individuals lack crystallized knowledge and can be open to new ideas, while in the freezing phase, this attained knowledge becomes consolidated (Kruglanski, Webster & Klem, 1993; Vermier, Van Kenhove & Hendrickx, 2002). The main aim of both phases (seizing and freezing) is to avoid ambiguity and/or uncertainty and quickly resolve any situation to prevent the possibility of repeating the situation in the future. Therefore, to resolve situations, individuals with a high NCC rely on old knowledge from similar situations experienced before.

Most research measures NCC as a dispositional trait by the scale developed by Webster and Kruglanski (1994) or adaptations of it (e.g., Roets & Van Hiel,

2007; Pierro & Kruglanski, 2005). However, as mentioned above, Kruglanski and Webster (1996) suggest that the NCC can also be a feature of the context and, as such, can be manipulated.

When individuals find themselves in circumstances that they do not understand and need more information, they face two options: they could either seek cognitive closure or avoid closure (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). The decision on how to proceed varies according to time and the personal benefit or loss in that particular circumstance (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994;). Being able to act immediately in any situation and reaping benefits is possibly one of the main advantages of closure, while the main disadvantages of not achieving closure immediately are that individuals continue to engage for long cognitive energy into the deeper understanding of a given situation (Kruglanski, 1990; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Several studies have demonstrated that the NCC is related to a limited information search, a preference for clear and unambiguous judgments, and a simplified cognitive process involved in decision-making (e.g., Choi, Koo, Choi, & Auh, 2008; Webster et al., 1996). In general, people with a high NCC exhibit a tendency toward more schematic, stereotypical, and simplified processing of information (e.g., Brizi et al., 2015; Chajut & Algom, 2003; Dijksterhuis et al., 1996; Huguet, Galvaing, Monteil, & Dumas, 1999; Kossowska, Dragon, & Bukowski, 2015; Kossowska, Szumowska, Dragon, Jaśko, & Kruglanski, 2018; Roets et al., 2015).

Moreover, unpleasant or boring tasks (Webster, 1993), as well as unfriendly environments (Kruglanski et al., 1993) may compel individuals to achieve epistemic closure faster than they usually would. On the contrary, pleasurable tasks (Webster, 1993) and the need for accuracy (Kruglanski, Peri & Zakai, 1991) can lower NCC as individuals become more prone to take the time they need to complete the tasks. Therefore, the NCC provides a theoretical framework for the cognitive-motivational aspects of decision-making, and

research demonstrates that it impacts how people view their social world (Roets et al., 2015).

The need for stable knowledge is so strong for individuals with a high NCC that even when stereotyped beliefs are rooted in prejudice beliefs still the certainty they promote is attractive and therefore assimilated. Roets and colleagues (2015) in fact argue that the need for cognitive closure is the source of the prejudiced personality.

Individuals with a high NCC are concerned with groups (Dugas & Kruglanski, 2018; Roets et al., 2015). Turning to the group's shared reality serves as a secure and readily available source of knowledge on topics that are important (Hardin & Higgins, 1996) when searching for answers (seizing phase) and when protecting existing beliefs from challenging or opposing beliefs (freezing phase). Research indicates that individuals who turn to their in-group to achieve stable knowledge can become very attached to the in-group. For example, individuals with a high NCC are more likely to show the in-group favouritism and the out-group derogation (Shah, Kruglanski, & Thompson, 1998). This often happens when individuals perceive themselves to be similar to the in-group (Kruglanski, Shah, Pierro, & Mannetti, 2002). In other words, individuals with a high NCC use their in-group to reinforce their existing beliefs and attitudes and more likely to dislike out-groups as these potentially challenge or threaten their knowledge and render it less secure. In addition, a high need for cognitive closure predisposes individuals to react with greater hostility against the out-groups (Roets et al., 2015; see also Golec de Zavala, 2002; Golec de Zavala, Cislak, & Wesołowska, 2010; Golec de Zavala & Federico, 2004; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Shah et al., 1998).

This environment of stable knowledge promotes homogeneity, which has been found to be a preference for individuals with a high NCC (Kruglanski, Pierro, Higgins & Capozza, 2007). In fact, the NCC propels people to seek

consensus with the salient group in the social environment (Kosic, Kruglanski, Pierro & Mannetti, 2004). This happens because fear of change is the motivating factor for individuals with a high need for epistemic certainty as changing implies that attitudes and opinion would need to be reframed and behaviours revisited. People with a high NCC are usually scared that outside factors (out-groups) may oblige them to change the ways that they are set in. For this reason, the out-groups that are more in-line with the in-group are usually welcomed by people with a high NCC (Baldner, Jaume, Pierro & Kruglanski, 2019). Additionally, recent research indicates that individuals with a high NCC are reluctant to mobilize themselves in favour of migrants as they tend to bind to their group and support collective conservatism (De Cristoforo et al., 2019).

It is therefore not surprising that individuals with a high NCC prefer autocratic group structures (DeGrada, Kruglanski, Mannetti & Pierro, 1995; Pierro et al., 2003) as autocratic groups not only demand submission from their group members but also provide an easy opportunity to reach faster and more stable knowledge. It is noteworthy to highlight that groups also include cultures – the physical world where one lives (Geertz, 1973) and shared realities (Hardin & Higgin, 1996). In turn, these shared realities include traditions and standards of thought that contribute to formation of stereotypes against specific out-groups (e.g., migrants).

3.2 The NCC and its relationship with prejudice and stereotypes

Hostile beliefs and prejudice emerge from the NCC (Baldner, Pierro, Talamo & Kruglanski, 2019; Kruglanski & Freund, 1983) or from the need that individuals have to understand quickly or hold on to any information that gives them secure and stable knowledge, even when this includes prejudiced and stereotyped beliefs about their surroundings and the world they live in (Baldner et al., 2019b). Several studies have investigated the relationship

between the NCC and prejudice (Baldner & Pierro, 2018, 2019; Onraet, Van Hiel, Roets, & Cornelis, 2011, Roets & Van Hiel, 2006, 2011; Roets, Van Hiel & Dhont, 2012; Van Hiel, Pandelaere, & Duriez, 2004,) as well as racism (Cunningham, Nezlek, & Banaji, 2004). Roets and collaborators argue that, in fact, the NCC is the source of the prejudiced personality (Roets et al., 2015). This, at first glance, may seem strange as the conceptualization of the NCC was developed outside the theoretical framework of prejudice, and desiring stable knowledge superficially does not have anything to do with prejudice. However, it is imperative to bear in mind that, as described above, individuals with a high NCC are automatically attracted to any form of firm knowledge. This because secure knowledge helps simplify a very complex social world. Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003) argue that individuals adopt an authoritarian belief system because this satisfies their deep-seated psychological needs, particularly their need for closure. Several studies have investigated the link between the NCC and authoritarian ideology. These studies confirm that individuals with a high NCC prefer autocratic group structures with centralized authority (Pierro et al., 2003) and an increased need for conformity (Kruglanski et al., 1993).

Several authors (e.g., Onraet et al., 2011; Roets & Van Hiel, 2006; Van Hiel et al., 2004) have demonstrated that a stronger endorsement of authoritarian views of society largely explains why people high in dispositional NCC show increased levels of blatant, subtle, and even implicit racism.

Furthermore, individuals with a high NCC have been found to use less individualizing or case-specific information and rely more on group membership information when making social judgments about others (Kruglanski & Mayselens, 1988) and tend to sanction the norms and conclusions drawn by their in-group (Brizi et al., 2016; Kruglanski et al., 2002; Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti, & De Grada, 2006). Also, as disruptions to routine are not

favoured by individuals with a high NCC (Kruglanski et al., 2007), often highly accessible stereotypes and schemas are used (Dijksterhuis et al., 1996) as these aid in understanding social surroundings better. Moreover, this simplified view of social reality gives rise to essentialism, which refers to the belief that particular social categories or groups share a common and fixed underlying essence or nature (Haslam & Levy, 2006). This facilitates the creation of inferences about any particular group. These created beliefs are termed 'entitativity.' To keep ambiguity at a minimum, individuals with a high NCC tend to engage in essentialism (Roets & Van Hiel, 2011). Engaging in essentialism means that individuals with a high NCC reflect their own or their groups' essence by stereotyping out-groups and their members. Roets and Van Hiel (2011) assert that the relationship between the NCC and ethnic prejudice can be explained by understanding how individuals with a high NCC attempt to reach closure. This makes essentialism a powerful and established determinant of prejudice (Duckitt, 2001; Haslam, Rothschild & Ernst, 2002). Evidence that essentialist thinking promotes ethnic stereotyping, and prejudice has been found in cross-sectional studies (Haslam et al., 2002) and longitudinal studies (Pehrson et al., 2009). As such, the entitativity component of essentialism has been found to constitute a mediator in the link between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice (Roets & Van Hiel, 2011). These findings were partially corroborated by Bastian and Haslam (2006), who found that essentialist beliefs predict an aggregate measure of stereotype acceptance. However, they failed to find an effect of the need for cognitive closure on their stereotype measures.

3.3 Conclusion

Research in NCC helps us understand how and when prejudiced attitudes could develop. As mentioned above, individuals who dispositionally or

situationally desire to acquire stable knowledge quickly could be at a greater risk for prejudiced attitudes as they are more prone to support sources that provide it, even if these sources are stereotyped attitudes or group membership. Heightened need for closure has also been found to express itself in intolerance of diversity (Shah et al., 1998). These notions of group affiliation and cohesion with group membership resonate with the proposition of moral foundations theory, specifically the binding moral foundations, which have been described in the literature as providing external guidelines (Federico, Ekstrom, Tagar, & Williams, 2016). These similarities get me to explore the link between the need for cognitive closure, moral foundations, and prejudice against out-groups in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

4.0 Moral Foundations Theory

Moral Foundation Theory (*MFT*) was developed to describe and investigate a range of human moral values, behaviours, and moral intuition (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). MFT is an offshoot of Haidt's Social Intuitionist Model, which contends that moral judgments are grounded in the emotional and intuitive processing of moral stimuli (Haidt, 2001). This process prepares the stage for reasoning and deliberation to take place. Adding onto this theory, MFT attempts to investigate specific morally laden intuitions that process moral stimuli.

Moral Foundations Theory has origins in the work of Kohlberg (1969), who unified moral psychology and building on Piaget's work (1932) who proposed that moral development is driven forward by the process of role-taking in children in all cultures. Kohlberg (1969) argues that role-taking teaches children to take on other people's perspectives and in so doing assimilate why and when actions, customs and practices are fair or unfair. This, he argues, is how children come to understand the concept of justice. His work was criticized by Gilligan (1982), who argued that an ethic of care could not be derived from an ethic of justice especially in the development of girls and women. Turiel (1983) elaborated on this. His definition of the moral domain allowed for both Kohlberg's and Gilligan's work to be united, defining the moral domain as "prescriptive judgements of justice, right and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other" (Turiel, 1983, p.3). Kohlberg, Gilligan, and Turiel contended "that morality is about how individuals ought to relate to protect and respect other individuals" (see Graham et al., 2013, p.59). Several other theorists add other dimensions to the moral domain (e.g., Brown, 1991, De Waal, 1996; Fiske, 1991; Ridley, 1996;

Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Shweder, 1990; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra & Park, 1997).

MFT makes four broad claims. First, Moral Foundation Theory is a nativist theory. At the centre of this theory is the assumption that there is a set of innate predispositions within each and every one of us. This is determined by genetic inheritance, however, the 'first draft' of moral development is changeable during our formative years in childhood and to some degree this is also possible in adulthood. Graham and colleagues (2013) used the metaphor of writing a book to distinguish between the 'first draft' and the 'editing process' (Graham et al., 2013) and claim that "The human mind is organized in advance of experience so that it is prepared to learn values, norms, and behaviours related to an adverse set of recurrent adaptive social problems" (Graham et al., 2013, p.67).

Second, MFT contends that morality is influenced by cultural learning, which happens through "learning instincts" that serve to generate cognitive competences as children develop (Graham et al., 2013, p.64). Different societies give more importance to different foundations to structure their morality. Haidt and Joseph (2004) argued that although different cultures vary considerably between themselves in "culinary taste", they all aim at pleasing the innate "taste receptors" of human beings: *"Each system is akin to a kind of taste bud, producing affective reactions of liking or disliking when certain kinds of patterns are perceived in the social world. Cultures then vary in the degree to which they construct, value, and teach virtues based on the five intuitive foundations"* (Haidt & Graham, 2007, p.104).

Hence whilst some cultures build their morality on one or two foundations other cultures may use all five foundations. For this reason, Graham et al., (2013) contend that ethnographical, correlational and

experimental data from various societies need to be examined before determining the number of specific forms of a foundation.

Third, MFT holds that human morality is intuitionist. It tends to happen quickly, and human beings do not take their time to reason and draw out evaluations. Agreeing with Hume's moral feeling theory, Haidt and Joseph (2004) used the analogy of the elephant and the rider to explain the relationship between reasoning and intuitions. They contend that the human mind is split between the defiant elephant and the rational rider. The rider represents the rational thinker, the analytical planner, the evidence-based decision-maker. On the other hand, the elephant represents the emotional player, full of energy, sympathy, and loyalty. The elephant stays put, backs away, or rears up based on feelings and instincts and is often on automatic pilot. It represents the part of the brain that tells us to go ahead and eat the ice cream after the rider has decided to put us on a diet. MFT contends that moral reasoning is generally utilized for strategic purposes, especially when we need to defend, explain, or justify our intuitive moral reactions towards others.

Last but not least, MFT is pluralistic and, as such, refuses monism. MFT claims that moral systems cannot ultimately be reduced to a simple principle or goal. Instead, it contends that morality is pluralist and that there are numerous but finite basic virtues and values (Graham et al., 2013). Therefore, MFT holds that although different societies have different moralities, they are based on a limited number of moral foundations, but different communities or cultures may highlight and emphasis any particular moral foundations. Moral foundation theory is heavily influenced by evolutionary biology, which encourages functionalism and finding solutions from readily available materials. As such Graham et al., (2013) argue that moral foundations, being innate mental structures, are “responses to adaptive challenges that faced our ancestors for a very long time” (p.67).

MFT attempts to integrate the motives and values of moral judgments and intuitions (Graham et al., 2011, 2013; Haidt & Graham, 2007, 2009). It posits that morality is made up of five foundations (Haidt & Graham, 2009; Haidt & Joseph, 2007), which derive from Shweder et al.'s (1997) ethic of autonomy (Graham et al., 2011). Each foundation corresponds to an adaptive challenge.

4.1 Moral Foundations

Care/Harm is the first foundation. It is rooted in the notion that as infants, human beings are dependent on their caregivers for a very long time and that mothers learn from their culture, or by trial and error, how to act and what to do when their infant children show signs of distress. This dependency triggers the intuitive reaction in caretakers to detect plight, violence, emotional abuse, distress, need, or suffering. The original triggers that activate this foundation are visual or auditory signs of suffering of one's offspring, however it can also be triggered by other struggling infants or animals, as well as animations or news reports depicting suffering in others. It highlights human's concern with caring, nurturing and protecting vulnerable individuals and fits well with the development of empathy. This foundation leads to qualities such as cruelty or kindness, which are valued differently by different cultures (Graham et al., 2013).

Fairness/Cheating is the second foundation, and it is oriented towards concerns for justice, fairness, equality, and reciprocity. It is activated when individuals perceive injustices or disproportionate distributions of goods, punishments, excessive inequalities, and failures to reciprocate (Graham et al., 2013).

Taken together, these first two foundations focus on individuals as the locus of moral value and emphasize the rights and welfare of individuals and thus are called the individualizing foundations (Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009).

The third foundation is the Loyalty/Betrayal foundation, which is oriented towards unity, solidarity, and group loyalty. Its manifestation can be witnessed in diverse groups and contexts (e.g., family, sport, nation). Its origins lie in our ancestors' need to form gelled groups when competing with other groups for resources and territory. This foundation gears individuals towards a sense of moral duty of support and favour towards the in-groups. It is triggered when disloyalty, betrayal, excess individualism, and a threat to the in-group are perceived (Graham et al., 2013).

Authority/Subversion is the fourth foundation and is rooted in dominance hierarchies' commonplace amongst many primates. It is concerned with order, authority, respect, and tradition for individuals who hold a higher status in society and is activated when individuals perceive disrespect, disobedience, and non-conformity. Obedience and deference are the traits associated with this foundation (Graham et al., 2013).

Lastly, the Sanctity/Degradation foundation is mainly responsible for emotional reactions such as disgust, and it is similar to Shweder's et al. (1997) ethic of divinity. It is concerned with protecting the dignity, purity, cleanliness, and sacredness of the in-group. Having been exposed to various parasites and pathogens, human beings developed a pre-emptory in-built sensitivity, which triggers this foundation. This adaptive challenge starts when individuals perceive situations that could contaminate or threaten the in-group's essence and/or cultural and religious identity, which could either be physical or social. The virtues associated with this foundation are chastity and temperance (Graham et al., 2013).

These last three foundations constitute the binding foundations (Federico, Weber, Ergun & Hunt, 2013; Graham et al., 2009). Therefore, "this binding approach focuses on the group as the locus of moral value" (Graham et

al., 2009, p.1030) and aims at enhancing social and interpersonal cohesion, self-control and protection of the collective.

These five moral foundations cover a whole range of value systems, social norms, psychological mechanisms, and institutions. Graham et al. (2013) also proposed the liberty/oppression, efficiency/waste, ownership/theft, and honesty/deception foundations as good moral foundation candidates. However, till now, little empirical research has been conducted on these dimensions.

In summary, MFT is an intuitionist theory grounded in evolutionary theory, this claim was recently supported by a study conducted by Doğruyol, Alper and Yilmaz(2019), and supported by research data gathered from around the world (Haidt & Graham, 2007). Reassuring, it claims that innate predispositions and cultural learning contribute to the formation of human moral systems and that judgments are rapidly made based on in-built mechanisms that are 'hardwired' into human beings through our evolutionary process (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Joseph, 2004). These mechanisms provide socializing agents with the moral foundations necessary to teach children their cultural vices, virtues, and moral practices thus, they "regulate individual selfishness and make social life possible" (Haidt, 2008, p.79). Hadarics and Kende (2018) add that, however, this is achieved through two distinct processes. On the one hand, the individualizing foundations request disapproval on harming others, oblige people to respect others' rights and help others in need and seek to protect from selfishness (Graham et al., 2013; Hadarics & Kende, 2018). While on the other hand, binding foundations are less concerned with the protection of individuals and channel people to cohesive groups and institutions and creates well-defined roles within these groups and within institutional systems in society, stressing the importance of group-solidarity, self-sacrifice, support for authority, and religious or ritual purity (Federico et al., 2013). Binding morality celebrates and promotes individuals

who support and sacrifice themselves for the in-group, obey and respect traditions and exercise self-control (Napier & Luguri, 2012). In fact the foundations of loyalty, authority, and sanctity are based on consensus and uniformity and promote stability and a sense of meaning within a group (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013).

4.2 Critics to Moral Foundation Theory

MFT has received various criticisms. Most criticisms are directed at the four main claims underlying it. First, it has been criticized for the pluralist hypothesis it makes. Gray, Young, and Waytz (2012) believe that only the Care/harm foundation is truly foundational. However, Graham et al. (2013) responded to this critic by claiming that its approach ruthlessly enforces conformity using disgust as an example of a moral judgment not accounted for by the Care/harm foundation. However, this claim is debatable as disgust over dirt or pathogens can easily be seen as causing harm. In fact, in studies conducted by Gray and Kennay (2015), purity demonstrated no specific effect on moral cognition and did not appear to work separately from harm.

Critiques of MFT's intuitionism claims came mostly from developmental psychologists (e.g., Narvaez, 2008, 2010; Saltzstein & Kasachkoff, 2004). Although Narvaez (2008) agrees that the intuitionism approach has served as a corrective approach to the rationalistic approach that moral psychology has embraced for several years, she argues that intuition and reasoning are best understood when thought of as dance partners. As in any dance one takes the lead and the other follows. She claims that moral "expertise" often starts with conscious deliberation and this gradually becomes an automatic process. Since Narvaez was a developmental psychologist she was more interested in moral behaviour than moral judgment as developmental psychologists claim that moral behaviours facilitate the achievement of mature moral functioning.

Graham et al. (2013) embrace this criticism and agree that perhaps they overly focused on initial moral judgment and not enough on the process by which morality develops and improves by experience. Another criticism to intuitionism claims of MFT comes from Gray and Keeney (2015) who argue that the moral foundation questionnaire proposed by Graham, Haidt and Nosek (2008) does not assess intuitive moral judgments. While the judgment scale only assesses general conservative values' endorsement, the relevance scale asks respondents to reflect on their moral cognition. To this effect, Nisbett and Wilson (1977) argue that research indicates that individuals are not able to introspect on the reasons behind their judgments. This because moral judgments are intuitive, and therefore individuals tend to use rationalization when reflecting on their morals.

Nativism has also been criticized as it is not easy to determine to which extent the mind is 'hardwired,' as it is difficult to find neuroscientific evidence. To this effect, Suhler and Churchland (2011) argue that the claim that behaviour is 'innate' or 'organized in advance of experience' is difficult to substantiate from a neurobiological perspective. Graham et al., (2013) reject this claim and argue that nativists are not obliged to pinpoint specific neural circuits or to specific genes.

Cultural learning has received the least criticism from the four major claims made by MFT. Cognitive-developmental psychologists could argue that the role of cultural learning is overstated in MFT while the role of self-construction by conscious reasoning about care and fairness is understated. Although this critique has been made against Sheweder, Mahapatra and Miller (1987), it has not been directed towards MFT (Graham et al., 2013).

4.3 Moral Foundations Theory, Intergroup Relations and Prejudice

Graham and colleagues (2011) argue that individuals' preferred moral foundations can predict whether people favour or dislike members of social out-groups (Graham et al., 2011) and in fact poor intergroup relations have been found to often be the result of moral differences between groups (Graham et al., 2013). At times, just the awareness that groups hold different worldviews becomes threatening and may engender violence and aggression between groups (Kesbir & Pyszczynski, 2011; Pyszczynski, Motyl & Abdollahi, 2009). For example, in an experimental study when participants were exposed to disdainful remarks about their political affiliation, they became aggressive and violent towards their critic and administered large amounts of hot sauce (McGregor et al., 1998). In experimental studies conducted by Wildschut and colleagues (2003), groups tended to engage in a dominant strategy of competition against the opposing group with the intent of protecting their in-group, whilst individuals tended to engage in a dominant strategy of cooperation with other individuals when put in similar situations (Wildschut, Pinter, Vevea, Insko & Schopler, 2003). To this effect, Graham et al. (2011) argue that individuals' preferred moral foundation can predict whether people favour or dislike members of social out-groups, this claim has been supported by several studies (e.g. Forsberg, Nilsson, & Jørgenson, 2018; Kugler et al., 2014)

Following MFT's prepositions, it follows that individualizing moral foundations embraces people's well-being regardless of their group membership while binding moral foundations place the in-group interests first. Therefore, this divide impacts intergroup attitudes and behaviour. Research indicates that while individuals who embrace individualizing moral foundations tend to help out-group members when in need, binding moral foundations are negatively related to prosocial intentions when the people

benefiting from these actions are out-group members (Baldner & Pierro, 2019; Kugler et al., 2014; Low & Wui, 2016; Nilson, Erlandsson, & Västfjäll, 2016; Smith, Aquino, Koleva & Graham, 2014; Van de Vyer et al., 2016). Binding moral foundations were found to be positively related to anti-immigrant attitudes and prejudice, while individualizing moral foundations were found to be negatively related (Baldner & Pierro, 2019; De Cristoforo et al., 2019; Forsberg et al., 2018; Kugler et al., 2014).

Additionally, individuals with strong binding and weak individualizing moral foundations perceive a high threat from out-groups that are culturally different (Hadarics & Kende, 2017a), are more inclined to discriminate against them (Kugler et al., 2014; Rosik, Dinges & Saavedra, 2013; Smith et al., 2014), and tend to be in favour of conflict resolution methods that are more aggressive and employ less cooperation in international conflict situations (Kertzer, Powers, Rathbun & Iyer, 2014).

Smith et al. (2014) found that binding moral foundations positively correlate with a preference for out-group members' torture amongst research participants with a weak moral identity. Hadarics and Kende (2018) argue that the more the out-group's characteristics contradict moral values and concerns, the greater the negative attitude towards the out-group becomes. These authors hold that although individualizing moral foundations seems to have a universal prejudice reducing effect, because judging out-group members solely on group membership may seem both harmful and unjust. Instead, binding foundations depend mainly on the need for security, certainty, social harmony, and the maintenance of a stable and coherent community, thus having negative attitudes towards the out-groups.

4.4 Moral Foundations Theory and Need for Cognitive Closure (NCC)

In recent studies, the association between moral foundations and the need for cognitive closure has been studied. Individuals with a high NCC are more prone to be closed-minded. They are oriented towards social entities that promote basic moral intuitions such as binding moral foundations (i.e., Loyalty/betrayal, Authority/subversion, and Sanctity/degradation) and tend to support the group over individual members (e.g., Federico et al., 2016). This is so because group cohesion serves as a source of permanence and stability and is the commonality that associates the NCC and binding moral foundations as they provide "external guidelines furnished by social groups a moral character" (Federico et al., 2016, p.228).

Following the tenants held by the NCC theory, Forsberg et al., (2018) found that binding moral foundations mediate individuals with intolerance for ambiguity and prejudice against dissident groups. LGBT activists and feminists were examples of dissident groups. Dissent groups were described by Duckitt and Sibley (2007) as groups that are perceived as socially threatening and possibly subordinate to the dominant group as they challenge societal norms and possibly represent a symbolic threat to society.

The link between the individualizing moral foundations and the NCC does not seem to be strong. This is probably because individualizing foundations are concerned with people's care and fairness irrespective of their provenience. As such, the NCC's goals and individualizing moral foundations are different (Baldner & Pierro, 2019).

4.5 Conclusion

Research indicates that group reality, together with strong leaders, social hierarchies, and social customs, serve as sources of stable knowledge and

promote binding moral foundations as individuals can rely on realities they know well (ex. Baldner, Pierro, Chemikova, & Kruglanski, 2018). Baldner and Pierro (2019) assessed how the NCC and binding moral foundations predict attitudes towards migrants and found that binding moral foundations mediate the relationship between the NCC and prejudice against migrants.

This hypothetically means that endorsing binding moral foundations could increase the perception of threat from out-group members and consequently increase prejudice against migrants in individuals with a high NCC. This gets me to review the theories of perceived threat and their relationship with prejudice, moral foundations, and the need for cognitive closure.

CHAPTER 5

5.0 Understanding Perceived Threat

Barbara Ward (1959) philosophizes that humankind has always been "tribal" as belonging to a "tribe" provides people with a sense of belonging and security. This sense of "tribe" derives from common language, values, traits, beliefs, and traditions. These structures provided by "tribes" gear individuals to view others belonging to other "tribes" as a threat (Dunbar, 1988). This tribal psychology might "by default, predisposed [people] to perceive threats where none exist" (Stephan, Ybarra & Bachman, 1999, p.3).

5.1 Perceived Threat and Prejudice

Schneider (2007) argues that threat perception is one of the core explanatory factors for widespread anti-migration attitudes. Perceived intergroup threat is conceptualized as the belief that an out-group is in some way harmful or is a detriment to one's in-group (Schmid & Muldoon, 2015). Blumer (1985) claims that four 'feelings' particularly augment prejudice against out-group members:

1. Feelings of superiority
2. Feeling that other races are intrinsically alien and/or different
3. Feelings of ownership over privileges and/or advantages
4. Suspicion and fear that other races are scheming on the prerogatives of the in-group.

Using Blumer's Group-Threat Theory, which focuses on relationships between groups and holds that perceived threat is the catalyst that challenges group identity, increases out-group stereotyping, and gives prominence to group status, Quillian (1995) researched how the perception of threat on a group level contributes to prejudice. He argues that Group-Threat Theory assumes that individuals identify with a particular group or groups and that

the out-groups' different interests generate conflict and increase negative attitudes. In his own words, "Group-threat theory emphasizes the perception of threat to dominant group prerogatives" (Quillian, 1995, p.588). Bizman and Yinan (2001) agree with this and highlight that when individuals strongly identify with their in-group, group-based threat is strongly associated with discrimination and prejudice.

Blalock's Racial Threat Theory (1956) states that social organization is rooted in competition between race and ethnic groups overvalued resources and privileges such as economic resources, political power, and symbolic threats. Adding to this theory, Quillian (1985) argues that perceived threat originates from two sources: the subordinate group's relative size and the dominant group's economic circumstances. He conducted a study in twelve European countries to test these two circumstances. The results showed that "the economic conditions in a country and the size of the racial or immigrant group influence people's views of group relations and in so doing influence prejudicial attitudes" (Quillian, 1985, p.606). To this, other authors add threats to positive distinction or status (Scheepers, 2009; Scheepers, Ellemers & Sintemaartensdijk, 2009), symbolic threats surrounding worldviews, values, and beliefs, competition over power, territory or resources (Esses, Jackson & Armstrong, 1998; Stephan & Stephan, 2000), and concerns about physical or material safety (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005). In conclusion, many social psychologists agree that threat perception, which could either be realistic or symbolic, plays a pivotal role in increasing prejudiced attitudes and perpetuating conflict (Canetti-Nisim, Ariely & Halperin, 2008; Hughes & Cairns, 2008; Maoz & McCauley, 2009; Schmid, Tausch, Hewstone, Stephen et al., 2009; Tausch, Hewstone, Kenworthy, Cairns & Christ, 2007).

Stephan and Stephan (2000) proposed the Integrated Threat Theory, which provides a useful framework for understanding the relationship between

prejudice and perceived threat. It contends that a threat to a group is experienced when group members perceive that another group is in a position to harm them. Unlike the Realistic Conflict Theory, the Integrated Threat Theory proposes that both realistic and symbolic threats do not necessarily have to be real to effect intergroup attitudes as even the perception of threat suffices to leave negative psychological consequences on the group. This highlights and puts the role of perception at the forefront, making perception the determining factor in prejudiced outcomes.

Le Vine and Campbell (1972), and Sherif (1966) were the first to offer a conceptualization of realistic threat. They were particularly concerned with competition for resources such as wealth, territory, or natural resources. Integrated Threat Theory adds another dimension to realistic threats. While stressing the importance of subjectively perceived conflict between groups, it posits that any form of threat on the welfare of the group or its members is a form of realistic threat.

Unlike realistic threats, symbolic threats are threats to the in-group's worldview and primarily involve perceived group differences in morals, values, standards, beliefs, and attitudes. Symbolic racism infers that the out-group's values and morals are inferior to the in-group (Bobo, 1983; Kinder & Sears, 1981). Therefore, this notion threatens the moral rightness and worldview of the in-groups. Integrated threat theory holds that prejudice occurs when individuals feel that their values are threatened, whereas antecedents' theories (e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1981; Sears, 1988) argue that feeling that an out-group threatens your values is a form of prejudice.

Together with realistic and symbolic threats, this theory identifies intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes as the other two conditions that increase threat perception and, in turn, may increase prejudice against out-

groups. Five factors that antecedent this theory need to be understood before delving into it:

1: Intergroup conflict - Intergroup confrontations over scarce resources or differences in culture, norms, and values. These conflicts heighten the perceptions of threat and lead to prejudice (Curşeu, Stoop, & Schalk, 2007).

2: Status inequality - happens when in-groups perceive a threat to their power status from out-groups (Mullen, Brown & Smith, 1992).

3: In-group identification (Riek, Mania & Gaertner, 2006) - contends that when members of the dominant in-group strongly identify with the in-group, they are less likely to relate to out-groups and therefore perceive more threat. Relating to the out-group could be seen as rejecting or doubting their in-group or their social self.

4: Knowledge of the out-group (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) - contends that a lack of information about the out-group strongly relates to a higher perception of threat from the out-group.

5: Quality of the intergroup contact - The better and more frequent the contact that the in-group has with the out-group, the likelier it is that a favourable view of the out-group will be held (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

Other forms of realistic and symbolic threats that predict negative attitudes towards out-groups indicated in literature are threats to safety, health threats, social cohesion, and functioning threats, threats to personal freedom and rights (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Vallejo-Martín, Canto, San Martín García & Perles Novas, 2020; Ybarra & Stephan, 1994).), terrorist attack threats (Cohrs, Kielmann, Maes & Moschner, 2005) and distinctiveness of the in-group when compared to similarities in the out-group (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1999), meaning threats and physical threats, where meaning threats *"include more abstract concerns regarding the violation of one's sense of belonging,*

identity, purpose, significance, continuity or certainty" while physical threats relate to concerns "regarding the physical violation of one's physical safety and well-being through the potential of death or other physical trauma" (Crawford, 2017, p.356).

Stephan and Stephan(1985) propose that intergroup anxiety occurs when individuals feel threatened by intergroup interactions because they are preoccupied about adverse outcomes such as being neglected, ridiculed, or embarrassed. Several theories have also proposed the negative effect of anxiety on intergroup relations. Negative effects such as disgust, fear, discomfort, and uneasiness have been attributed to the avoidance of out-groups rather than direct prejudice (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). Although Integrated Threat Theory resonates with these other theories, the main difference is that anxiety levels are specifically measured and directly related to prejudice.

Lastly, stereotypes are social cognitive schemas (Schneider, 2004) that are selective and produce differentiation between groups (Hilton & Von Hippel, 1996). These expectations are often negative, unpleasant, and are central to threat. Historically, they have always been associated with prejudice (Allport, 1954, Brigham, 1971), however, stereotypes can be both positive and negative. This shortcoming in conducting research that measures the valance of traits in stereotypes might be why, for a long time, the relationship between stereotype and prejudice was not established. However, now various studies have established and confirmed this link (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Integrated Threat Theory, therefore, proposed that negative stereotypes are predictors of prejudice.

A newer and amended version of Integrated Threat Theory known as the Intergroup Threat Theory (ITT) was proposed by Stephan et al. (2009) has become an important theoretical framework for understanding the key role of perceived threat in the genesis of inter-group prejudice. In this version, intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes were eliminated. The former was

omitted because it has been found to be a significant predictor of both realistic and symbolic threat (Stephan & Renfro, 2002), while the latter was omitted as it is now considered to be the underlying cause of apprehension towards out-group members (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Therefore, ITT proposes that realistic threat relates to the threat of harm to the group's power, resources, or general welfare, and that symbolic threat refers to the threat that undermines the group's religion, values, belief system, mortality, or worldview (Stephan et al., 2009). Therefore, while realistic threats are the more tangible types of threat that result from the perception that these pose a risk to the safety, economy, politics, health, or well-being of the community, symbolic threats are focused on the culture, traditions, worldview, and moral values of a community. Furthermore, ITT postulates that both realistic and symbolic threats could operate both on an individual and group level.

This theoretical framework helps us understand the relationship between prejudice and threat, as it contends that threat to a group is experienced when group members perceive that another group is in a position to harm them either on a realistic level or a symbolic level or a combination of the two. At "the core of [this] model is.... the idea that threat causes prejudice" (Stephan & Stephan, 2000, p.37) and therefore prejudice is conceptualized only as a consequence of threat.

Theories of prejudice have acknowledged and tested both casual paths that relate to threat and prejudice: one which suggests that perceived threat and stereotypes can act as predecessors to prejudice (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Fiske et al., 2002; Mackie, Devos & Smith, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 2000), and the other which argues that prejudiced people may perceive threat as a way of justifying their prejudices (Bahns, 2015; Pereira, Vala & Costa Lopes, 2010; Pereira, Vala & Leyens, 2009).

This casual path proposed by Bahns (2015) is based on the Justification – Suppression Model (*JSM*) of prejudice expression (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). At the heart of this model is the notion that the conflict between negative affect and egalitarian beliefs creates psychological tension. Bahns (2015) argues that prejudiced individuals initially suppress this feeling and release the tension they experience when a justifiable occasion arises. Justifiable reasons could arise in the form of beliefs, values, stereotypes, and/or religion (Bahns, 2015). Threat perception in this model is dynamic, and as such plausible threats can be constructed to fit any particular social situation that arises. Earlier studies conducted by Pereira et al. (2009), established that increased discrimination against out-groups is mediated by symbolic threat perception. Furthermore, Pereira et al. (2010) also found that prejudice is associated with increased threat perception and increased discrimination against migrants. Therefore, threat serves as a justification for discrimination.

To this effect, Landmann, Gaschler and Rohmann (2019) propose the Bidirectional Threat Model. This model firstly contents that out-groups can elicit either direct or extended threats. Under this model, direct threats refer to realistic, symbolic, and safety threats. In contrast, extended threats refer to expectations about processes within the in-group and include cohesion, prejudice, and altruistic threat. According to this model, the relationship between threat and attitudes is bidirectional and includes the notion that threats can either cause negative attitudes towards the out-group, which is very similar to in-group threat theory, or negative attitudes can cause threats. In this direction, threats serve as a justification for pre-existing negative attitudes. Lastly, this model proposes that the range and relevance of specific threats depend on the context where they take place.

Similarly, other studies have shown that perceived threat is linked with increased intergroup bias and as such is one of the most important predictors of

prejudice in general (Riek et al., 2006, Stephan, 2014), increased negative attitudes towards migrants and refugees, increased hostility, dislike, disregard, rejection and hatred (Butz & Yogeeswaran, 2011; Croucher, 2013; Esses, González, Verkuyten, Weesie, & Poppe, 2008; 2010; Hamilton & Gaucher, 2017; Pererira et al., 2010; Zarate, Garcia, Garza & Hitlan, 2004), and prejudice against migrant groups (Stephan et al., 1999). Moreover, various studies suggest that different minority groups can provoke different perceptions of threat and prejudice (Hellwig & Sinno, 2017; Stephan et al., 2016).

Stephan and Stephan (2016) argue that intergroup threat serves as a mediator between its cause and consequence. They argue that this same variable shows up as both cause and effect and is therefore reciprocal: negative attitudes towards a particular out-group and its members may cause the in-group to perceive the out-group as a threat, but similarly, perceptions of in-group threat can also heighten negative attitudes towards the out-group.

These studies clearly outline the role of threat on prejudice against out-groups. This contributes to understanding hostility against migrants, however, the link or relationship between morality and the perception of threat has not been investigated. What role does morality play, and does it play a significant role in our threat perception?

5.2 Perceived Threat and Moral Foundations

As discussed in the previous chapter, moral foundations theory explains the psychological mechanisms that underlie different moral values and social groups' preferences (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt & Graham, 2009). Very briefly, individualizing moral foundations serve to protect the community from individual selfishness by directly disapproving of harming others and making individuals respect others' rights. In contrast, binding moral foundations

achieve this same goal by binding people to cohesive groups and creating defined roles within institutional systems and groups (Graham et al., 2013).

Moral judgments are determined mainly by individuals' psychological character and motivational preferences. Research indicates that when these motivational preferences surface, they affect moral judgments and determine how people relate to particular out-groups (Hadarics & Kende, 2017a).

Research indicates that moral foundations are directly related to the negative evaluation of out-groups. For example, Kugler and his colleagues (2014) found that binding moral foundations are positively associated with anti-immigrant attitudes while individualizing moral foundations were found to relate negatively. Similarly, Low and Wui (2016) report a negative association between individualizing moral foundations and negative attitudes towards the poor. Smith et al., (2014) report that in respondents with weak moral identity binding moral foundations increase support for out-group members' torture. Recent research about migrants indicates that individuals with high binding moral foundations perceive migrants as a threat and as a potential danger (Hadarics & Kende, 2017a). These results suggest that moral concerns possibly determine the perception of out-groups. It seems that when individuals form an opinion about a particular group, that opinion is at least partly formulated on how the perceived characteristics of the specific out-group relate to the individuals' preferred moral concerns and standards.

5.3 Perceived Threat and the Need for Cognitive Closure (NCC)

As described in Chapter 3, the NCC is defined as the motivation to quickly formulate and maintain clear answers to questions or situations rather than accepting states of confusion and ambiguity (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). As reviewed, the need for cognitive closure is related to a tendency to rely on group norms in intergroup behaviour (e.g., Golec de Zavala, 2006) and a

decreased ability to understand intergroup situations in complex and multifaceted ways (De Dreu, Koole, & Oldersma, 1999; De Dreu, Koole, & Steinel, 2000; Webster et al., 1996). A high NCC is also related to a preference for coercive actions in intergroup conflicts (Winter, 2007). In the context of this thesis, recent studies have found that a high NCC and perceiving out-groups as a threat are closely linked (Baldner et al., 2019b). Baldner and colleagues posit that change to individuals known realities and the need for cognitive closure are closely related. Individuals with a high NCC are particularly worried when out-groups force them to change their opinions, attitudes, and behaviours as their own in-group might not provide the knowledge necessary to cope with new changed realities. Individuals with a high NCC perceive a threat from out-groups because a high need for epistemic certainty predisposes individuals to see intergroup relations in a polarized fashion (black or white thinking). This cognitive style encourages a feeling of competition. Furthermore, this predisposition to compete strengthens the tendency to stick to prescribed behaviours provided by salient worldviews, which are also associated with a high NCC (De Zavala, Cislak & Wesolowska, 2010).

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, extensive research has been conducted on the theories reviewed in this and the preceding chapters of this thesis in relation to prejudice against migrants. In the next chapter I shall be presenting the migratory situation of both Malta and Italy.

CHAPTER 6

6.0 Mapping the Migration Context in Malta and Italy

A combination of social, political, economic, and environmental factors influences the migration trend across Europe. This has made the topic of migration a controversial one (Grover, Bayraktaroglu, Mark, & Rho, 2019) and for years it has sparked debate at all levels of society.

On January 1, 2019, a bit less than twenty-two million (4.9 %) of the 446.8 million people living in the European Union were non-European Union citizens (Eurostat, 2020). About 2.4 million migrants entered the European Union from non-European Union countries in 2018, and about 4.4 million in 2017 (Eurostat, 2020).

Owing to their geographical position in the Mediterranean Sea, both Malta and Italy are the first shores that migrants, attempting to reach Europe by sea, reach. This central position has contributed to increasing numbers of migrants and refugees in both countries over the past decades. This social phenomenon has not only initiated heated debates between the two countries and the rest of the European Union but also amongst the inhabitants of both countries. Apart from attracting non-European nationals who reach these countries by sea, Malta attracts both European and non-European migrants who regularly migrate to Malta in search for a better quality of life, be it financial or economic or simply in search of an idyllic island in the sun. The situation in Italy is somewhat more complex. Not only does Italy receive its share of migrants arriving irregularly via the sea route and migrants settling in Italy regularly but also Italy deals with migrants reaching Italy irregularly via land.

6.1 Migrants in Malta

The number of migrants embarking upon the dangerous journey using the central Mediterranean route to enter Europe from Libya had decreased after the Malta Declaration by the members of the European Council in 2017 and as a result of the effort of a joint migration task force with the African Union and United Nations (European Council, 2020). Nevertheless, in 2019, about 3406 migrants from Africa landed on the Maltese shores. The situation remains sensitive with Malta reporting 2,281 arrivals from sea for the period January to November, 2020 (Statista, 2021).

With every new arrival Maltese social media has been mostly flooded with xenophobic comments, stereotyped images of migrants, reports of crime, and posts spawning racial hatred. Xenophobic pressure groups advocate the claim that migrants arriving to the Maltese shores increase crime and bring disease. Over the years these reports and pressure groups have heightened public anxiety and an association in the public's mind between migrants and crime has been seeded (Gauci, 2012).

In recent decades, Malta's migrant population has increased to 14.1% of overall residents, with 39% of the total migrants being non- European Union member migrants (Eurostat, 2019).

6.2 Migrants in Italy

The number of migrants reaching Italy between 2014 and 2020 peaked in 2016 when Italy recorded 181,000 arrivals by sea. Last year, 2020, Italy recorded 34, 000 arrivals by sea. Most of these arrivals were African and South Asian nationals (Statista, 2021). Non-European Union member migration in Italy is relatively higher than that in Malta (69.9% of total migrants Vs 39% of total migrants) (Eurostat, 2019)

Italy's migrant population has in fact risen to 8.5 percent of its total inhabitants (Eurostat, 2019). In 2020 Italy was reported to be the third-highest European Union state with the largest number of foreigners living on its' territory, 5.3 million or 8% of the total population (ISTAT, 2020).

6.3 Overview

These fluctuating numbers of migrants in both countries have historically contributed to racial prejudice, discrimination and stereotyped views of migrants. But is it just the numbers that contribute and escalate prejudiced attitudes towards migrants? As seen in the previous chapters' literature suggests not.

In the following chapters, I shall be presenting a series of four correlational studies conducted in relation to prejudice against migrants. These studies address specific literature gaps and generate new insights into the possible correlations between different variables that may increase prejudice against migrants by investigating individual level theories and group-level theories and their relations to prejudiced attitudes towards migrants with the aim to fill in the present gap in theory that link these two strands to theory together.

In study 1, I have reasoned that individuals who strongly endorse the moral duties of loyalty to the in-group, respect for authority, and sanctity (i.e., binding moral foundations) are more likely to perceive migrants and refugees as posing realistic and symbolic threats and consequently to be more prejudiced. These foundations serve to protect the in-group and render people more prone to monitor non-conformance, disobedience, or possible external contamination and threats that may violate the in-group's dignity, traditions, and social order. The host group may fear losing, for example, in-group customs, language, and traditions as a consequence of interaction with migrants

and refugees. Another reason to expect that moral foundations are an antecedent of threat is that they have been portrayed as very basic, stable aspects of morality that are difficult to alter (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Graham et al., 2013). I, therefore, hypothesize that individuals with high binding moral foundations more likely to perceive a high threat (either realistic or symbolic) from migrants and consequently be more prejudiced against them, and controversially individuals with high individualizing moral foundations more likely to perceive less threats from migrants and therefore be less prejudiced against them

The main purpose of Study 2 is to investigate whether binding moral foundations and perceived threats (realistic and symbolic) may mediate the relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants. It was hypothesized that individuals with a high need for cognitive closure tend to give more importance to the loyalty of the in-group, authority, and sanctity of the in-group (i.e., binding moral foundations) and consequently are more likely to perceive migrants as posing realistic and symbolic threats and to exhibit prejudice against migrants. This second study investigates whether the relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants is sequentially mediated by binding moral foundations and the perception of threat from migrants.

Building on the findings from Study 2 and on the findings from several other studies that showed that national identification increases negative attitudes towards out-groups (Hopkins, 2001; Kunovich, 2009; Pehrson, Vignoles, & Brown, 2009; Pehrson & Green, 2010), in Study 3, I set out to examine whether and how the national identification, binding moral foundations and perceived out-group threats mediate the relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants. I hypothesized that participants who have a high need for cognitive closure have a stronger

sense of national identity and consequently are more likely to endorse binding moral foundation and perceive a threat from African migrants. All these lead high need for cognitive closure individuals to be more prejudiced against migrants. It was also hypothesized a negative relationship between individualizing moral foundations and prejudice, as found in the previous studies (e.g., Balder & Pierro, 2018, 2019; De Cristoforo et al., 2019).

In the last study, I reasoned that situational uncertainty interacts with a dispositional need for certainty (NCC). It is hypothesized that situational uncertainty caused by COVID -19 increases the need for cognitive closure, which in turn increases endorsement on binding moral foundations, which lead to increased prejudiced against migrants. More specifically, it is hypothesize that serial mediation will occur such that the effect of situational uncertainty caused by COVID-19 on prejudice against migrants will at least in part, be sequentially mediated by the need for cognitive closure and binding moral foundations.

Finally, in Chapter 11, the last chapter, general conclusions about these studies that include the theoretical and practical contributions that these studies make to the field of social psychology, more specially to the understanding of how prejudice against migrants is perpetuated from a socio-psychological perspective, the limitations of these four studies and future study suggestions are made.

CHAPTER 7

7.0 Study 1

The effects of binding moral foundations on prejudiced attitudes toward migrants: the mediating role of perceived realistic and symbolic threats.

Introduction

Various surveys have shown that anti-migrant prejudice in Europe is pervasive (Jaakkola, 2000; Schneider, 2007). With increasing numbers of migrants in large parts of the world, it is essential to investigate factors that may explain prejudice and racist incidents. Previous studies found that binding moral foundations relative to domains of loyalty, authority, and sanctity, contribute to increased levels of prejudice against out-group members (e.g., Baldner & Pierro, 2019, Kugler et al., 2014; Low & Wui, 2016; Van de Vyer, et al., 2016). This study aims to investigate whether the relation between binding moral foundations and prejudice against migrants (migrants and refugees) is mediated through perceived threats. Previous studies have already shown that out-groups are perceived as threatening but these studies have not examined the role of the perceived threats in the relationship between binding moral foundations and prejudice against migrants and whether this can lead to prejudice and discrimination towards migrants and refugees (e.g., Croucher, Galy-Badenas & Routsalainen, 2014).

This study contributes to fill in the gap. I sought to find evidence supporting the assumption that the perception of realistic and symbolic threats mediates the relationship between binding moral foundations (loyalty, authority, and sanctity) and prejudice towards migrants and refugees in a cross-cultural study in two countries, Malta and Italy.

Methods

Participants

A total of three hundred and eighty participants answered the survey. Two separate samples were gathered, one in Malta (N=191) and another in Italy (N=189). 70.2% of the Maltese population were female, while in the Italian sample, 57.6% were female. Inclusion criteria were being born Maltese and Italian, aged 18 years and over. Malta's total population is 475,701 of which 98,918 (21%) (Regional Statistics Malta, 2019) are non-Maltese nationals. In order to make the questionnaire as anonymous as possible, the participants were not asked to state their age, since age together with other socio-demographic characteristics (for example: level of education attained) could be considered by the respondents as an indirect identifier. Therefore participants were simply asked to indicate their age group. The majority of respondents in the total study were 18 to 30-year-olds (41%). Maltese and Italian residents living abroad were excluded. A power analysis (Gpower 3; Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009), considering 0.05 as a threshold probability to reject the null hypothesis, and the expected correlation ($r = 0.20$, or the equivalent incremental f^2 within multiple regression $f^2 = .0416$), in this study 95% power is achieved with $n = 266$; therefore, acceptable levels of power were met with the sample.

Procedure

Participants were contacted through a post pasted on the researcher's social network platform (Facebook). An electronic questionnaire was composed using the instruments described below. Instruments were presented in a fixed sequence as showed below. Participants were allowed to check what they had filled out and could not move forward unless all items on the page were completed. At the end of the questionnaire, the participants submitted their responses, which were then registered anonymously. A portion of the Italian

participants was also recruited amongst students attending an introductory course in social psychology. Participation was voluntary. Students who choose to participate were asked to distribute five questionnaires and, in return, were given course credit. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants included in this study.

Measures

At the beginning of the questionnaire some socio-demographic questions were asked (for example: gender, nationality, age, and education – which were used as covariate variables). The questionnaire then included the scales described hereunder:

Moral Foundations Questionnaire: To measure moral foundations, participants completed the 30 item scale of *The Moral Foundation Questionnaire* (MFQ) (Graham et al., 2008). The original questionnaire in English was administered to the participants in Malta, while the Italian version of the questionnaire was administered to the participants in Italy (Bobbio, Nencuni & Sarrica, 2011). The MFQ invokes the five moral foundations and is made up of two sections. The first section contains 15 items concerning moral relevance (example for each moral foundation: "Whether or not someone cared or not for someone weak or vulnerable," "Whether or not someone acted fairly," "Whether or not someone did something to betray his or her group," "Whether or not someone conformed to the traditions of society," "Whether or not someone did something disgusting."). Respondents were asked to answer a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all relevant*) to 6 (*extremely relevant*). The second section of the MFQ contains other 15 items that assess moral judgments (example for each moral foundation: "It can never be right to kill a human being"; "I think it's morally wrong that rich children inherit a lot of money while poor children inherit nothing"; "It is more important to be a team player than to express oneself"; "If I were a soldier and

disagree with my commanding officer's orders, I would obey anyway because that is my duty"; *"Chastity is an important and valuable virtue."* Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they disagree or agree on a scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). A composite score was calculated for each of the five moral foundations by combining the relevance and judgment scores. In the end, two indexes were calculated: for the Binding dimension (including items pertinent to the foundations of Authority, Loyalty, and Purity) and for the Individualizing dimension (including items pertinent to the foundations of Care and Fairness). High scores indicate high levels of moral foundations. Internal reliability for both scales was satisfactory: Malta: Binding $\alpha = .88$; Individualizing $\alpha = .75$; Italy: Binding $\alpha = .87$; Individualizing $\alpha = .79$.

Scale of the Perceived threat. A ten-item scale was created by including affirmations from various mass media and political discourse common to Malta and Italy. These ten items reflected realistic (safety concern) and symbolic (concern about culture) threats to Maltese and Italian society. Participants were asked to rate their perception of threat on a range from 1 (*Completely disagree*) to 6 (*Completely agree*). The factorial structure of the scale was examined. Two of the items were reversed (*"Migrants bring new ideas and/or boost innovation in Italy," "Migrants enrich Italian cultural life (art, music, food, etc.)"*). A bi-factorial structure emerged from the analysis which together explained: Malta 66.78% of variance (55.60% first component, and 10.80% second component), Italy 66.16% of variance (54.73% first component, and 11.44% second component). We created two indexes in each country: one for realistic threat in Malta (M=3.57; SD=1.31) and then in Italy (M=2.69; SD=1.61), and another for symbolic threat in Malta (M=3.57; SD=1.61), and in Italy (M=3.06; SD=1.07). The internal reliability was high: in Malta Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$ and $\alpha = .81$ respectively, and in Italy $\alpha = .90$ and $\alpha = .81$ respectively.

Explicit Prejudice Scale: To measure prejudice as the dependent variable, we created an eight-item scale by extrapolating public discourse statements(ex: “I don't care if people make racist statements against immigrants or refugees.”; “I would not be happy if my children were to befriend migrants”). Participants were asked to rate their attitudes on a range from 1 (Completely disagree) to 6 (Completely agree). The factorial structure of the scale was examined. We found a mono-factorial structure and all the communalities were above .37. Therefore, an index of explicit prejudice was created; high scores indicate high levels of prejudice. Internal reliability for both countries' scale was good: Malta: $\alpha = .86$ and Italy: $\alpha = .92$.

The Bogardus' social distance scale (Bogardus, 1933). This scale was used as an additional measure of explicit prejudice as it taps into the behavioural components of prejudice (e.g., Doell, 2006; Javakhisvili, 2011; Morgan, 2006; Sakuragi, 2006; Wark & Galliner, 2007). I reasoned that the greater the distance individuals choose to put between themselves and migrants, the greater the prejudice they have against them. This scale consists of six social situations with varying degrees of intimacy. Participants were required to indicate their willingness to become involved with members of six migrant groups living in Malta or Italy (i.e., Asians, East Europeans, Africans, Hispanic and South-Americans (Latino's), and West Europeans/American). The participants were asked to indicate whether they would be willing to accept members of these six above mentioned groups in 'marriage,' 'personal friends,' 'neighbours,' 'work colleagues,' 'tourists'; or if they would prefer to have 'no relation and send them back home. The indexes of social distance for each migrant group were calculated by summing responses in the six positive categories and subtracting this sum from the negative category 'no relations' high scores indicate high social distance.

Results

Correlations

Bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics are reported in Tables 1 and 2 (Malta & Italy).

As seen in Tables 1 & 2, binding moral foundations are positively related to prejudice, while individualizing moral foundations are negatively related to prejudice what confirms the previous studies (Baldner & Pierro, 2019; Kugler et al., 2014). Furthermore, both perceived realistic and symbolic threat are positively correlated with binding moral foundations and explicit prejudice, and negatively correlated with individualizing moral foundations in both samples (Malta and Italy).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables(Malta: N=191)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.BMF	4.18	0.82	-									
2.PRT	3.57	1.31	0.43*	-								
3.PST	3.57	1.61	0.42*	0.75*	-							
4.PREJ	2.71	1.11	0.43*	0.72*	0.65*	-						
5.ASIA	2.41	1.31	0.28*	0.47*	0.44*	0.54*	-					
6.EEUR	2.74	1.59	0.32*	0.48*	0.46*	0.43*	0.64*	-				
7.AFR	3.15	1.59	0.31*	0.62*	0.52*	0.55*	0.66*	0.65*	-			
8.HIS	2.51	1.46	0.37*	0.50*	0.48*	0.44*	0.64*	0.62*	0.63*	-		
9.MEA	3.02	1.56	0.29*	0.59*	0.52*	0.57*	0.65*	0.60*	0.89*	0.62*	-	
10.W/A	2.05	1.29	0.31*	0.39*	0.39*	0.36*	0.53*	0.59*	0.48*	0.64*	0.42*	-
11.IMF	4.78	0.52	0.44*	-0.01	-0.02	-0.09	0.02	0.10	0.00	0.06	-0.00	0.07

Note: *p<.001

Legend: BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; PRT = Perceived Realistic Threat; PST = Perceived Symbolic Threat; EP = Explicit prejudice; ASIA = social distance from Asian migrants; EEUR= social distance from migrants from the East Europe; AFR = social distance from African migrants; HIS = social distance from Hispanic migrants; MEA = social distance from migrants from the Middle East; W/A = social distance from the West Europe/America; IMF = Individualizing Moral Foundations.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables (Italy: $N=189$)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.BMF	3.65	0.78	-									
2.PRT	2.68	1.27	0.42*	-								
3.PST	3.05	1.07	0.27*	0.66*	-							
4.PREJ	2.13	1.10	0.33*	0.74*	0.63*	-						
5.ASIA	2.24	1.40	0.29*	0.44*	0.33*	0.40*	-					
6.EEUR	2.57	1.56	0.30*	0.44*	0.39*	0.50*	0.73*	-				
7.AFR	2.43	1.49	0.28*	0.53*	0.51*	0.63*	0.76*	0.81*	-			
8.HIS	2.05	1.34	0.14	0.37*	0.32*	0.46*	0.72*	0.68*	0.77*	-		
9.MEA	2.39	1.47	0.31*	0.56*	0.47*	0.61*	0.77*	0.77*	0.85*	0.70*	-	
10.W/A	1.73	1.21	0.11	0.24*	0.22*	0.30*	0.56*	0.47*	0.52*	0.69*	0.54*	-
11..IMF	4.38	0.68	0.38*	-0.05	-0.21*	-0.26*	-0.08	-0.15*	-0.20*	-0.26*	-0.14*	-0.22*

Note: * $p<.001$

Legend: BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; PRT = Perceived Realistic Threat; PST = Perceived Symbolic Threat; EP = Explicit prejudice; ASIA = social distance from Asian migrants; EEUR = social distance from migrants from the East Europe; AFR = social distance from African migrants; HIS = social distance from Hispanic migrants; MEA = social distance from migrants from the Middle East;

W/A = social distance from the West Europe/America; IMF = Individualizing Moral Foundations

From the descriptive results, it can be observed that Italy's mean values are lower than those in Malta. To check the differences between Malta and Italy, a one- way ANOVA was performed. Before conducting the ANOVA, the assumption of normality was checked and confirmed to be satisfied as both groups distributions were associated with skew and kurtosis between -2 and +2, which are considered to be acceptable levels to prove normal distribution (George & Mallery, 2010). Since a test of homogeneity of variance using Levene's F test was not satisfied, we performed an ANOVA Welch Test (See Table 3). The analysis yielded significant results for binding moral foundations, individualizing moral foundations, explicit prejudice, social distance from the Asian, African, Middle eastern and West European/American migrant groups, but not for perceived realistic threat, perceived symbolic threat and social distance from the East European and Hispanic migrant group.

Table 3

One-Way Analyses of Variance for study variables between the two countries
(Malta & Italy)

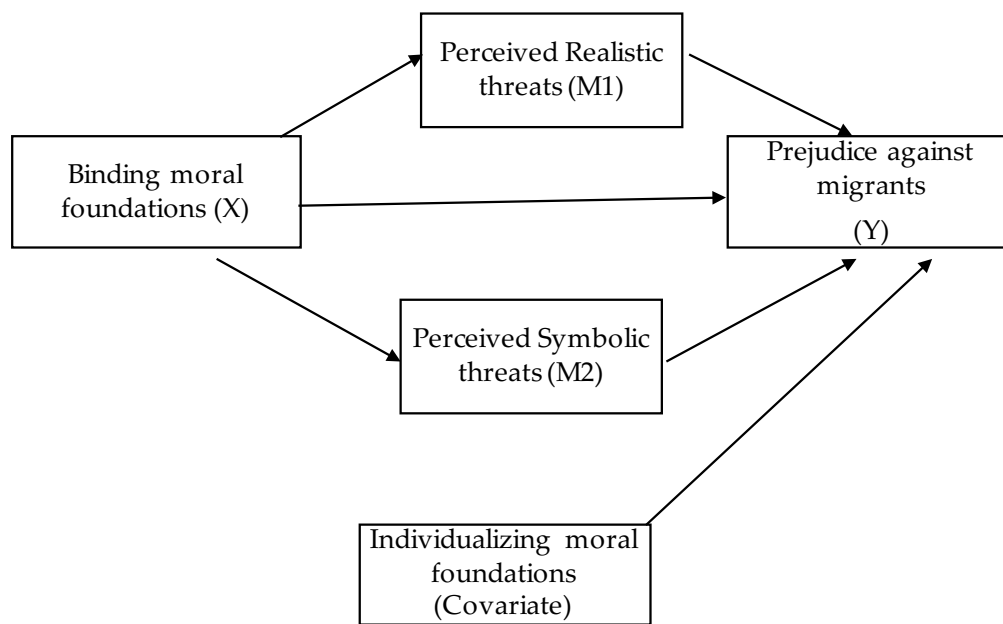
ANOVA	
1. PR Threat	$F(1,378)= 4.17, p = .042, \eta = 0.01$
2. PS Threat	$F(1,378)= 5.17, p = .024, \eta = 0.01$
3. BMF	$F(1,378)= 42.28, p = .000, \eta = 0.10$
4. IMF	$F(1,378)= 41.75, p = .000, \eta = 0.09$
5. EP	$F(1,378)= 151.33, p = .000, \eta = 0.28$
6. ASIA	$F(1,378)= 35.40, p = .000, \eta = 0.08$
7. EEUR	$F(1,378)= 0.17, p = .682, \eta = 0.00$
8. AFRICA	$F(1,378)= 14.09, p = .000, \eta = 0.03$
9. HISPANIC	$F(1,378)= 0.00, p = .966, \eta = 0.00$
10. MEA	$F(1,378)= 67.16, p = .000, \eta = 0.15$
11. W/A	$F(1,378)= 227.86, p = .000, \eta = 0.37$

Legend: PR Threat = Perceived Realistic Threat; PS Threat = Perceived Symbolic Threat; BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; IMF = Individualizing Moral Foundations; EP = Explicit prejudice; ASIA = social distance from Asian migrants; EEUR = social distance from migrants from the East Europe; AFRICA = social distance from African migrants; HISPANIC = social distance from Hispanic migrants; MEA= social distance from migrants from the Middle East; W/A= social distance from the West Europe/America

Parallel Mediation Analysis

To test whether binding moral foundations and perceived realistic and perceived symbolic threats mediate the relationship between the binding moral foundations and prejudice against migrants, a mediation analysis (PROCESS;

Model 4, Hayes, 2017) was run with 5000 bootstrap method, with bias correction 95% confidence intervals (CI's) for each of the indirect effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). In the model (Figure 1), binding moral foundation is the independent variable (X), perceived realistic threat (M1) and perceived symbolic threat (M2) are the mediators, and prejudice against migrants is the criterion variable (Y). The analysis was ran seven times per country by using the index of explicit prejudice, and then indexes of social distance from each migrant group as criterion variables. All the variables were standardized before entering the analyses (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2002).



Initially individualizing moral foundations, age, and education were controlled for in both samples, however, age, and education have little or no effect on the mediator and dependent variable in both samples.

Consequently, the model was re-ran with just individualizing moral foundations as a covariate.

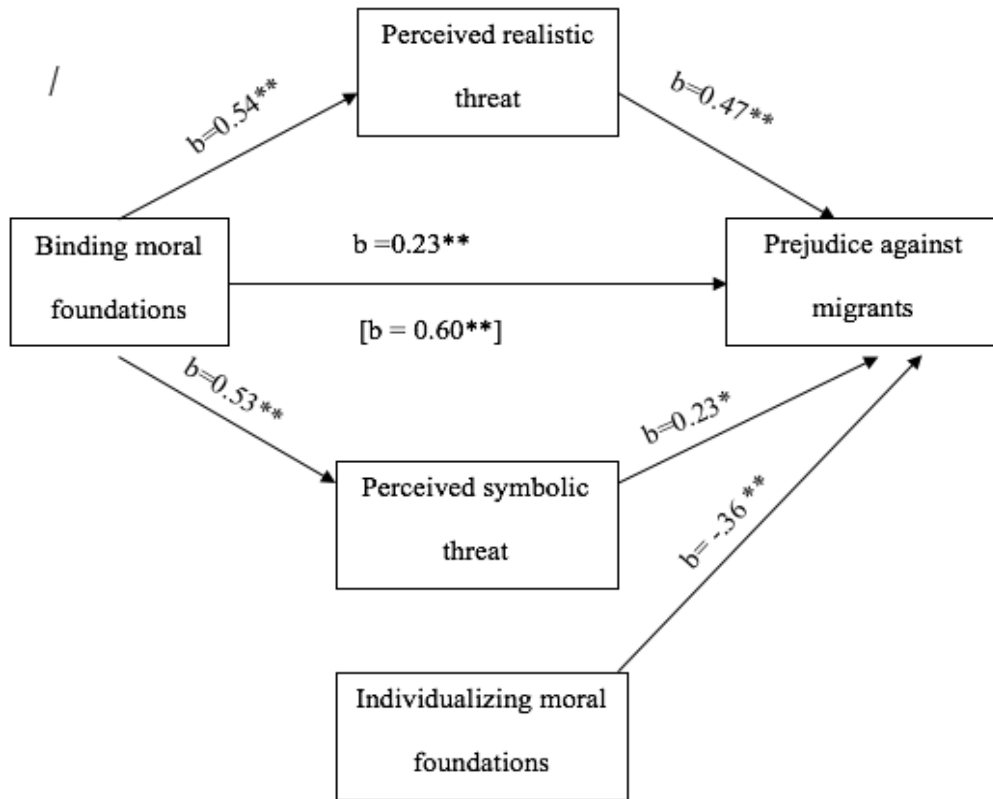
Explicit Prejudice against Migrants.

The total effect for this model was significant in both countries: Malta: $b=0.60$, $SE=0.07$, $t=8.80$, $F(2,188)=39.91$, $p<.001$, 95% CI [0.46, 0.73]; and Italy: $b=0.49$, $SE=0.07$, $t=7.33$, $F(2,188)=35.18$, $p<.001$, 95% CI [0.36, 0.63], while the direct effect was also significant for both countries: Malta: $b=0.23$, $SE=0.06$, $t=3.82$, $p<.001$, 95% CI [0.11, 0.34], Italy: $b=0.14$, $SE=0.06$, $t=2.51$, $p<.001$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.25].

In both countries binding moral foundations positively and significantly predict perceived realistic and symbolic threat. Perceived realistic and symbolic threats positively predict prejudice against migrants in both samples too. In addition, a direct negative effect of the individualizing moral foundations on prejudice against migrants in both countries was found (see Fig. 2 & 3).

Figure 2

Path analysis of binding moral foundations on explicit prejudice against migrants, through perceived realistic threat and perceived symbolic threat in Malta.

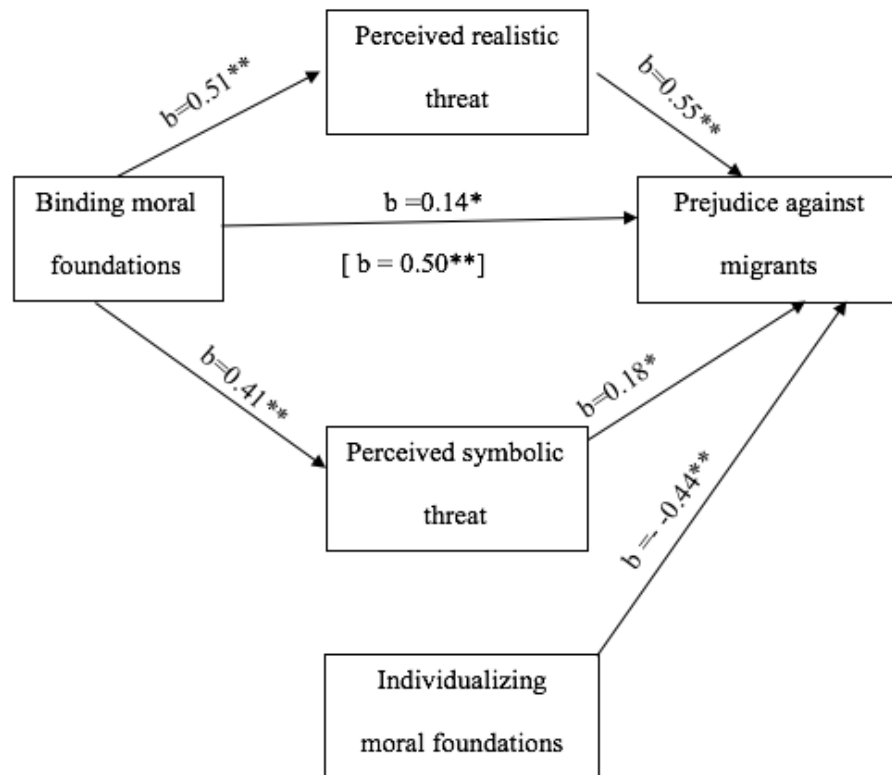


Note: N= 191

$^{**}p < .001$, $^{*}p < .005$; Individualizing moral foundations was inserted as covariate.

Figure 3

Path analysis of binding moral foundations on explicit prejudice against migrants, through perceived realistic threat and perceived symbolic threat in Italy.



Note: N= 189

**p<.001, *p<.05; Individualizing moral foundations was inserted as covariate

Indirect Effects

To detect the mediation effect, as recommended by Hayes (2009), indirect effects were analysed. A significant, although small, indirect effect of binding moral foundations on explicit prejudice through both perceived

realistic and symbolic threat in both countries was found. Perceived realistic threat however seems to be the most consistent predictor (see tables 4 & 5). These results confirm a partial mediation. In the Maltese sample, R squared = 0.30 and in the Italian sample, R squared = 0.27, meaning that 30% and 27% of the variation in prejudice against migrants is explained by the relationship with binding moral foundations and perceived realistic and symbolic threats.

Table 4

Malta - Standardized Indirect effect of Binding Moral Foundations on Explicit Prejudice (through Perceived Realistic and Symbolic Threat)

Indirect effect of BMF on EP	<i>Indirect</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>95% CILL; UL</i>
Indirect effect (through PRT) on EP	0.25	0.06	[0.15; 0.37]
Indirect effect (through PST) on EP	0.12	0.05	[0.04; 0.22]

Note: BMF = Binding moral foundations; PRT = Perceived realistic threat; PST = Perceived symbolic threat; and EP = Explicit prejudice; CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit

Table 5

Italy - Standardized Indirect effect of Binding Moral Foundations on Explicit Prejudice against migrants (through Perceived Realistic and Symbolic Threat)

Indirect effect of BMF on EP	<i>Indirect</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>95% CILL; UL</i>
Indirect effect (through PRT) on EP	0.28	0.05	[0.18; 0.39]
Indirect effect (through PST) on EP	0.07	0.04	[0.01; 0.15]

Note: BMF = Binding moral foundations; PRT = Perceived realistic threat; and EP=Explicit prejudice; PST = Perceived symbolic threat; CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit

Social Distance from migrant groups

The total effect for all six migrant groups was significant in both samples (See Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6

Malta–Total effect for all six migrant group.

	<i>Effect</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>95% CI LL; UL</i>
Asia	0.33	0.08	4.31	<.001	[0.18; 0.49]
East European	0.35	0.08	4.50	<.001	[0.19; 0.50]
African	0.38	0.07	5.02	<.001	[0.23; 0.53]
Hispanic	0.42	0.08	5.59	<.001	[0.27; 0.57]
Middle East	0.36	0.08	4.69	<.001	[0.21; 0.51]
West European/American	0.34	0.08	4.47	<.001	[0.19; 0.50]

Legend: CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

Table 7

Italy–Total effect for all six migrant group.

	<i>Effect</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>95% CI LL; UL</i>
Asia	0.37	0.07	5.01	<.001	[0.23; 0.52]
East European	0.42	0.07	5.84	<.001	[0.28; 0.56]
African	0.41	0.07	5.77	<.001	[0.27; 0.55]
Hispanic	0.28	0.07	3.73	<.001	[0.13; 0.42]
Middle East	0.43	0.07	5.99	<.001	[0.29; 0.57]

West European/American	0.22	0.08	2.91	<.005	[0.07; 0.37]
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Legend: CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

However a direct effect of binding moral foundations on prejudice against migrants was only found for the Hispanic migrants group in the Maltese sample: $b=0.17$, $SE=0.08$, $t=2.06$, $p<.05$, 95% CI [0.01; 0.32], while in the Italian sample a direct effect was found in the Asian, East European, African and Middle Eastern migrant groups: Asian: $b=0.19$, $SE=0.08$, $t=2.34$, $p<.05$, 95% CI [0.03; 0.35]; East European: $b=0.25$, $SE=0.08$, $t=3.15$, $p<.005$, 95% CI [0.09; 0.40]; African: $b=0.17$, $SE=0.07$, $t=2.27$, $p<.05$, 95% CI [0.02; 0.31]; Middle Eastern: $b=0.18$, $SE=0.07$, $t=2.43$, $p<.01$, 95% CI [0.03; 0.32]. These results suggest partial mediation in the Hispanic migrant group in the Maltese sample and full mediation in the remaining migrant groups, and partial mediation in the Asian, East European, African and Middle Eastern migrant groups and full mediation in the Hispanic and West European/ American migrant groups in the Italian sample.

Binding moral foundations on perceived realistic and perceived symbolic threat was significant in both sample. While perceived realistic threat on social distance was significant with all individual migrant groups except the Western European/ American migrant group in both samples, perceive symbolic threats was only significant on the East European and Hispanic migrant groups in the Maltese sample and the African and Western European/American migrant groups in the Italian sample

Besides these results, a direct negative effect of the individualizing moral foundations on all individual migrant groups was found in both samples with the exception of the Western European/American migrant group in the Maltese sample (see Tables 8 and 9)

Table 8

The relationship between Moral foundations, Perceived realistic threat and Social distance on Individual migrant groups (Malta: N=191)

	BMF			PRT			PST			IMF		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
ASIA	.07	.07	.387	.30	.10	<.005	.19	.10	.060	-.01	.07	.921
EEUR	.07	.08	.350	.30	.10	<.005	.20	.10	<.05	.08	.07	.302
AFRICAN	.04	.07	.557	.50	.09	<.001	.13	.09	.156	-.01	.07	.889
HISPANIC	.17	.08	<.05	.27	.10	<.01	.20	.10	<.05	-.01	.07	.927
MEA	.03	.08	.716	.44	.09	<.001	.18	.09	.052	-.01	.07	.908
W/A	.15	.09	.091	.18	.10	.074	.19	.10	.069	.01	.08	.934

Legend: PRT = Perceived Realistic Threat; PST = Perceived Symbolic Threat; BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; IMF = Individualizing Moral Foundations; EP = Explicit prejudice; ASIA = social distance from Asian migrants; EEUR = social distance from migrants from the East Europe; AFRICA = social distance from African migrants; HISPANIC = social distance from Hispanic migrants; MEA = social distance from migrants from the Middle East; W/A = social distance from the West Europe/American.

Table 9

The relationship between Moral foundations, Perceived realistic threat and Social distance on Individual migrant groups (Italy: N=189)

	BMF			PRT			PST			IMF		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
ASIA	.19	.08	<.05	.33	.07	<.001	.03	.08	.729	-.13	.08	.098
EEUR	.25	.08	<.005	.25	.09	<.01	.11	.09	.212	-.21	.07	<.01
AFRICA	.17	.07	<.05	.32	.08	<.001	.21	.08	<.05	-.20	.07	<.005
HISPANIC	.11	.08	.164	.28	.09	<.005	.05	.09	.601	-.28	.08	<.001
MEA	.18	.07	<.05	.39	.08	<.001	-.13	.08	.103	-.17	.07	<.05
W/A	.13	.09	.127	.15	.10	.126	.03	.10	.789	-.25	.08	<.005

Legend: PRT = Perceived Realistic Threat; PST = Perceived Symbolic Threat; BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; IMF = Individualizing Moral Foundations; EP = Explicit prejudice; ASIA = social distance from Asian migrants; EEUR = social distance from migrants from the East Europe; AFRICA = social distance from African migrants; HISPANIC = social distance from Hispanic migrants; MEA = social distance from migrants from the Middle East; W/A = social distance from the West Europe/America

Indirect Effects

To detect the mediation effect, as recommended by Hayes (2009), indirect effects were analysed. In the Maltese sample an indirect effect of binding moral foundations through perceived realistic threat on social distance from migrants in all the migrant groups with the exception of the West European/American migrant group was found. No indirect effect through perceived symbolic threat was found.

Similarly, in the Italian sample indirect effects for perceived realistic threats in all the migrant groups except the West European/American migrant group were found. Moreover, the only indirect effect of perceived symbolic threat in the Italian sample was found in the African migrant group. These results imply that when mediated by perceived threats prejudice in both Malta and Italy is directed against the majority of migrant groups, with perceived realistic threat seeming to be the most consistent predictor of the outcome (see Tables 10 and 11).

Table 10

Standardized Indirect effect of Binding moral foundations on social distance from different migrant groups (through Perceived Realistic and Perceived Symbolic Threat) (Malta)

Indirect effect of BMF on Social Distance	<i>Indirect</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>95% CILL; UL</i>
Asian			
Indirect effect through PRT	0.16	0.06	[0.14; 0.36]
Indirect effect through PST	0.10	0.06	[-0.02; 0.22]
East Europe			
Indirect effect through PRT	0.16	0.06	[0.05; 0.30]
Indirect effect through PST	0.11	0.06	[-0.02; 0.23]
African			
Indirect effect through PRT	0.27	0.07	[0.16; 0.42]
Indirect effect through PST	0.07	0.06	[-0.05; 0.18]
Hispanic			
Indirect effect through PRT	0.15	0.06	[0.04; 0.33]
Indirect effect through PST	0.11	0.06	[-0.01; 0.23]

Middle East			
Indirect effect through PRT	0.24	0.06	[0.12; 0.37]
Indirect effect through PST	0.09	0.06	[-0.02; 0.21]
West European/American			
Indirect effect through PRT	0.10	0.06	[-0.00; 0.262]
Indirect effect through PST	0.10	0.07	[-0.02; 0.23]

Note: BMF = Binding moral foundations; PRT = Perceived realistic threat; PST = Perceived symbolic threat; CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

Table 11

Standardized Indirect effect of Binding moral foundations on social distance from different migrant groups (through Perceived Realistic and Perceived Symbolic Threat) (Italy)

Indirect effect of BMF on Social Distance	<i>Indirect</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>95% CI LL; UL</i>
Asia			
Indirect effect through PRT	0.17	0.05	[0.07; 0.28]
Indirect effect through PST	0.13	0.04	[-0.06; 0.10]
East Europe			
Indirect effect through PRT	0.03	0.05	[0.03; 0.24]
Indirect effect through PST	0.05	0.04	[-0.03; 0.13]
Africa			
Indirect effect through PRT	0.16	0.05	[0.07; 0.26]
Indirect effect through PST	0.09	0.04	[0.01; 0.18]
Latinos			
Indirect effect through PRT	0.14	0.14	[0.05; 0.24]
Indirect effect through PST	0.02	0.02	[-0.06; 0.11]

Middle East

Indirect effect through PRT	0.10	0.05	[0.10; 0.31]
Indirect effect through PST	0.05	0.04	[-0.01; 0.14]
West European/American			
Indirect effect through PRT	0.08	0.06	[-0.03; 0.18]
Indirect effect through PST	0.01	0.05	[-0.07; 0.12]

Note: BMF = Binding moral foundations; PRT = Perceived realistic threat; PST = Perceived Symbolic Threat; CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit

Discussion

This study's primary objective is to provide a conceptual integration by linking binding moral foundations, perception of realistic and symbolic threats, and prejudice against migrants.

I predicted that individuals who endorse binding moral foundations would be more prejudiced against migrants and that this relation is increased in situations where realistic or symbolic threats from migrants is perceived. Building on previous research, I also hypothesized that individualizing moral foundations would be negatively correlated with prejudice against migrants. Therefore, more formally, this study sought to investigate how perceived threats (realistic and symbolic) mediate the relationship between binding moral foundations and prejudice against migrants, and it also sought to corroborate what already exists in literature about the negative relationship between individualizing moral foundations and prejudice against migrants (Hadarics & Kende, 2017; Kugler et al., 2014; Low & Wui; Van de Vyer et al., 2016).

Support for both hypotheses in samples gathered in both countries (Malta and Italy) using the explicit prejudice index was found. When using the

social distance index in relation to individual migrant groups, the hypothesis was partially confirmed.

This study adds to the body of knowledge on the relationship between moral foundations and prejudice against migrants. It specifically confirms that individuals who are very loyal to their community, support authority, and religious or ritual purity (binding moral foundations) are more likely to be prejudiced against migrants because binding moral standards increase realistic and symbolic threat perception from migrants.

This research has practical implications for both migrants and autochthonous. Both countries in this study have high migration rates, Malta as per Eurostat (2017), has the highest migration rate in Europe (46.3 per 1000 inhabitants), while although Italy's migration rate is somewhat lower (5.7 per 1000 inhabitants), Italy's migration rate (69.9%) from outside the European Union is higher than that in Malta (39%). Results from this study demonstrate that the prejudice against migrants is, in fact, slightly higher in Malta than in Italy, where migration rates are higher. Results also show that perceived threats, and more specifically perceived realistic threat, mediate the relationship between binding moral foundations and prejudice against migrants perhaps because threat perception is dependent on the social context where individuals live (for example: higher migration rates in Malta over the recent years, the limited size of the Maltese archipelago (316km sq.), Malta being the most densely populated European country together with Malta having limited natural resources increases threat perception in the native community). The very fact that when social distance was used as an index of prejudice, there was no direct relation between binding moral foundations and prejudice against migrants in five out of the six migrant groups, but the relationship is fully mediated through perceived realistic threat may be influenced by the country's history of colonialization. As to a large extent, 'foreigners' (out-group),

especially other Western Europeans (for example: French, British) were mostly welcome on the islands as the Maltese were primarily dependent on other nations (historically for reasons of protection, economic, infrastructure, and sanitary reasons). This further corroborates my hypothesis that only when these same out-groups (migrants and refugees) are perceived to pose a realistic or symbolic threat the prejudiced attitudes towards migrants come into play. These results are replicated in the Italian sample where I found that realistic threat is not perceived from other western European or American migrants and symbolic threat is perceived from African migrants. Therefore, the results support the assumption that, as previously established in literature, binding morality works as the bases for negative attitudes against migrants (e.g., Hadarics & Kende, 2017) when these same migrants and refugees are perceived to pose a realistic threat to the in-group's wealth or resources or as a symbolic threat to the in-group's culture, values or traditions.

This study sheds light on the responsibility that public speakers (politicians, media, etc.) have when addressing migration issues. Misinterpretation of facts may lead to the creation of misguided perceptions of realistic or symbolic threats that could potentially lead to increased levels of prejudice against migrants, especially in individuals who are bound to their in-group. Also, it is important that policymakers became more aware of the words they choose when promoting national solidarity around the community's shared values as this in itself can encourage in-group loyalty, which may result in increasing prejudice against migrants rather than stirring away from prejudice and promoting integration. In order to reduce the prejudice, care and fairness principles could be emphasized and highlighted in public discourse.

Conclusion, limitations, and future research

This study has a few limitations. Firstly, the majority of the respondents in both samples were female, Malta: (70.2%), Italy: (57.6%), and the majority of the respondents (41%) were young (18 to 30-year-old group). Therefore, it would be interesting to replicate the same study with a more age and gender-balanced sample.

Although Italian students who were given course credit for participating in the study were asked to hand in the five questionnaires personally and were explicitly instructed to distribute the questionnaires amongst friends and family, I am confident, but anyway had no control over whether they had distributed the questionnaires to third parties or not. However, on analysing the data, normal distributions were observed. This increases my confidence that the students who opted to participate in this study effectively distribute the questionnaires as requested.

The current research provides evidence that binding moral foundations partially mediate the relationship between perceived realistic and symbolic threats and prejudice against migrants. Further research could investigate the relationship between the individual moral foundations, threat (both realistic and symbolic), and prejudice against migrants in specific contexts. Also, the low partial mediation result suggests that other mediators could be at work. Further studies could also investigate the change in prejudice (if any) over a prolonged period to establish whether different local contexts and changes in migration figures contribute to a change in prejudiced attitudes towards migrants, therefore longitudinal studies could shed further light on this relationship. Experimental studies that manipulate both realistic and symbolic threat perception could corroborate these results, adding a valid contribution to what is already established in the literature.

CHAPTER 8

8.0 Study 2

The mediating role of binding moral foundations and perceived realistic and symbolic threats on the relationship between need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants.

Introduction

Several studies have established a relation between a high need for cognitive closure and prejudice towards migrants (e.g., Baldner et al., 2019; Roets et al., 2015; Roets & Van Hiel, 2011). Other studies found that loyalty, authority, and sanctity (binding moral foundations) mediate the relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants (Baldner & Pierro, 2019).

This paper extends the relationship between the need for closure, binding moral foundations, and prejudice against migrants by adding additional two variables: perceived realistic and symbolic threats. Previous studies on intergroup threat have shown that ethnic groups are not all alike and that each of them poses different levels of symbolic and realistic threat. Thus, in this study, several groups of migrants have been considered and their relationship with perceived symbolic and realistic threats was tested.

Following existing research that indicates that binding moral foundations mediate the relationship between high need for cognitive closure and prejudice against out-group members, this study tests whether this relationship is further sequentially mediated by the perceived threats (realistic and symbolic).

Research Overview and Hypothesis

I reasoned that individuals who are dispositionally prone to experience a high need for cognitive closure would be more inclined towards endorsing binding moral standards that guarantee order, certainty, stability, and well-defined roles (i.e., loyalty towards the in-group, respect for authority, and concerned with purity and self-containment). In turn, binding moral foundations makes people more sensitive about the perception of out-groups as a threat and, consequently, more prejudiced against migrants.

Therefore, I reasoned that: (i) that individuals with a high need for cognitive closure will be prejudiced against migrants; (ii) individuals who strongly endorse binding foundations should conceptually protect the in-group and thus perceive out-groups as posing realistic and/or symbolic threats to in-group social order and morality; and (iii) individuals with high need for cognitive closure will endorse binding morality, perceive higher threats, and be more socially distant from different ethnic groups. Therefore, I proposed a mediation model in which the relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice is sequentially mediated first through binding moral foundations and then perceived threats.

Method

Participants

A total of three hundred and fifty-one participants answered the survey. The inclusion criteria were Italians living in Italy, aged 18 years and over. A power analysis (Gpower 3; Faul et al., 2009), considering 0.05 as a threshold probability to reject the null hypothesis, and the expected correlation ($r = 0.20$, or the equivalent incremental f^2 within multiple regression $f^2 = .0416$), this sample size overcame 95% of power which would require a sample with $n = 266$.

Two hundred and twenty-four participants (63.8%) were female, the remaining one hundred and twenty-seven participants (36.2%) male. In terms

of education, 0.6% of the participants have a primary education level, 8% secondary level, 62.7% educated to post-secondary level, and the remaining 28.8% were university graduates. Four age bracket categories were created in the questionnaire: 18-35(62.1%); 36-50 (6.6%); 51-70 (25%) and over 70 (6%).

Participants for this study were recruited amongst students attending an introductory course in Social Psychology at Sapienza Università di Roma. Students were asked to distribute three questionnaires to their acquaintances and, once completed, to bring them back to the researcher. In return, they earned course credit. Participation in this study was voluntary and anonymous. The research has been approved by the Ethical Research Committee of the researchers' department.

Measures

A questionnaire was used containing questions about socio-demographics and the following scales:

Need for Cognitive Closure scale (14 items): The Italian version of the *Revised Need for Closure Scale (Rev NCCS)*, Pierro & Kruglanski, 2005) that measures the need for cognitive closure as a dispositional trait was used. Participants were asked to indicate the extent by which they agree with statements reflecting the need for closure on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). E.g., "Generally, I do not search for alternative solutions to problems for which I already have a solution available," "I prefer things to which I am used to those I do not know, and cannot predict." A composite index was calculated by aggregating averaged responses on all items ($\alpha = .76$). Higher scores indicate higher levels of need for cognitive closure ($M = 3.33$; $SD = 0.70$).

Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ): (Graham et al., 2008) was used, consisting of 30 items. The Italian version of this scale (Bobbio et al., 2011)

available at www.moralfoundation.org was presented to the participants. The MFQ is made up of two sections. The first subscale contains 15 items and measures moral relevance. Example for each moral foundation: *"Whether or not someone suffered emotionally," "Whether or not some people were treated differently than others," "Whether or not someone's action showed love for his or her country," "Whether or not someone showed a lack of respect for authority," "Whether or not someone violated standards of purity and decency."* Respondents were asked to answer a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all relevant*) to 6 (*extremely relevant*). The second subscale (15 items) assesses moral judgments. Example for each moral foundation: *"Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue"; "When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly"; "I am proud of my country's history"; "Respect for authority is something all children need to learn"; "People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed."* Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they disagree or agree on a scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). As suggested by the authors (Graham et al., 2011) a composite score was calculated for each of the five moral foundations by summing the averaged responses on corresponding items in both subscales (Relevance and Judgements). Moreover, in order to test the hypotheses, composite indexes for the individualizing ($M = 4.83$; $SD = 0.55$) and the binding dimension ($M = 3.63$; $SD = 0.72$) were calculated. High scores indicate high levels of moral foundations. Internal reliability for both scales was satisfactory: Individualizing $\alpha = .71$, Binding $\alpha = .84$.

Scale of the Perceived threat. A ten-item scale was created by including affirmations from various mass-media and political discourse. These ten items reflected realistic (safety concern) and symbolic (concern about culture) threat to Italian society. Participants were asked to rate their perceptions of realistic and symbolic threat on a range from 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (completely

agree). Initially, the factorial structure of the ten items was examined. Two of the items were reversed ("*Migrants bring new ideas and/or boost innovation in Italy,*" "*Migrants enrich Italian cultural life (art, music, food, etc.)*"). A bi-factorial structure emerged from the principle component analysis which explained 65.17% of the variance (first component 42.09% and second component 23.07%). Two separate indexes for Realistic Threat ($M=2.52$; $SD=1.19$) and Symbolic Threat ($M=2.95$; $SD=1.03$) were created with Cronbach's Alpha α .89 and α .75, respectively.

Explicit Prejudice Scale: To measure prejudice an eight item scale based on public discourse was created. Participants were asked to rate their attitudes on a range from 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (completely agree). The factorial structure of the scale was examined. The Kaiser-Meyer- Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .91, which is higher than the recommended value of .6. Moreover, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 (28) = 1384.92$, $p < .001$). The communalities between items were all above .50. This confirms that every item shares some common variance with other items, and suggesting a mono-factorial structure. Therefore, an index of explicit prejudice was created; high scores indicate high prejudice levels ($M = 2.00$; $SD = 0.98$). Cronbach's α is .90.

The Bogardus' social distance scale (Bogardus, 1933). This scale was used as an additional measure of prejudice (e.g., Doell, 2006; Morgan, 2006; Sakuragi, 2006; Wark & Galliner, 2007), reasoning that the more distance individuals put between themselves and migrants, the more prejudiced they are towards them. This scale presents six social situations describing varying degrees of intimacy. More specifically, participants were asked to indicate whether they would consider relations with members of these six migrant categories living in Italy (i.e., Asians, East Europeans, Africans, Hispanic and South-Americans, and West Europeans). More specifically, the participants were asked to indicate if

they would consider relations with members of these six migrant groups in 'marriage,' 'personal friends,' 'neighbours,' 'work colleagues,' 'tourists'; or if they would prefer to 'ban them from entering Italy.' Indexes of social distance for each migrant category were calculated by adding the responses in the six positive options and then subtracting this sum from the negative option 'no relations.

Results

Correlations

This study found that the binding moral foundations are positively related to the NCC, perceived realistic threat, perceived symbolic threat, with each of the six indexes of social distance, and with prejudice against migrants, while individualizing moral foundations are negatively associated with the variables measuring prejudice. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and correlations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of the variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
NCC	3.33	0.70	-										
BMF	3.63	0.72	.29**	-									
PRT	2.52	1.19	.34**	.38**	-								
PST	2.92	1.03	.28**	.33**	.72**	-							
EP	2.00	0.98	.38**	.35**	.73**	.65**	-						
ASI	2.09	1.35	.36**	.31**	.48**	.43**	.47**	-					
EEU	2.28	1.45	.25**	.34**	.48**	.43**	.52**	.78**	-				
AFR	2.20	1.41	.28**	.33**	.58**	.54**	.63**	.79**	.83**	-			
HIS	1.88	1.24	.25**	.23**	.45**	.41**	.51**	.78**	.73**	.79**	-		
MEA	2.24	1.40	.31**	.30**	.56**	.51**	.62**	.77**	.79**	.84**	.74**	-	
W/A	1.66	1.16	.16**	.23**	.31**	.31**	.37**	.66**	.56**	.60**	.74**	.60**	-

IMF	4.83	0.55	-.03	.26**	-.16**	-.25**	-.27**	-.15**	-.11*	-.17**	-.16**	-.16**	-.10
-----	------	------	------	-------	--------	--------	--------	--------	-------	--------	--------	--------	------

Note: N=351; **p<.001, *p<.005

Legend: NCC = Need for Cognitive Closure; BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; PRT = Perceived Realistic Threat; PST = Perceived Symbolic Threat; EP = Explicit prejudice; ASI = social distance from Asian migrants; EEU = social distance from migrants from the East Europe; AFR = social distance from African migrants; HIS = social distance from Hispanic migrants; MEA = social distance from migrants from the Middle East; W/A = social distance from the West Europe/America; IMF = Individualizing Moral Foundations.

NCC, Binding Moral Foundations, Perceived Realistic Threat, Perceived Symbolic Threat and Explicit Prejudice.

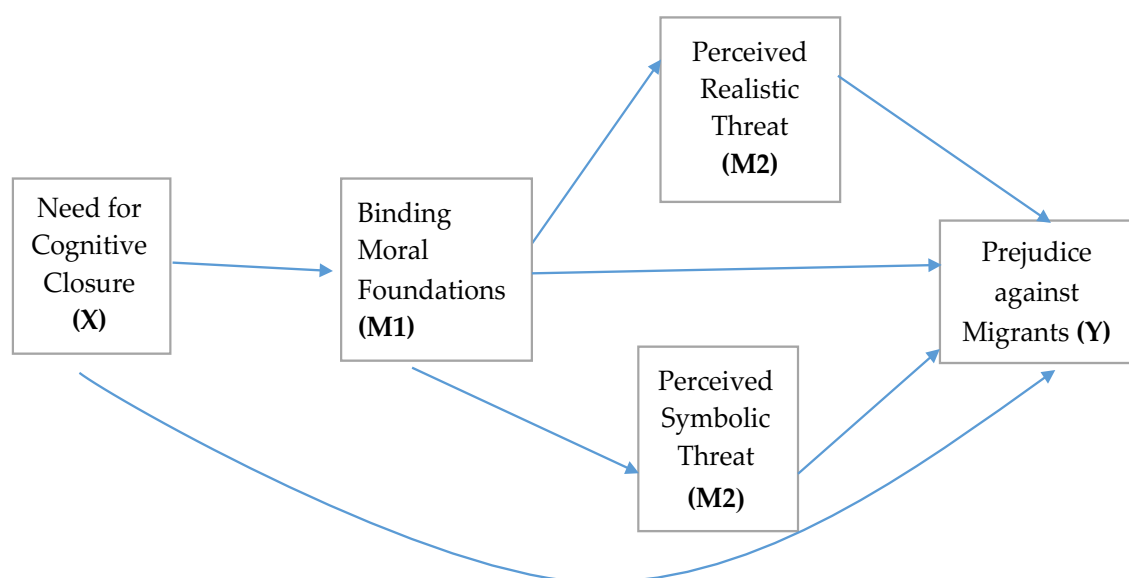
A mediation analysis (PROCESS; Model 81, Hayes, 2017) (See: Fig. 1) was run with 5000 bootstrap method, with bias correction 95% confidence intervals (CI's) for each of the indirect effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This analysis was repeated first considering the index of explicit prejudice and then the indexes of social distance for each migrant group as criterion variables. All the variables were standardized before entering the analyses (Cohen et al., 2002).

In the model (See: Fig 1), NCC was the independent variable (X), binding moral foundations and perceived realistic/perceived symbolic threat (in parallel) were the mediators (M1, M2, M3, respectively), and prejudice against migrants was the dependent variable (Y). I also controlled for individualizing moral foundations, which was entered as a covariate.

To estimate the model's coefficients to determine the predictors' direct and indirect effects on the outcome variable this procedure uses an ordinary least square path analysis. To obtain bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals for

making statistical inferences about specific and total indirect effects
bootstrapping was used in the analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Figure 1: Hypothesized model of the relationships between Need for Cognitive Closure, Binding moral foundations, Perceived Realistic and Perceived Symbolic Threat and Prejudice against migrants.

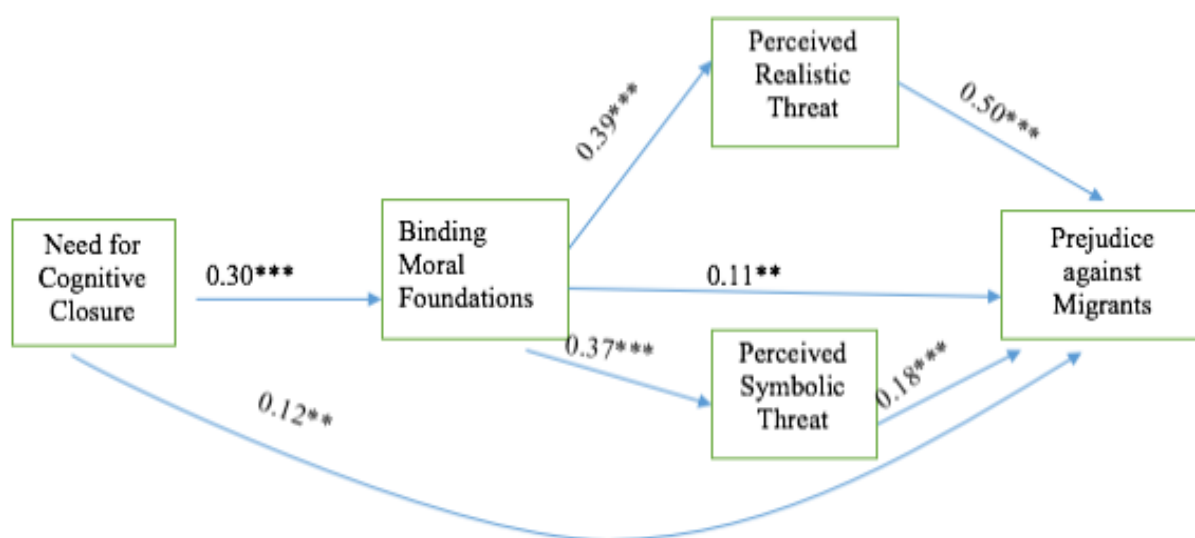


The total effect for this model was significant EP: $b=0.37$, $SE=0.05$, $t=7.67$, $F(2,346)=45.23$, $p<.001$, 95% CI [0.27, 0.46], while the direct effect was also significant $b=0.12$, $SE=0.04$, $t=3.16$, $p<.005$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.19].

NCC positively predicts binding moral foundations, indicating that high need for cognitive closure participants tend to score highly on binding moral foundations. Furthermore, a main effect of binding moral foundations on both perceived realistic threat and perceived symbolic threat was found. It was also found on the index of explicit prejudice. Both, perceived realistic threats and

perceived symbolic threats predict explicit prejudice against migrants. Last but not least, a negative and significant effect of individualizing moral foundations on explicit prejudice against migrants was found (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Path diagram illustrating direct paths and causal paths linking NCC and prejudice against migrants.



Indirect Effects

To detect the mediation effect, as recommended by Hayes (2009), indirect effects were analysed. A significant indirect effect of the NCC on explicit prejudice through binding moral foundations and on perceived realistic threat: Indirect = 0.06, SE = 0.01, 95% CI [0.01; 0.06] was found, and a small but also significant effect on explicit prejudice through binding moral foundations and perceived symbolic threat: Indirect = 0.02, SE = 0.01, 95% CI [0.01; 0.04]. Also, a significant indirect effect of NCC on explicit prejudice through binding moral foundations was found: Indirect = 0.03, SE = 0.01, 95% CI [0.01; 0.06], through perceived realistic threat: Indirect = 0.11, SE = 0.03, 95% CI [0.06; 0.17], and through perceived symbolic threat: Indirect = 0.03, SE = 0.01, 95% CI [0.01;

0.06]. This confirms a partial mediation. In this model, $R^2 = 0.21$, meaning that 21% of the variation in prejudice against migrants is explained by the relationship with NCC, binding moral foundations and, perceived threats (both realistic and symbolic).

NCC, Binding Moral Foundations, Perceived Realistic Threat, Perceived Symbolic Threat and Social Distance with Migrant categories

The total effect for all six migrant categories was significant (See Table 2).

Table 2

Total effect for all six migrant group.

	<i>Effect</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>95% CI LL; UL</i>
Asia	0.30	0.05	5.95	(2,346)=20.58	<.001	[0.20; 0.40]
East European	0.25	0.05	4.78	(2,346)=13.58	<.001	[0.15; 0.35]
African	0.27	0.05	5.38	(2,346)=19.86	<.001	[0.17; 0.37]
Hispanic	0.25	0.05	4.80	(2,346)=16.04	<.001	[0.15; 0.35]
Middle East	0.31	0.05	6.13	(2,346)=23.84	<.001	[0.21; 0.41]
West	0.16	0.05	2.94	(2,346)=6.20	<.005	[0.05; 0.26]
European/American						

Legend: CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

However, a direct effect of NCC was only found in the Asian and Middle Eastern migrant groups. Asia: $b=0.13$, $SE=0.05$, $t=2.63$, $p<.01$, 95% CI [0.03; 0.23]; Middle East: $b=0.11$, $SE=0.05$, $t=2.42$, $p<.05$, 95% CI [0.02; 0.20]. This suggest partial mediation in these two groups and full mediation in the East Europe, African, Hispanic and West Europe/America. NCC's effects on binding moral

foundations, binding moral foundations on perceived realistic threat and, perceived symbolic threat, were all significant and similar to the results obtained when explicit prejudice variable was used. Taking a closer look at the individual migrant groups NCC was not significant with the East European, African and West European/American migrant groups, binding moral foundations were not significant with the Hispanic migrant group, perceived realistic threat was not significant with the West European/American migrant group, and perceived symbolic threat was not significant with the Hispanic and West European/ American migrant groups. Besides these results, a direct negative of the individualizing moral foundations on all individual migrant groups was found, however it was only significant with the African migrant group (see Table 3).

Table 3

The relationship between NCC, Moral foundations, Perceived realistic threat and Social distance on Individual migrant groups (N=351)

	BMF			PRT			PST			ASIA			EAST EUROPEAN			AFRICA			HISPANIC			MIDDLE EAST			WEST EUROPEAN /AMERICA N		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
NCC	.30	.05	<.001	.22	.05	<.001	.16	.05	<.001	.13	.05	<.01	.06	.05	.201	.06	.05	.201	.09	.05	<.05	.11	.05	<.05	.03	.05	.633
BMF				.38	.05	<.001	.37	.05	<.001	.14	.05	<.01	.21	.05	<.001	.13	.05	<.01	.09	.06	.134	.10	.05	<.01	.15	.06	<.05
PRT										.28	.07	<.001	.27	.07	<.001	.36	.06	<.001	.27	.07	<.001	.34	.07	<.001	.15	.08	.054
PST										.13	.07	<.05	.13	.07	<.05	.19	.06	<.005	.14	.07	.051	.19	.06	<.005	.12	.08	.101
IMF										-.80	.05	.120	-.08	.05	.099	-.10	.05	<.05	-.10	.05	.065	-.08	.05	.081	-.09	.06	.129

Legend: NCC = Need for Cognitive Closure; BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; PRT = Perceived Realistic Threat; PST = Perceived Symbolic Threat; IMF = Individualizing Moral Foundations.

Indirect Effects

To check the indirect effects of the binding moral foundations and perceived realistic and perceived symbolic threats on the relationship between NCC's and the social distance from various migrant groups, the model was re-ran six other times, once for each migrant group. The indirect effects were highest for binding moral foundations and perceived realistic threats, with the strongest effects emerging on the African and Middle Eastern migrant group and lowest effect emerging for the West European/American migrant group, implying that although prejudiced attitudes are directed against all migrants, the highest prejudice is directed towards Africans and individuals from the Middle East, with perceived realistic threat being the most consistent predictor of the outcome (see Table 4).

Table 4

Standardized Indirect effect of NCC on Migrant Groups through Binding moral foundations, Perceived Realistic and Perceived Symbolic Threats

Indirect effect of NCC on Social Distance with different Migrant Groups	<i>Indirect</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>95% CI</i> <i>LL UL</i>
Asia			
Indirect effect (through BMF)	0.04	0.02	[0.01; 0.08]
Indirect effect (through PRT)	0.06	0.02	[0.03; 0.11]
Indirect effect (through PST)	0.02	0.01	[-0.00; 0.05]
Indirect effect (through BMF& PRT)	0.03	0.01	[0.01; 0.06]
Indirect effect (through BMF & PST)	0.01	0.01	[-0.00; 0.03]
East Europe			
Indirect effect (through BMF)	0.06	0.02	[0.03; 0.10]
Indirect effect (through PRT)	0.06	0.02	[0.03; 0.10]
Indirect effect (through PST)	0.02	0.01	[-0.00; 0.05]
Indirect effect (through BMF& PRT)	0.03	0.01	[0.01; 0.05]
Indirect effect (through BMF & PST)	0.01	0.00	[0.00; 0.03]

Africa

Indirect effect (through BMF)	0.04	0.02	[0.01; 0.07]
Indirect effect (through PRT)	0.08	0.02	[0.04; 0.12]
Indirect effect (through PST)	0.03	0.01	[0.01; 0.06]
Indirect effect (through BMF& PRT)	0.04	0.01	[0.02; 0.06]
Indirect effect (through BMF & PST)	0.02	0.01	[0.01; 0.04]

Hispanic

Indirect effect (through BMF)	0.03	0.02	[-0.00; 0.06]
Indirect effect (through PRT)	0.06	0.02	[0.03; 0.10]
Indirect effect (through PST)	0.02	0.01	[-0.00; 0.05]
Indirect effect (through BMF& PRT)	0.03	0.01	[0.01; 0.05]
Indirect effect (through BMF & PST)	0.02	0.01	[-0.00; 0.04]

Middle East

Indirect effect (through BMF)	0.03	0.02	[0.00; 0.07]
Indirect effect (through PRT)	0.07	0.02	[0.04; 0.12]
Indirect effect (through PST)	0.03	0.01	[0.01; 0.06]
Indirect effect (through BMF& PRT)	0.04	0.01	[0.02; 0.06]
Indirect effect (through BMF & PST)	0.02	0.01	[0.01; 0.04]

West European/American

Indirect effect (through BMF)	0.05	0.02	[0.01; 0.09]
Indirect effect (through PRT)	0.03	0.02	[-0.00; 0.08]
Indirect effect (through PST)	0.02	0.02	[-0.01; 0.06]
Indirect effect (through BMF& PRT)	0.02	0.01	[-0.00; 0.04]
Indirect effect (through BMF & PST)	0.01	0.01	[-0.00; 0.04]

Legend: NCC = Need for cognitive closure; BMF = Binding moral foundations;

PRT = Perceived realistic threat; PST = Perceived Symbolic Threat; CI =

confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit

Discussion

The relationship between the need for cognitive closure, binding moral foundations, perceived threats (realistic and symbolic), and prejudice against migrants was tested in this study by integrating these links in a sequential mediational model.

Binding moral foundations were found to be positively related to the need for cognitive closure, perceived realistic and perceived symbolic threats, and prejudice against migrants while individualizing moral foundations are negatively associated with these variables. These results confirm what has been found in the previous studies (e.g., Baldner & Pierro, 2018, 2019; Kugler et al., 2014). As expected, binding and individualizing moral foundations and prejudice against migrants are negatively correlated between themselves.

This study showed that a high need for epistemic certainty is related with high binding moral foundations and, through these, successively with perceived realistic and symbolic threats and, ultimately, prejudice against migrants. More specifically: (a) Need for cognitive closure is linked to an increased endorsement of the binding moral foundations, consistent with what is already found in literature (Baldner & Pierro, 2018; Federico et al., 2016; De Cristoforo et al., 2019); (b) binding moral foundations are associated with an increase in perceived threat perception (realistic and symbolic); (c) perceived realistic threat is strongly and positively associated with prejudice against migrants and social distance with all migrant groups except for the Western European/American migrant group; (d) perceived symbolic threat was associated with explicit prejudice against migrants and social distance with all migrant groups except the Hispanic and West European/American migrant group; (e) the indirect effect of need for cognitive closure on prejudice against migrants through binding moral foundations and perceived realistic threat was significant for the indexes of explicit prejudice and of social distance with all migrant groups except the West European/American migrant groups, with the strongest perception of realistic threat coming from the African and Middle Eastern migrant groups; (f) the indirect effect of need for cognitive closure on prejudice against migrants through binding moral foundations and perceived symbolic threats was significant on explicit prejudice against migrants and the

East European, African and Middle East ; (g) individualizing moral foundations (entered as a covariate) were positively and significantly related to binding moral foundations but negatively associated with perceived realistic and symbolic threat and explicit prejudice against migrants, and negatively and significantly related to social distance with the African migrants. Although it negatively relates to all the other migrant groups the relation is not significant. It is possible that individuals who endorse individualizing moral foundations see migrants as individuals and not as a mere out-group and therefore are guided by the underlying virtues of the care and fairness foundations (e.g., kindness, gentleness, nurturance, and equality).

Theoretically this study adds on what already has been found on the relationship between the need for cognitive closure, moral foundations, perception of threats, and prejudice against migrants. It adds that individuals under a high need for epistemic certainty tend to be more loyal to their community, to support authority, and to have respect for purity (Federico, Weber, Ergan, & Hunt, 2013) and, through that, they are more prone to perceive migrants as a threat and, consequently, they are more likely to be prejudiced against them. Individuals with high need for cognitive closure are more inclined to exhibit prejudice against migrants (Brizi & Mannetti, 2018; Roets et al., 2015). Despite this, the results suggest that this relationship depends on additional factors.

Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, this research advances our understanding of how individuals with high need for cognitive closure tend to bind to their own in-group (binding morality). When individuals experience a heightened perception of threat, be it realistic or symbolic, explicit prejudice increases against all migrants. However, individuals tend to keep their social distance,

especially from the groups they perceive to be more threatening. This supports Allport's (1954) argument that prejudice is generalized.

This study also advances our knowledge of the impact of perceived threats on individuals with a high need for cognitive closure and their prejudiced attitude against migrants, as threats to the well-being of the in-group (e.g. safety, health, and economic threats) seem to be stronger than non-tangible threats (e.g. culture, morals, values).

The present research has practical implications for both migrants and natives. Italy has 5.3 million foreign citizens, almost 9 % of the total population (United Nations, 2019). In individuals with a high need for epistemic certainty, these high migration rates may increase prejudice, especially in those bound to their in-group as they perceive migrants as a threat that may compete for resources, jeopardize the economic situation, or even contaminate Italian culture/traditions. This study also indicates that binding morality and the perception of threat in individuals with a high need for cognitive closure increases prejudiced attitudes towards all migrants, notwithstanding their origin.

This study sheds light on the responsibility that public speakers (politicians, media, etc.) may have when addressing the general public about migration issues and migrant group members. Misinterpreting or decontextualizing facts may lead to the creation of misguided perceptions of threats. This potentially results in increased prejudice levels, especially in individuals who are highly bound to their in-group.

Conclusion, future directions and limitations

This study has several notable limitations. Most of the respondents are female (63.8%), and most are educated at post-secondary level (62.7%). Replicating the same study on a broader and more varied population would be

interesting. The participants' exact age was not included in the questionnaire as the age categories were used instead. This gives an indicative but not a specific mean age of the population of the study.

Although students who were given course credit for participating in the study were asked to hand in the three questionnaires personally, we are confident but anyway had little control over whether they had distributed the questionnaires to third parties or not. However, since the data have normal distributions, my confidence that each student effectively distributed the questionnaires as requested increases.

It would be interesting to consider targets specific migrant groups (European Union versus non-European Union) in further research. Repeating the same research in other European Union countries, for example, those with a higher gross domestic product, could help establish whether the perception of threat is equally significant.

Longitudinal and experimental studies could also help us understand whether prejudice against migrants increases or decreases with the changing flux of migration. Finally, since the mediating effect of binding moral foundations and perceived realistic and symbolic threat on the relationship between need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants is relatively small, future studies may seek to investigate the eventual role in the model of other variables such as political affiliations and national or ethnic identification, etc.

CHAPTER 9

9.0 Study 3

The mediating role of National Identification, Binding moral foundations and Perceived threat on the relationship between Need for Cognitive Closure and Prejudice against Migrants in Malta.

This study was accepted for publication in Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology

Introduction

A recent literature review suggests that high national identification is related to harbouring negative attitudes toward asylum seekers (Anderson & Ferguson, 2018). Other researchers have also shown that national identification predicts the following relations: blatant and subtle forms of prejudice toward foreigners in European countries (Mummendey et al., 2001; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), negative attitudes toward immigrants in both Canada and Australia through threat perceptions and dehumanizing beliefs (Louis, Esses, & Lalonde, 2013); and more negative or less positive behavioural intentions toward Syrian refugees in Turkey, especially when the feeling of being under threat was high (Yitmen & Verkuyten, 2018). Despite these results, several scholars emphasize that in-group identification and in-group bias do not necessarily co-exist with out-group derogation (Brewer, 1999; Sandelind, 2015).

Further studies found that people who feel strongly identified with their in-group are more likely to be more concerned with protecting in-group interests and preserving social norms, values, and customs than are low identifiers (Hutchison, Chitiade, & Puiiu, 2018). In a similar way, Jackson and colleagues (2001) suggest that a significant relationship between national identification and negative attitudes toward migrants might be expected

because people who identify with the nation have a greater concern for national interest (Jackson, Brown, Brown, & Marks, 2001). In a recent study by Khan and Stagnaro (2015), ethnic identity, together with culture and gender, was found to serve as a predictor to binding moral foundations. They posit that ethnic identity predicts moral foundations and that moral foundations are developed and reinforced through the ties that individuals have within their ethnic community. Following these findings, and previous studies that link the need for cognitive closure with binding moral foundations (e.g.: Baldner & Pierro, 2018, 2019) I expect that in-group identification will mediate the relation between the need for cognitive closure and binding moral foundations.

Bringing these theories together, this study aims to investigate whether individual characteristic such as need for cognitive closure may affect prejudice against migrants directly, but also indirectly by predisposing some individuals to identify more strongly with relevant in-group membership and to endorse more strongly binding moral foundations. The study was conducted in Malta.

Research Overview and Hypothesis

Reassuring, several studies have confirmed that discrimination and prejudice against migrants are related to the need for epistemic certainty (e.g., Baldner & Pierro, 2019; Roets et al., 2015) and that individuals who experience high epistemic need for closure are more inclined to favour group centrism and endorse so called binding moral standards that guarantee order, loyalty, and stability (i.e., in-group loyalty, respect for authority and concern for purity and self-containment) (e.g., Baldner & Pierro, 2019; Federico et al., 2016). It was found also that the binding moral foundations are associated with prejudice and that they mediate the relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants (Baldner & Pierro, 2019). In addition, several studies showed that national identification increases negative attitudes towards

out-groups (Hopkins, 2001; Kunovich, 2009; Pehrson et al., 2009). This study sought to test the mediation model that links all these variables together, and to see if all these mediators lead to high need for cognitive closure individuals to be more prejudiced against migrants. The study adds to the discussion about the role of individual characteristics and of people's group memberships in prejudice towards the out-groups.

Based on the review of the literature I hypothesized that the need for cognitive closure is related to high social identification with the in-group (being Maltese), which in turn is associated to binding moral foundations. I further reasoned that individuals who endorse binding moral foundations value in-group cohesion and thus could perceive the out-group as a threat to in-group's order and morality. This could be particularly worrisome to individuals with a high need for cognitive closure and those who are highly identified with the in-group.

I therefore set out to test a sequential mediational model in which need for cognitive closure would be sequentially mediated first by national identification, then by binding moral foundation and then perceived threat.

Method

Participants

A total of two hundred and twenty-four adult participants answered the online survey. Inclusion criteria was being Maltese and residing in Malta, aged 18 years and over. Respondents were aged 18 to 87 years ($M=43.44$, $SD=15.05$). The majority of them (67.5%) were female, 32.1% male, and 0.4% non-binary. 60.5% of the participants had a tertiary level of education.

Procedure

Participants for this study were recruited through a message posted on the researcher's page on Facebook. This post was shared through snowball methods within the networks. Data collection commenced at the end of November 2019 and ended in February 2020. An electronic questionnaire in English was composed using the scales described hereunder. At the beginning informed consent was asked, and it was emphasized that the survey is anonymous. The scales were presented in a fixed sequence order. Respondents were allowed to review what they had completed but could not move forward unless they submitted the completed items. Participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any given stage. Their responses were recorded anonymously.

Measures

A questionnaire was administered in the English language containing questions about some socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, place of residence and citizenship), and the following Likert type scales (6 point scales):

The Revised Need for Cognitive Closure scale: (Rev NCCS, Pierro & Kruglanski, 2005). This 14-item scale measures NCC and is confirmed to be a unitary construct (e.g., Baldner, Di Santo, Talamo & Pierro, 2020; Pica, Pierro, Bélanger & Kruglanski, 2014) and has been considered as such in this study. Ex: *"When I find myself facing various potentially valid alternatives; I decide in favour of one of them quickly and without hesitation"; "I prefer activities where it is always clear what is to be done and how it needs to be done"*. An index of NCC was created with higher score reflecting higher NCC with satisfactory (Cronbach $\alpha = .81$).

The In-Group Identification Scale (Leach et al., 2008). For this study the 10-item Self-Investment dimension was used. The In-Group Identification Scale contains one other hierarchical dimension (Self-Definition) which was not included in the questionnaire. The dimension of Self-Investment specifically

examines “how one’s identification with an in-group affects how one experiences and reacts to specific group and intergroup contexts” (Leach et al., 2008, p.20). Ex: *“I am glad to be Maltese”*, this aspect was considered relevant for this study. An index was created and higher results indicate higher in-group identification ($\alpha = .93$).

Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ) assesses individual differences across five moral foundations and consists of 30 items (Graham et al., 2008). It is freely available at www.moralfoundations.org. The MFQ is split into two 15-item subscales. The first subscale includes 15 items on a 6-point response scale from (anchored by 1 = not at all relevant, and 6= extremely relevant). An example for this subscale is *“Whether or not someone cared for someone weak or vulnerable”*; *“Whether or not someone showed a lack of respect for authority”*. The second subscale is made up of 15 moral judgment items where participants indicated on a 6-point scale whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements. Example items are *“Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial value”*; *“Respect for authority is something all children need to learn”*. Several authors have used the five factor model of moral foundations (e.g. Koleva et al., 2012; Nillson & Erlandsson, 2014), however other authors have collapsed the five moral foundations into two dimensions – binding and individualizing (e.g., Franks & Scherr, 2015; Winterich et al., 2012). Franks and Scherr (2015) demonstrate that collapsing the five foundations into two (individualizing and binding) shows a consistent set of observed effects throughout their studies. Following these authors, the five factors were collapsed into two factors and two final indexes were calculated: one for Individualizing dimension (including items pertinent to the foundations of Care and Fairness) and other for Binding dimension (including items pertinent to the foundations of Authority, Loyalty and Purity). Internal reliability for both dimensions was satisfactory: Individualizing ($\alpha = .77$) and Binding ($\alpha = .88$).

The Threat Scale (Stephan et al., 1999) is made up of 15 items and measures both realistic and symbolic threats. Realistic and symbolic threats are theoretically distinct, however, often realistic threats are generated by individuals who have high symbolic threat perceptions (or vice versa) (Clifton & Aberson, 2012). Due to this perceived threat is often measured as a unidimensional (Matthews, Levin & Sidanius, 2009). The factorial structure of the scale was examined. Although three of the items saturated on both components, Eigen values indicated a higher saturation on the first component. An index of perceived threat was created ($\alpha = .90$).

Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). The participants were asked to rate their perception of prejudice against African migrants in Malta. Ex: *"More politicians in Malta care too much about migrants and not enough about the average Maltese person"; African migrants have jobs that Maltese should have"*. The scale was originally intended to distinguish between subtle and blatant prejudice. Owing to the medium-high correlations between these scales various authors argue that it does not adequately distinguish between subtle and blatant prejudice and that more adequately measures prejudice as a single dimension (Coenders, Scheepers, Sniderman & Verbek, 2001; Gattino, Miglietta & Testa, 2008; Hamberger & Hewstone, 1997; Rattazzi & Volpato, 2003). I followed these authors and adopted all items as a single measure of prejudice against migrants. An index of prejudice was created ($\alpha = .88$).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations are illustrated in Table 1. Need for cognitive closure is positively correlated with national identification, binding moral foundations, perceived threat and prejudice against migrants and individualizing moral foundations.

Table 1

Summary of means, standard deviations, and correlations between variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1.NCC	3.60	0.87	-				
2.ID	4.76	1.04	0.302*	-			
3.BMF	4.31	0.84	0.352*	0.498*	-		
4.TH	3.41	0.99	0.393*	0.320*	0.318*	-	
5.PREJ	3.30	0.94	0.533*	0.415*	0.430*	0.846*	-
6.IMF	5.01	0.63	-0.275*	-0.043	0.324*	-0.312*	-0.329*

Note: N=224.* $p < .001$ (2 tailed)

Legend: NCC = Need for Cognitive Closure; ID = National Identification; BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; TH = Perceived Threat; PREJ = Prejudice; IMF = Individualizing Moral Foundations.

Serial Mediation Analysis

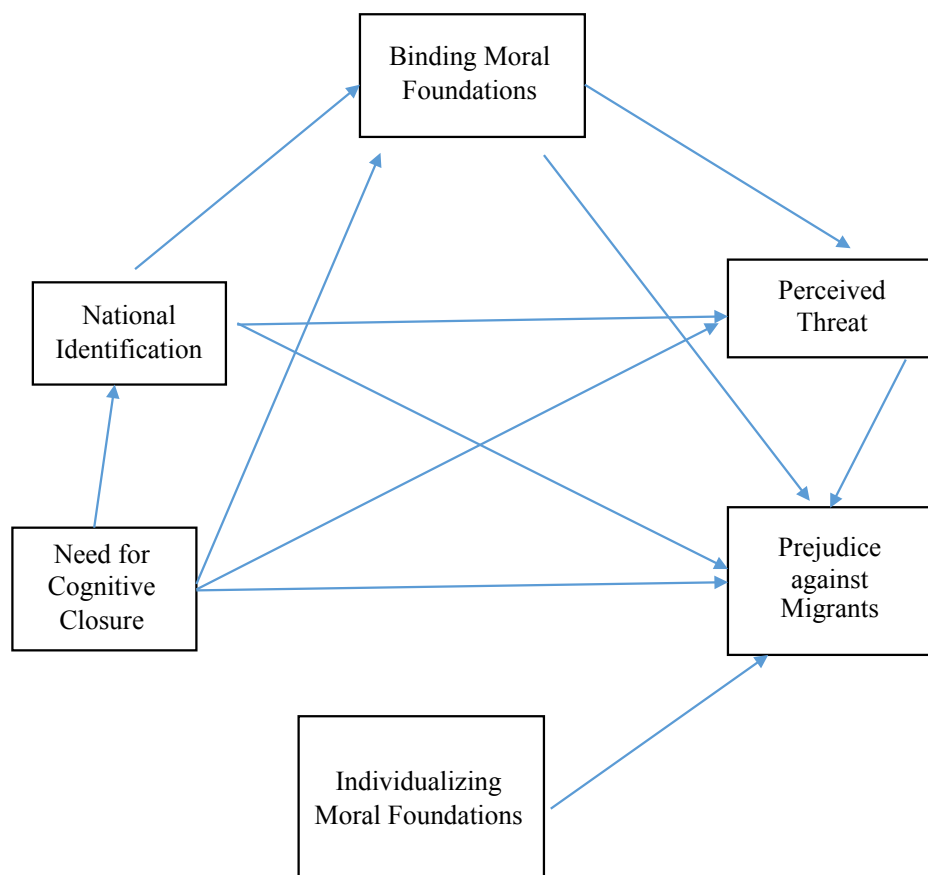
Since literature suggests a bidirectional relationship between perceived threat and prejudice, I initially tested both paths in the hypothesized model using serial mediation analysis with the SPSS macro PROCESS with 5000 bootstrap samples (Model 6; Hayes, 2017). Results from this initial analysis confirmed bi-directionality, however, the relationship between perceived threat and prejudice against migrants is stronger than the relationship between prejudice against migrants and perceived threat ($R^2 = 30\%$, $F(2,218) = 47.07$ vs. $R^2 = .20$, $F(2,218) = 27.84$).

Therefore, in the proposed model (see Fig 1), Need for cognitive closure (NCC) is an independent variable (X), National identification, Binding moral foundations and Perceived threat are the mediators (M1, M2 and M3 respectively), Prejudice against migrants is a criterion variable (Y) and

Individualizing moral foundations an additional variable (covariate). I initially also included age and education as covariates, but found that these variables had little or no effect on the mediators and dependent variable, and thus excluded them from the final analysis. This procedure uses an ordinary least squares path analysis to estimate the coefficients of the direct and indirect effects of the predictors on the outcome variable.

Figure 1

Hypothesized model of the relationships between NCC, national identification, binding moral foundations, perceived threat and prejudice against migrants



The total effect of the model was significant $b=0.46$, $SE=0.06$, $t=7.94$, $p<.001$, 95% CI [0.35, 0.58]. The model explains 30% of variance of dependent variable ($F(5,215) = 157.64$, $p<.001$). These results support the hypothesis that need for cognitive closure is positively and significantly associated with prejudice against migrants, sequentially mediated first through national identification, then binding moral foundation and finally perceived threat. Consistent with the hypothesis, the need for cognitive closure is positively associated with national identification. Furthermore, national identification is positively associated with binding moral foundations indicating that higher national identifications accentuates endorsement of the binding moral foundations (loyalty, respect for authority and purity). In sequence, binding moral foundations are positively associated with perceived threat, indicating that individuals with high binding moral foundations perceive more threat. As expected, the perceived threat predicted prejudice against migrants.

In addition, a significant direct effect of the need for cognitive closure on prejudice was found: $b=0.13$, $SE=0.04$, $t=3.52$, $p<.001$, 95% CI [0.06, 0.21]. Although the direct effect of the need for cognitive closure on prejudice against migrants in this study is rather small, it attained statistical significance and corroborate findings in literature that there is a positive effect of the need for cognitive closure on prejudice towards migrants (e.g. Roets et al., 2015). Besides these results, a direct negative effect of the individualizing moral foundations on perceived threat and prejudice against migrants was found (see Table 2).

Table 2

Relationship between the Need for Cognitive Closure and Prejudice against migrants: mediated by National Identification, Binding Moral Foundations and Perceived threat

	National Identification			Binding Moral Foundations			Perceived threat			Prejudice Against African Migrants		
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>
IMF	0.05	0.07	.502	0.46	0.05	<.001	-0.44	0.07	<.001	-0.13	0.04	<.005
NCC	0.28	0.06	<.001	0.34	0.05	<.001	0.15	0.07	<.05	0.14	0.04	<.001
ID	-	-	-	0.43	0.05	<.001	0.07	0.07	.323	0.08	0.04	<.05
BMF	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.38	0.08	<.001	0.18	0.05	<.001
TH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.67	0.04	<.001

Note: N=224

Legend: NCC = Need for Cognitive Closure; ID = National Identification; BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; TH = Perceived Threat; IMF = Individualizing Moral Foundations.

Bootstrapping, which allows for an estimate of the sampling distribution of the indirect effects, was implemented in order to obtain bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals for making statistical inference about specific and total indirect effects (Hayes, 2017). As hypothesized, a significant although low indirect effect of the need for cognitive closure on prejudice against migrants when mediated through national identification, binding moral foundations and perceived threat was found. Moreover, a significant, although small, indirect effect of the need for cognitive closure on prejudice through binding moral foundations, and a significant indirect effect of the need for cognitive closure on

prejudice through perceived threat was also found. Additionally, a low but meaningful indirect effects of the need for cognitive closure on prejudice against migrants when mediated through both national identification and binding moral foundations, as well as when mediated through binding moral foundation and perceived threat was found.

However, I did not find a significant indirect effect of the need for cognitive closure on prejudice against migrants when mediated through national identification or through national identification together with perceived threat, indicating that prejudice against migrants in individuals with a high need for cognitive closure is not solely determined by their sense of national identification but rather by a combination of variables (see Table 3).

Table 3

Indirect effect of Need for Cognitive Closure on Prejudice against African migrants through mediators

Indirect Effect of NCC on Prejudice against African migrants	Indirect	SE	95% CI
Indirect Effect(through ID)	.02	.01	[-0.00; 0.05]
Indirect Effect (through BMF)	.06	.02	[0.02; 0.10]
Indirect Effect (through TH)	.10	.05	[0.01; 0.19]
Indirect Effect (through ID & BMF)	.02	.01	[0.01; 0.04]
Indirect Effect (through ID &TH)	-.01	.02	[-0.02; 0.04]
Indirect Effect (through BMF &TH)	.09	.03	[0.04; 0.14]
Indirect Effect (through ID, BMF and TH)	.03	.01	[0.01; 0.05]

Note: N=224.

Legend: NCC = Need for Cognitive Closure; ID = National Identification; BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; TH = Perceived Threat; IMF = Individualizing Moral Foundations

Discussion

The model proposed in this study is based on three mediators, offers interesting insight into the relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants. The results show that individuals who have a high need for epistemic closure (NCC) tend to identify more with their nation and consequently are more prone to support binding moral foundations of authority, loyalty and purity of their in-groups (Federico et al., 2016) and through that, they are more prone to perceive migrants as a threat, and in the end are more likely to be prejudiced against them. More specifically, Maltese with a high need for cognitive closure tend to identify more with being Maltese, endorse stronger binding morality, and perceive a higher threat from African migrants arriving at their shores.

Thus, the results found that need for cognitive closure is positively associated with prejudice against migrants, this is congruent with the previous studies (e.g., Baldner & Pierro, 2019; Roets et al., 2015). Thus, the findings suggest that the prejudice may depend, at least in part, on individual characteristics of the prejudice-prone cognitive style as suggested by Allport (1954) characterized of those who are narrow-minded and intolerant of ambiguity. However, this study found that the direct effect of need for cognitive closure on prejudice is rather weak although significant. It means that the relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice is reinforced with some variables relevant to the group membership and the nature of intergroup relations. Basically it is higher when individuals identify strongly with their in-group, when endorse binding moral standards, and when

out-groups are perceived as a threat. This sequence of relationships suggests that individuals under a strong need for cognitive closure feel prejudiced against outgroup members. Thus, this study proposed a model that reunites, on one side, the theories that emphasized the role of personality characteristics in prejudice against out-groups, and on the other side, the theories that suggest that prejudice is a function of people's group memberships. Thus, personality and social variables do not exclude each other but reinforce their relationship with the prejudice.

In addition, a negative and significant relationship between individualizing moral foundations and both perceived threat and prejudice against migrants was found. This resonates with what we already know about these foundations, that care and fairness possibly encourage individuals to be concerned with the well-being of other human beings, no matter which group they belong to. This is coherent with previous studies (e.g., Baldner & Pierro, 2019). Future studies should test whether this model is valid if we consider attitudes towards other target groups.

This study confirmed the crucial role of the perception of migrants as a threat in determining prejudice against them. Thus, it indicates that it is important that, when addressing the general public, discourse moves away from speeches that portray migrants in a negative light. Further studies should test whether the relationship between need for cognitive closure, in-group identification, binding moral foundations and prejudice could change if we provide positive information about migrants. Although Maltese have readily available negative narratives about migrants, such as "Africans come to the island to live off the Maltese"; "Criminality has risen since Africans started arriving in Malta", it would be important to test whether these narratives could be changed to more positive ones through information in which migrants are presented as agents of positive contribution to the community.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. The majority of the respondents are female (67.5%) and 60.5% have a tertiary level of education, it would be interesting to replicate the same study on a wider and more varied population. This study was conducted in the smallest European Union country, that has only been a Republic for 46 years. It would be interesting to replicate this study in other Mediterranean countries receiving migrants that have a longer history of independence and national identity. This study is of correlational nature. It would be important to test the model proposed in experimental studies which should manipulate the national identification, moral foundations and threat perception in order to verify our findings.

CHAPTER 10

10.0 Study 4

COVID-19 and Prejudice against Migrants: The mediating roles of Need for Cognitive Closure and Binding Moral Foundations. A comparative Study.

This study has been published in The Journal of Social Psychology.

Introduction

Since the emergence of COVID-19 being declared a global pandemic, several reports of intensified uncertainties, inequalities, division, and discrimination have been reported worldwide. The early stages of any pandemic are usually saturated with uncertainty, as the only certainty is that weeks, months, and maybe years to come will be full of uncertainty (Vos, 2020). At the time of writing this chapter (February, 2021), in excess of 100 million people have been infected, and the death toll has surpassed 2.25 million. Against the backdrop of this pandemic in many countries all over the world, a heated debate about migration has been unfolding. In uncertain times, people often prefer to be surrounded by the in-group members (Schachter, 1959) and people seem to develop judgmental attitudes towards out-group members leading to a possible increase in xenophobia and other prejudices (Vos, 2020). Unfortunately, several surveys pointed to growing instances of racism and prejudice both in Malta and Italy. For example, a 2017 Pew Research Centre survey indicated Italy as the most racist country in Western Europe (Pew Research Centre, 2017). A 2019 study by SWG revealed that 55% of the Italian interviewees justified racist acts' perpetuation (SWG, 2020). In 2018, Eurobarometer released the results of a survey which demonstrated that Malta

holds the highest levels of hate speech in the EU (Flash Eurobarometer 469 Report, 2018).

It seems that the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed worldwide to increased prejudice, xenophobia, violence, and discrimination against migrants, especially from Asia (Bauomy, 2020; Campbell, 2020; Clissold, Nylander, Watson & Ventriglio, 2020; Kuo & Davidson, 2020). Depicting the Coronavirus as a virus brought about by non-locals or as the "Chinese virus" may have highlighted the divide between 'us' and 'them' (Factbase, 2020). A percentage of foreign nationals living in Malta opted to leave the island because of feelings of increased xenophobia during the pandemic (Conneely, 2020; Times of Malta, June 25, 2020). In Italy, former Minister for the Interior, Salvini, attempted to politicize the Coronavirus spread by attacking the Italian Prime Minister for not defending its borders against illegal migration during the pandemic (Vertovec, 2020).

Conditions of uncertainty may increase the need for cognitive closure. The COVID-19 pandemic causes many uncertainties and concerns, for example, economic, financial, health, and social (Bavel et al., 2020). This research aims to examine the relationship between the COVID-19 concerns and uncertainties, and prejudice against migrants. In addition, the study tests whether this relationship is mediated by the need for cognitive closure and binding moral foundations (in-group loyalty, authority, and purity). Examination of the relationships among such variables is timely, especially given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but also in the context of decades of highly increased immigration of non-Europeans into the European Union.

Uncertainty and Intergroup Relations

Vos (2020), in his recently published book, argues that an essential factor in understanding the psychology of COVID-19 is to comprehend people's wish

for certainty and understand their perception of uncertainties caused by COVID-19. Along the years, several theories of uncertainty have been proposed, including Uncertainty Identity Theory (Hogg, 2007), Uncertainty Management Model (Van den Bos, 2009; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002), and Terror Management Theory (TMT; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1999). Several studies on COVID-19 have confirmed the *TMT* model (*See* Bottemanne, Morlaàs, Schmidt & Fossati, 2020; Courtney, Goldenberg & Boyd, 2020; Menzies & Menzies, 2020). Although these theories focus on different reasons underlying uncertainty, they all postulate that whatever the cause of uncertainty, the consequences and manifestation of it are similar (Wichman, Brunner, & Weary, 2008). All these models posit that uncertainty is the underlying phenomenon that motivates intergroup orientations. Uncertainty is an unpleasant state that individuals want to quickly resolve and prevent from recurring. In uncertain situations, people struggle to understand what is happening, trying to piece together a coherent interpretation of their reality (Chater, 2020).

Past research has confirmed that feelings of uncertainty are related to increased physiological stress markers (Greco & Rogers, 2003). On a behavioural level, unpredictability elicited anxious behaviours such as avoidance and enhanced attention toward negative stimuli (Herry et al., 2007). Other studies have demonstrated that individuals decrease information processing under conditions of uncertainty, stress, and anxiety, form quick judgments, and make simple decisions (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Stephan and Stephan (2000) argue that anxiety-provoking situations evoke a mechanism that induces simplified information processing and lends itself to engaging in stereotypical views. In effect, various studies confirmed that uncertainty is associated with negative attitudes towards the out-group members (e.g., Bredemeier & Berenbaum, 2008; Brizi, et al., 2016; Maciej, Kossowska, &

Czernatowicz-Kukuczka, 2017) and perception of threat. Stigmatization and scapegoating are, in fact, the aftermath of all kinds of emergencies and uncertainties (e.g., natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and epidemics)(White, 2020).

This study aims to examine whether uncertainty caused by COVID-19 is associated with prejudice against migrants and if this relationship is mediated by the need for cognitive closure, which is particularly relevant to understanding responses to uncertainty (Kruglanski, 2004; Roets et al., 2015). I expect that together with the need for cognitive closure, binding moral foundations may mediate the relationship between COVID-19 concern and prejudice against migrants. I wish to test the role of each of the three single binding dimensions (Loyalty/Betrayal; Authority/Subversion; Purity/Degradation).

Research Overview and Hypothesis

Following existing literature on the relationship between uncertainty caused by COVID-19 and prejudice against migrants, it was predicted that the need for cognitive closure and binding morality might mediate this relationship. Often when confronted with new unpleasant and uncertain situations, individuals search for any answers, predictability, and stability. Thus, we can expect that unpleasant, uncertain situations such as COVID-19 may activate the need for cognitive closure (NCC), which drives individuals towards elaborating any threatening information quickly through simplified processing and towards favouring norms and moral foundations that protect the in-group and derogate out-groups. It has been suggested that the need for cognitive closure is similar to cognitive styles described by Allport (1954) as being the source of the prejudiced personality (Roets et al., 2015).

This study argues that NCC increases binding moral foundations, which in turn increase prejudice against migrants. Therefore, I hypothesize that: (i) individuals with greater COVID-19 concern will perceive migrants as a greater threat and show prejudice towards them, indirectly through the mechanism of need for cognitive closure and the three binding moral foundations (in-group loyalty, authority, and purity). More specifically, I expect that: (ii) this indirect relationship is hypothesized to be particularly strong when people endorse strongly binding foundations. These hypotheses were tested in two European Union states (Malta and Italy).

Method

Participants and procedure

A total of six hundred and seventy-six adult participants answered the survey. Two separate samples were gathered in two European countries: Malta (N=204) and Italy (N=472). A post-hoc sensitivity analyses using G*Power 3. (Faul et al., 2009) separately for each country's sample. With a total of 10 direct and indirect pathways in the model, the Maltese sample (N=204) achieved power greater than .95 to detect effects as small as $r=.13$ with alpha of .05, while the Italian sample (N=472) achieved power greater than .95 to detect effects as small as $r=.06$ with alpha of .05." Inclusion criteria were being Maltese and residing in Malta or being Italian and residing in Italy. Participants under 18 years of age and Maltese or Italian nationals not living in the respective countries were excluded. The Maltese respondents' mean age was 40.70 (SD=14.88), ranging from 18 to 87 years. Italian respondents' mean age was 31.05 (SD=15.27), ranging from 18 to 83 years. Both samples' participants were predominantly female: Malta (70.1%) and Italy (64.8%). One participant in each sample identified as 'Other': Malta (0.5%); Italy (0.2%). In the Maltese sample, 1 (0.5%) participants had a primary level standard of education, 35 (17.2%)

participants completed secondary school, 62 (30.4%) completed post-secondary education, while the remaining 106 (52%) held a University degree or higher. In the Italian sample, 41 (8.7%) participants completed secondary education, 278 (58.9%) participants completed post-secondary education, while the remaining 151 participants (32%) completed a first cycle University degree or higher.

Participants for this study were recruited through an advertisement posted on social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp) during April and May 2020. A questionnaire was used in English for the Maltese participants and Italian for the Italian participants, containing the scales described hereunder. Qualtrics was used as the survey platform tool. A portion of the Italian participants was recruited from a pool of students attending an introductory course in Social Psychology Sapienza, Università di Roma. Participation was voluntary. Informed consent was asked at the beginning of the questionnaire, and the anonymity of the responses was emphasized. The scales were presented in fixed sequence order. On submitting their responses, their completed questionnaire was recorded anonymously.

Measures

Coronavirus concern: to measure Coronavirus concern, the Perceived Coronavirus Threat Questionnaire (Conway, Woodard & Zubroad, 2020), which comprises eight items was used. The original scale in English was translated into Italian using the back translation method proposed by Brislin (1970). Participants were asked to rate their concern towards Coronavirus on a range from 1 (Completely disagree) to 6 (Completely agree) (ex: "*Thinking about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) makes me feel threatened*"). An index of perceived Coronavirus threat was calculated by aggregating averaged responses on all items (Malta: $\alpha = .68$, Italy: $\alpha = .67$).

Need for Cognitive Closure scale: was measured using the English version of the *Revised Need for Closure Scale (Rev NCC)*, Pierro & Kruglanski, 2005) for the Maltese participants and the Italian version for the Italian participants. This scale constitutes a brief 14-item self-report measure that assesses motivation with respect to information processing and judgment. The respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with statements on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) (ex: *"I prefer to decide on the first available solution rather than to ponder at length what decision I should make"*). A composite score of NCC was computed by averaging the responses to each item. This scale's internal reliability was good for both countries: Malta ($\alpha = .80$); Italy ($\alpha = .81$).

Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ); Graham et al., 2008): The English version was used for the Maltese sample while the Italian version was administered to the Italian participants (Bobbio, Nencuni & Sarrica, 2011). MFQ is made up of 30 items and is freely available at moralfoundations.org. MFQ30 is composed of two sub-scales, each with 15 items. The first sub-scale, known as the "moral relevance" scale, seeks to measure thoughts about what is morally relevant on a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (not at all relevant) to 6 (extremely relevant), while the second sub-scale, known as the "moral judgments" scale aims at assessing the use of moral foundations in judgment, on a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Each of these sub-scales is composed of items measuring the five foundations, which can be categorized into two supra-dimensions: the individualizing dimension (care and fairness foundations) and the binding dimension (in-group loyalty, authority, and purity foundations) (ex. for each moral foundation: *"Whether or not someone suffered emotionally"*; *"Whether or not someone acted unfairly"*; *"I am proud of my country's history"*; *"Respect for authority is something all children need to learn"*; *"Chastity is an important and valuable virtue"*).

Composite scores for each binding dimension by summing averaged corresponding responses: Malta: (Loyalty $\alpha = .65$; Authority $\alpha = .67$; Purity $\alpha = .80$); Italy: (Loyalty $\alpha = .59$; Authority $\alpha = .61$; Purity $\alpha = .69$). Composite scores for Binding and Individualizing foundations were also computed: Individualizing dimension in Malta ($\alpha = .73$) and Italy ($\alpha = .75$) and for the Binding dimension Malta ($\alpha = .87$) and Italy ($\alpha = .82$).

The Perceived Threat Scale (Stephan et al., 1999): is made up of 15 items that measure the perception of migrants as realistic and symbolic threats on the scale that range from 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (completely agree) (ex: "*Migrants get more from this country than they contribute*"). Here, the original scale in English was translated into Italian using the back translation method proposed by Brislin (1970). A composite score of the perceived threat from migrants was computed by averaging the responses to each item. This scale's internal reliability was high: Malta ($\alpha = .89$) and Italy ($\alpha = .89$).

Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995): The original 20-item scale was adapted to migrants living within the Maltese and Italian contexts (Rattazzi & Volpato, 2001). The scale was originally intended to distinguish between subtle and blatant prejudice. However, Gattino et al., (2008) argue that this scale does not adequately differentiate between subtle and blatant prejudice. Participants were asked to rate their perception of prejudice against migrants on a 6-point scale (1=strongly disagree to 6= strongly agree) (ex: "*Migrants come from less able races and this explains why they are not as well off as most Maltese people*"). Two Principal Component Analyses were run, these suggested a mono-factorial structure. This factor explains the percentage of variance in the Maltese sample and that of the Italian sample. Again, a composite score of prejudice against migrants was computed by averaging the responses to each item. This scale's internal reliability was good: Malta ($\alpha = .91$) and Italy ($\alpha = .87$). Since perceived threat and prejudice correlated highly: Malta (0.87) and Italy

(.80), the two scales were aggregated. A composite score for the combined scales was computed by averaging the responses for each item.

The mean values obtained from both samples were compared to the study conducted by Baldner and Pierro (2018). NCC: Malta (M=3.50; SD= .80); Italy (M=3.37; SD= .75), compare well to the study conducted by Baldner and Pierro (2018) in the U.S. (M = 3.54; SD =.62). Values for moral foundations in Malta for Binding (M = 4.10; SD =.80) and Individualizing (M = 5.09; SD = .58), and in Italy for Binding (M = 4.90; SD =.56) and Individualizing (M = 3.76; SD = .65) are similar to results reported by Napier and Luguri (2013) (Binding: M = 3.72 SD =.88 and Individualizing: M =4 .59; SD = .75).

Results

Correlations

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are shown in Tables 1& 2. In both samples, COVID-19 concern was positively correlated with NCC, binding moral foundations (loyalty, authority, and purity), and prejudice against migrants.

Table 1

Summary of means, standard deviations, and correlations between scales for Maltese study.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	SK	KUR
1.COV	4.09	0.71	-					-0.14	0.57
2.NCC	3.49	0.80	0.256**	-				0.14	-0.36
3.LOY	4.14	0.83	0.237**	0.240**	-			-0.63	0.44
4.AUT	4.15	0.86	0.142*	0.277**	0.682**	-		-0.54	-0.23
5.PUR	4.00	1.09	0.235**	0.240**	0.597**	0.576**	-	-0.44	-0.43

6.PREJ	3.13	0.86	0.295**	0.320**	0.340**	0.427**	0.241**	0.36	0.46
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Note: N=204.

Legend: COV= COVID-19 Concern; BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; NCC = Need for Cognitive Closure; LOY = Loyalty; AUT = Authority; PUR = Purity; PREJ = Prejudice.

**p<.001 (2 tailed); *p<.005 (2 tailed);

Table 2

Summary of means, standard deviations, and correlations between scales for Italian study.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	SK	KUR
1.COV	3.78	0.79	-					-0.42	0.11
2.NCC	3.37	0.75	0.208**	-				0.12	0.39
3.LOY	4.13	0.71	0.156**	0.185**	-			-0.27	0.10
4.AUT	3.69	0.78	0.129**	0.248**	0.555**	-		-0.29	0.07
5.PUR	3.46	0.86	0.268**	0.273**	0.503**	0.567**	-	0.59	-0.18
6.PREJ	2.55	0.72	0.188**	0.215**	0.274**	0.367**	0.363**	0.68	0.33

Note: N=472.

Legend: COV = COVID-19 Concern; BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; NCC = Need for Cognitive Closure; LOY = Loyalty; AUT = Authority; PUR = Purity; PREJ = Prejudice.

**p<.001 (2 tailed)

The assumption of normality of the variables considered was evaluated. It was found to be satisfactory as both groups' distributions were associated with skew and kurtosis less than 2 and 9, respectively. These values are deemed acceptable to demonstrate unimodal distribution (Schmider, Ziegler, Danay,

Beyer & Buhner, 2010). As seen in Tables 1 and 2, NCC's mean level results, binding moral foundations, and prejudice are higher for Malta than for Italy. To check the differences between Malta and Italy, a one-way between-group ANOVA was performed. Since a test of homogeneity of variance using Levene's F test was not satisfied, and also because of unequal sample sizes and to avoid Type 1 error, we performed an ANOVA Welch Test (See Table 3). The analysis yielded significant results for COVID-19 concern, authority, purity, and prejudice against migrants, but not for the need for cognitive closure and loyalty.

Table 3

ANOVA and Variance results, Malta & Italy

	ANOVA	%of variance by country
1.COV	$F(1,674)= 3167.12, p = .000, \eta = 0.82$	8.2%
2..NCC	$F(1,674)= 5.85, p = .057, \eta = 0.01$	0.1%
3.LOY	$F(1,674)= 0.624, p = .431, \eta = 0.00$	0.0%
4.AUT	$F(1,674)= 2774.33, p = .000, \eta = 0.80$	8.0%
5.PUR	$F(1,674)= 92.87, p = .000, \eta = 0.12$	1.2%
4. PREJ	$F(1,674)=2004.89, p = .000, \eta = 0.75$	7.5%

Legend: COV = COVID-19 Concern; BMF = Binding Moral Foundations; NCC = Need for Cognitive Closure; LOY = Loyalty; AUT = Authority; PUR = Purity; PREJ = Prejudice.

The media for the need for cognitive closure, COVID-19, prejudice against migrants, authority, and purity are significantly higher in Malta than in Italy for COVID -19 concern (4.17 *vs.* 3.83), NCC (3.50 *vs.* 3.36), Authority (4.25

vs. 3.66), Purity (4.17 *vs.* 3.50) and prejudice against migrants (3.14 *vs.* 2.46). Loyalty is 4.17 for both countries.

Serial Mediation Analysis

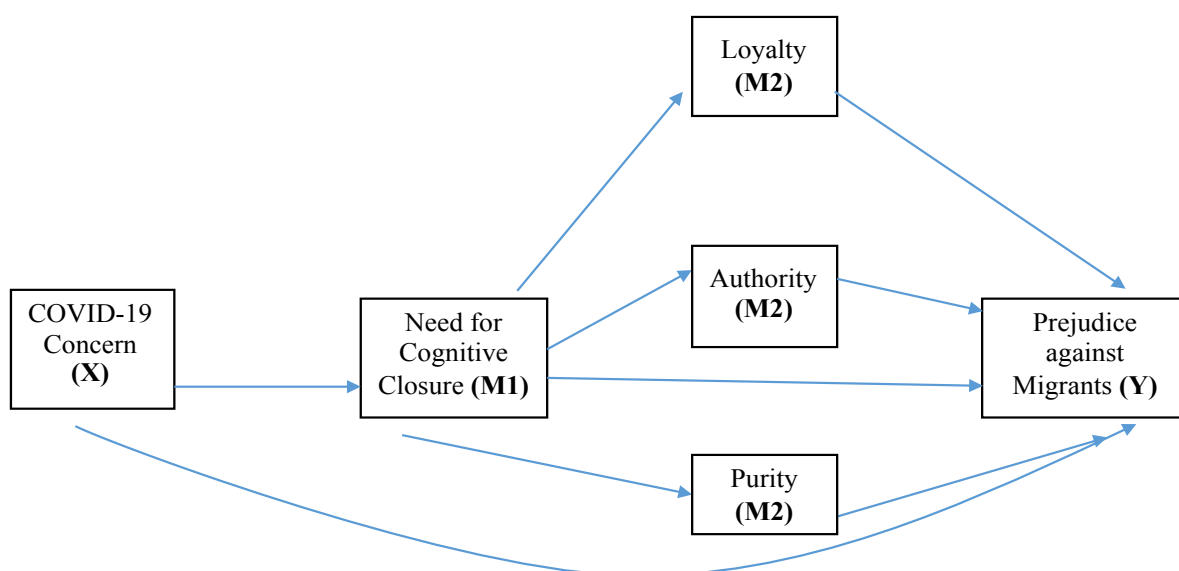
Since literature and studies 2 and 3 suggests that NCC predicts prejudice against migrant I initially tested both models. In the first model NCC was the independent variable, and in the second COVID-19 concern was the independent variable. Results from this initial analysis confirmed both models, however the relationship between COVID-19 concern and prejudice against migrants is stronger than NCC and prejudice against migrants in both countries; Malta ($R^2 = 10\%$, $F = (1,220) = 23.04$ *vs.* ($R^2 = .9\%$), $F = (1,202) = 19.20$); Italy: ($R^2 = 5\%$, $F = (1,470) = 22.78$ *vs.* ($R^2 = .4\%$), $F = (1,470) = 17.20$).

Therefore, in the proposed mediation model (See Fig. 1), COVID-19 concern is the independent variable (X), NCC and binding moral foundations (loyalty, authority, and purity) are the mediators (M1 and M2, M3 and M4, respectively), and prejudice against migrants is the criterion variable (Y). In this sequential mediation model, M2, M3, and M4 work in parallel. Initially, we controlled for age and education in both samples. However, that they had little or no effect on the mediators and dependent variable, and thus they were omitted from the analysis.

This mediation model was assessed through PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017), Model 81. This study uses bootstrapping, which is a non-parametric resampling procedure, to estimate the indirect effect size. Bias correction 95% confidence intervals (CI's) were created with 5000 bootstrap samples, and this allows statistical inferences to be made about specific and total indirect effects (Hayes, 2017).

Figure 1

Hypothesized model of the relationships between COVID-19 concern, NCC, Binding moral foundations, and Prejudice against migrants.



Malta

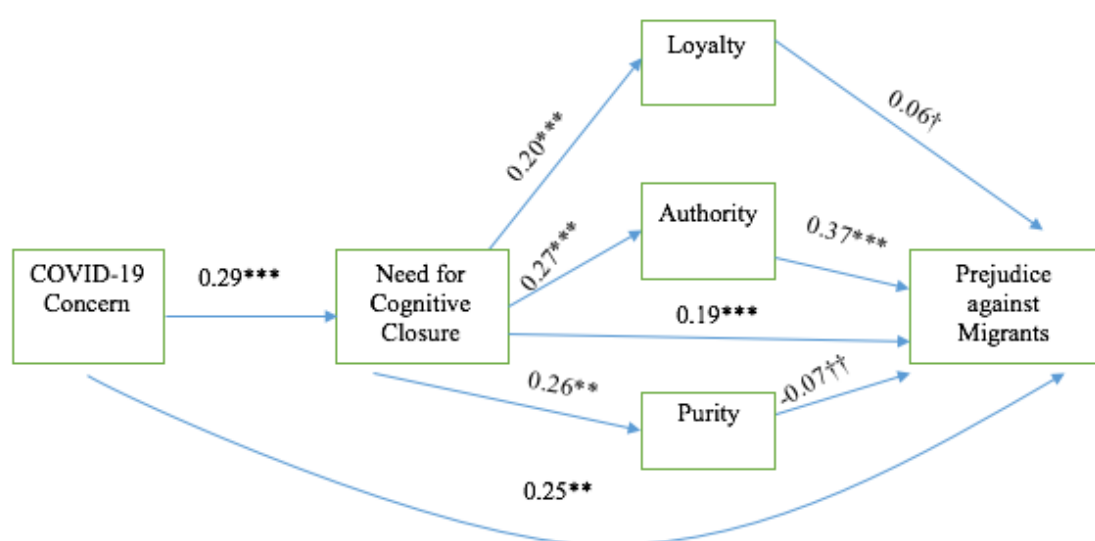
In the Maltese sample, the total effect of the model was significant: $b=0.35$, $SE=0.08$, $t=4.38$, $p<.001$ 95% CI [0.19;0.51]. In this model, $R^2=0.10$, meaning that 10% of the variation in prejudice against migrants is explained by the relationship with COVID-19 concern, NCC, and binding moral foundations. More specifically, a significant direct effect of COVID-19 concern on prejudice against migrants was found: $b=0.25$, $SE=0.08$, $t=3.20$, $p<.005$, 95% CI [0.10; 0.40].

COVID-19 concern positively and significantly relates to NCC. In sequence, it confirmed that NCC positively and significantly relates to all three binding moral foundations (loyalty, authority, and purity). NCC also positively and significantly relates to prejudice against migrants.

Interestingly, among moral foundations, only authority positively and significantly predicts prejudice against migrants, whereas loyalty and purity do not seem to accentuate the perception of threat from migrants (see Fig 2).

Figure 2

Path diagram illustrating direct paths and causal paths linking COVID-19 concern and prejudice against migrants, in Maltese Sample.



Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .05$, †0.54, ††0.25

As already stated, to detect the mediation effects, as recommended by Hayes (2017), indirect effects were analysed. In this sample (Malta), two small but significant indirect effects were found. The indirect effect of COVID-19 on prejudice against migrants through NCC was: *Indirect* = .04, *SE* = .02, 95% *CI* = [.01; .09] and the indirect effect through NCC and authority was: *Indirect* = .02, *SE* = .01, 95% *CI* = [.01; .05]. This indicates that prejudice against migrants in

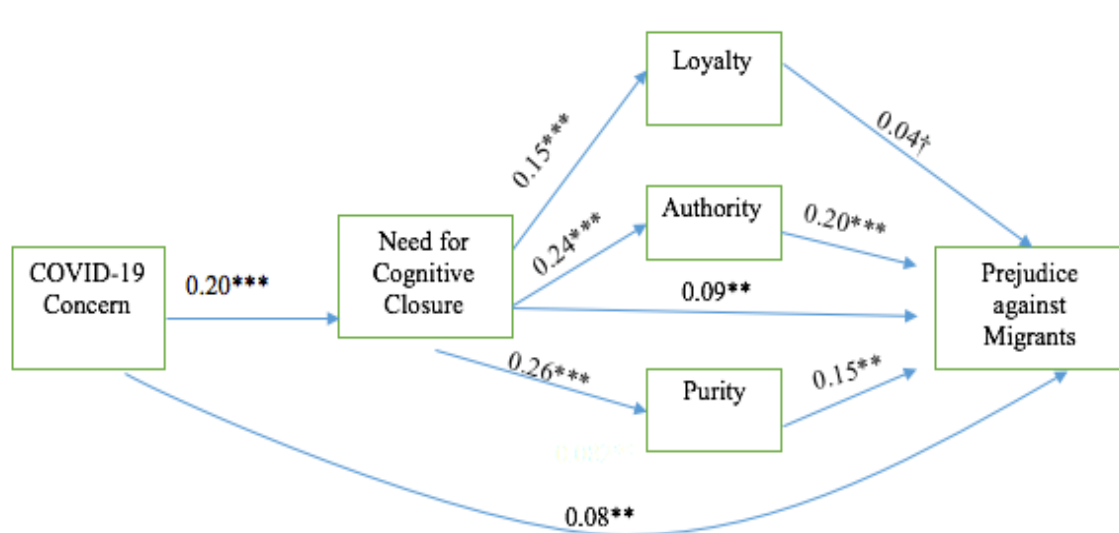
individuals with high COVID-19 concern is not solely determined by one particular variable but by at least two variables.

Italy: The total effect of this model in the Italian sample was also significant: $b=0.17$, $SE=0.04$, $t=4.15$, $p<.001$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.25]. In this model, $R^2 = 0.05$, meaning that 5% of the variation in prejudice against migrants is explained by the relationship with COVID-19 concern, NCC, and binding moral foundations. More specifically, a small but statistically significant direct effect of COVID-19 concern on prejudice against migrants was found: $b=0.08$, $SE=0.04$, $t=2.03$, $p<.05$, 95% CI [0.00, 0.16].

Findings of direct effects in this sample were similar to the findings in the Maltese sample. COVID-19 concern positively and significantly relates to NCC, which in sequence relates positively and significantly to all three binding moral foundations and prejudice against migrants. The main difference is that in this sample, both authority and purity positively and significantly predicted prejudice against migrants (See Fig.3).

Figure 3

Path diagram illustrating direct paths and causal paths linking COVID-19 concern and prejudice against migrants, in Italian Sample



Note:*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .05$, †0.49

The indirect effects for this sample were somewhat similar to those of the Maltese sample. The indirect effect of COVID-19 on prejudice against migrants through Purity was: *Indirect* = .04, *SE* = .02, 95% *CI* = [.00; .07]. The indirect effect through NCC and authority was: *Indirect* = .01, *SE* = .00, 95% *CI* = [.00; .02]. While the indirect effect of COVID-19 on prejudice against migrants through NCC and purity was: *Indirect* = 0.01; *SE* = 0.00; 95% *CI* [.00; .02].

Looking at both samples, authority seems to be the most consistent unique predictor. These results taken together support our hypothesis that COVID-19 concern is positively and significantly related to prejudice against migrants and increases when sequentially mediated through NCC and at least one of the binding moral foundations (authority).

Discussion

This study examined the relationship between uncertainty caused by COVID-19 concern and prejudice against migrants. This was tested by adopting a sequential mediation model by integrating COVID-19 concern, NCC, the three binding moral foundations, and prejudice against migrants. In both Malta and Italy, we found that COVID-19 concern is positively linked to prejudice against migrants and confirmed what has previously been outlined in literature: that situational uncertainty directly predicts prejudice (e.g., Brizi et al., 2015). This relationship increases significantly when NCC and binding moral foundations are endorsed. More specifically, the indirect effect of COVID-19 concern on prejudice against migrants was significant when mediated through NCC and authority in both samples. In addition, NCC is strongly and positively linked to an increased endorsement of binding moral foundations, consistent with previous literature (Baldner & Pierro, 2018, 2019; Federico et al., 2016).

As found in literature, this study confirmed that individuals who endorse binding moral foundations tend to perceive culturally different out-groups as more threatening (Hadarics & Kende, 2017a) and tend to be more prejudiced against migrants (Baldner et al., 2019). When checking for NCC's and the specific binding foundations (in-group loyalty, respect for authority, and purity) mediating effect, respect for authority foundation has the strongest effects in both samples.

This study adds to the body of knowledge on the relationship between situational uncertainty and prejudice against migrants. It adds that uncertainty caused by COVID-19 may increase the need for cognitive closure and endorsement of binding morality, in particular authority foundation, and consequently also prejudice against migrants. Individuals affected by the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 are more likely to search for epistemic

certainty. This, in turn, encourages the endorsement of binding morality, especially authority. It can be argued that situational uncertainty does trigger fear, which contributes to cognitive closure and stronger conformity, obedience, and respect for authority in the family, school, and society. Conceptually, the authority/subversion foundation emphasizes obedience and respect for authority and norms, all characteristics that have been strongly required from people during this pandemic. Taken together, these factors increase prejudice against migrants. It is notable that similar findings resulted in both countries, despite Malta not being impacted as greatly as Italy by the pandemic at the time of data collection. However, the Maltese population had already been alarmed about the danger and probable escalation.

Implications

The present research has practical implications for migrants living in Malta and Italy during the coronavirus pandemic, which may generalize to migrants in other European Union countries. Policymakers, the media, and public officers share a joint responsibility when addressing the public about this pandemic. Speeches and policies that depict the pandemic as overwhelmingly scary increase uncertainty in an already new and unprecedented context. This, together with the discourse about 'foreigners,' creates the divide between 'us' and 'them' and increases prejudiced attitudes against migrants. Therefore, precise information on how COVID-19 is transmitted and treated, and reassuring information on prevention could reduce uncertainty and help counteract misinformation and stigmatization of some social groups.

Conclusion, future direction, and limitations

There are several notable limitations. The first of which is the use of snowball convenience sampling to recruit Italian participants. Students were encouraged to disseminate the questionnaire amongst relatives and friends. This data collection method does heed the possibility of incorrect responses. However, since the findings were consistent in both samples (Malta and Italy), we are encouraged that the students did distribute the questionnaire as asked.

The majority of the respondents in both countries were female and educated to a post-secondary level or above. A more gender-balanced sample would be interesting. Sample sizes of this study are also unequal Malta (N=204) Vs. Italy (N=472). Also, the data was gathered during the first peak of the pandemic, when both countries had already closed their borders, and when both Malta and Italy were facing a flux of irregular migrants who were arriving via the southern Mediterranean route from Libya, which gives rise to a heated debate between nations on whether or not to rescue the individuals stuck at sea, in light of the ongoing pandemic. This situation could have affected the respondents' perception of the threat from migrants.

Additional limitations concern certain measures that could have been included to make our model more complete. Our study did not include specific scales measuring obedience or respect for authority (institutions and norms), and this would be interesting to explore in future experimental research.

Moreover, numerous studies indicate that the need for closure motivates the preference for political attitudes and ideologies (Duckitt, 2001; Jost, Glaser et al., 2003) and found that the need for cognitive closure is associated with conservative political attitudes and binding moral foundations (Federico et al., 2016). In addition, Koleva et al., (2012) found that purity, closely followed by authority, best predict opposition towards irregular immigrants, indicating that a socially conservative position fuels fear that migrants bring with them

dangerous and potentially polluting elements (purity) and could subvert traditions and order (authority). It would be interesting to consider political orientation in further studies when investigating the relationship between situational uncertainty and prejudice against migrants. It may be hypothesized that the relationship between COVID-19 uncertainty and the need for cognitive closure could be stronger for people with right-wing orientation/conservative attitudes.

It would also be recommendable to replicate the study in the same and other countries during the pandemic's ongoing phase to corroborate, or challenge, these results.

Moreover, it would be interesting to apply the model proposed in the context of past studies, for example, the two proposed by Franks (2019) and Franks & Scherr (2019), to examine whether uncertainty caused by COVID-19 may predict through moral foundations the moral judgment of inequality in their own country and people's desire to reduce economic inequality of the in-group.

CHAPTER 11

11.0. General Discussion and Conclusion

In this doctoral dissertation I have illustrated the roles of need for cognitive closure, moral foundations, perceived threat, national identification and situational uncertainty cause by COVID-19 on prejudice against migrants. Four quantitative studies have been conducted in Italy and in Malta by using a questionnaire.

11.1 Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This dissertation brings both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of social psychology. Theoretically these studies add onto the body of knowledge between NCC, moral foundations and prejudice against migrants.

Binding moral foundations have been linked to prejudice against out-groups (migrants) (Baldner & Pierro, 2019), building on the previous literature this study aimed to test whether perceived realistic and symbolic threat mediate this relationship. Our results confirmed what is found in literature that perceived threats potentially account for an increase in prejudice (Riek et al., 2006; Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Stephan et al., 2002) in individuals who endorse binding morality. It adds that the endorsement of binding morality (loyalty, authority and sanctity) increases the perception of threat, with perceived realistic threat seeming to be the most consistent predictor of prejudice against migrants (Study 1).

In addition, previous studies have linked the need for cognitive closure (NCC) to prejudice against migrants (e.g.: Brizi et al., 2016; Baldner & Pierro, 2019, Baldner et al, 2019). Expanding on this research, I found that binding moral foundations and perceived threats mediate sequentially the relationship between NCC and prejudice against migrants (Study 2). I reasoned that

individuals who tend to endorse binding foundations should conceptually wish to protect their in-group and thus could perceive migrants (out-group) as a threat to in-group order and morality as change that may originate from the contact with an out-group is particularly worrisome to individuals with a high NCC and to those who endorse moral standards which could be threatened by that out-group. Using two indexes to measure prejudice against migrants (explicit prejudice and social distance from migrant groups) this study found that individuals who endorse binding morality and who in so doing are more loyal to their community, respect authority and endorse purity and sanctity perceive higher realistic and symbolic threats from migrants especially migrants who they perceive to be different to them (non-Western Europeans or Americans). Therefore, it corroborates that individuals who have a high need for epistemic closure tend to be more loyal to their community, to support authority, and to have respect for purity (Federico et al., 2013) and adds that through that, they are more prone to perceive migrants as a threat and, consequently, they are more likely to be prejudiced against them. This finding is also corroborated by Studies 3 and 4.

Building on Study 2 and links made in literature that the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants are linked (e.g., Baldner & Pierro, 2019; Roets et al., 2015), that individuals who experience high epistemic need for closure are more inclined to favour group centrism and endorse binding morality (e.g., Baldner & Pierro, 2019; Federico et al., 2016) and that binding moral foundations are associated with prejudice and that they mediate the relationship between the need for cognitive closure and prejudice against migrants (Baldner & Pierro, 2019), I reasoned that that the need for cognitive closure is related to high social identification with the in-group (being Maltese), which in turn is associated to binding moral foundations. I further reasoned that individuals who endorse binding moral foundations value in-group

cohesion and thus could perceive the out-group as a threat to in-group's cohesion and morality. This reasoning was formulated in the light that several studies showed that national identification increases negative attitudes towards out-groups and out-group members (Green & Sarasin, 2019; Hopkins, 2001; Kunovich, 2009; Pehrson et al., 2009). Study 3 confirmed the hypothesis and showed that individuals with a high need for cognitive closure tend to have an increased need for identification with their in-group, and consequently are more likely to endorse binding morality and to perceive higher threat from out-group members. This sequence contributes toward increasing prejudiced attitudes against migrants and confirms that individuals with a high need for cognitive closure and those who are highly identified with the in-group are more likely to endorse binding morality and are particularly susceptible to perceive threats from migrants which increases prejudice against them.

The ongoing pandemic inspired Study 4 where I sought to examine the relationship between uncertainty caused by COVID-19 and prejudice against migrants. Results from this study corroborate the direct link between uncertainty and prejudice against migrants (Brizi et al., 2015) and adds that this relationship is further increased in individuals with a high need for cognitive closure and the endorsement of binding morality, especially the authority foundation. This might be because during uncertain times people look to formal authority for leadership and guidance which may increase the perception of safety, security and certainty in these very uncertain times.

It is here noteworthy to address the choice of creating an explicit prejudice scale for Studies 1 and 2. During the time when I, together with my supervisors, were designing the questionnaires for the first two studies a heated debate between Malta and Italy was going on with regards to whose responsibility it was to aid migrants in the Mediterranean. Political discourse, public opinion and reports from both countries were laden with explicit

prejudice statements targeted at migrants. This heated political situation inspired our choice to create the 8-item measure for studies 1 and 2. This scale was tested for construct validity using a screening sample of 30 research participants who answered the scale and sent us feedback on each scale item. As explained further above in chapter 7 and 8, the factorial structure of the scale was examined and a mono-factorial structure was found. When we came to launch the third and fourth study we decided to use a classical scale (Pettigrew & Merteen, 1995) to verify and corroborate the results obtained in the first two studies.

The central results from this series of studies is that prejudice against migrants in both Malta and Italy is strongly related to both, individual factors (e.g., need for cognitive closure; moral foundations) and group-level factors such as in-group identification and the perception of threat to the dominant group in both these countries. Taken together these results suggest that individual factors (NCC and moral foundations) and group-level factors (threat perception, situational uncertainty, and in-group identification) influence the degree of prejudiced attitudes towards outgroup members by the dominant group.

In conclusion, although in literature we find various theories that highlight both individual and group-level theories, the studies in this thesis indicate that the phenomenon of prejudice is complex and therefore both strands of theories need to be considered being individual level factors and group level factors intertwined.

These studies also give a practical contribution. The main insights that can be drawn from these studies can be used to inform how public discourse may contribute to increased levels of prejudiced attitudes towards migrants. These studies found that the perception of realistic threat is an important predictor of prejudice against different migrant groups. For example, in both

Malta (Study 1) and Italy (Study 1 and 2) the strongest perception of threat comes from the African migrant group, it is therefore important to sensitize public speakers about their responsibility when publicly debating the issue of irregular migration as emphasizes on any particular migrant group may increase levels of both the perceived realistic and symbolic threat brought about by the particular group and in so doing increase prejudice against that particular group and migrants in general.

Moreover, promoting national identity needs to be done diligently as an increased sense of national identity promotes increased endorsement of binding morality which in turn increases the perception of threat and prejudice towards migrants (Study 3). It would therefore be recommended to emphasize the principles of care and fairness when debating migration as this may lead to a reduction in prejudiced attitudes towards migrants (Studies 1,2 and 3).

Times of uncertainty increase the responsibility that public figures have towards the general public. The state of uncertainty triggers fears which induces individuals to try and attain some source of certainty. The tendency to seek epistemic closure increases respect, obedience towards authority figures and conformity to rules, laws and regulations (Study 4). This increases the responsibility of leaders, who are seen as authority figures, during uncertain times as clear guidance, precise information on how to contain the situation, timely decisions and diligently assigning the community resources to all members of society not only generates a sense of safety but also influences the perception of threat and prejudice against migrants.

11.2 Limitations and Future Research

Although these studies provided support for the hypotheses regarding the roles of need for cognitive closure, moral foundations, perceived threat, national identification and situational uncertainty caused by COVID-19

concern, the findings should be interpreted in the context of the following limitations.

Firstly, the self-report measures and the correlational design of all four studies preclude any causal inference. To determine causality, future studies of experimental nature need to extensively test the relationship between the independent variable(s) and prejudice against migrants (dependent variable). For example, experimental manipulation of the need of cognitive closure could demonstrate that there indeed exists a casual path that originates in this need for epistemic certainty. Likewise, experimental manipulation of moral foundations, or in a separate experiment the manipulation of perceived threat, could establish whether morality, or the perception of threat, do really effect prejudice in individuals with a high need for cognitive closure. These experiments could result in practical implications that might help reduce prejudice against migrants (Studies 2 and 3).

My original intent was to conduct an experimental research study, as my last study in this series of studies, using Virtual Reality to measure differences in implicit prejudice against outgroup members after virtual immersion. The preliminary work for this experiment, which had to be conducted in cooperation with the University of Malta, was already underway. With the onset of the ongoing global pandemic this experimental study had to be shelved and a new research study designed – Study 4.

Secondly, in studies 1,2 and 4 the recruitment of Italian participants was mainly done by using a convenience sample amongst students attending an introductory course of social psychology at university. The students were asked to distribute a number of questionnaires and course credit was granted on presentation of the completed questionnaires. In future studies probability sampling such as online data collection or web-based questionnaire method might be more desirable.

Thirdly, the majority of respondents in all four studies were female (percentage in different studies:). Stratifying my population sample by gender would have helped me achieve a more precise measure of the variables in this series of studies. It is therefore recommended that further studies seek to collect a more gender balanced sample.

Fourthly, this series of studies is not exhaustive of all socio psychological theories that contribute to individual and group level prejudice against migrants. For example, the Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius, Pratto & Devereux, 1992) describes how different processes at numerous societal levels (e.g. Cultural ideologies, gender roles and prejudice) work together to produce group-based inequalities. Although the role of social dominance has been researched extensively (e.g. Federico et al., 2013; Kugler et al., 2014), it would be interesting to look into the role of social dominance orientation, being an individual level factor, that contributes to the maintenance and creation of group based hierarchy. Various studies showed that social dominance orientation correlates across countries with various kinds of group prejudice, racism and hostility towards different groups (McFarland & Adelson, 1996; Pratto & Stewart, 2011) and that it has strong implications for the moral foundations (Federico et al., 2013). Furthermore, research on moral foundations (e.g. Graham et al., 2009) and need for cognitive closure (Duckitt, 2001, Jost et al., 2003) indicates that these factors motivate preference for political ideologies and attitudes. Since no data about the political preference of respondents was gathered in this series of studies, it would be interesting to consider this political/attitudinal dimension in future studies investigating the relationship between the need for cognitive closure, morality and prejudice against migrants.

Similarly, the concept of Relative Deprivation, which challenges the notion of absolute deprivation and, instead, shifts its focus on individual and group relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966), offers insight into intergroup

prejudice from both these levels, indicating that group relative deprivation is mostly responsible for promoting prejudice (Pettigrew, 1964; Vanneman & Pettigrew, 1972; Walker & Mann, 1987; Walker & Smith, 2001).

Research indicates that resentful anger towards specific comparison groups (Smith, Pettigrew, Pippin & Bialosiewicz, 2015) increases feelings of relative deprivation. Both individual relative deprivation and group relative deprivation are specific to the social context one is living in. For example, individuals from lower social class who have restricted income and those who are politically alienated (Pettigrew et al., 2008). Since three of my studies were conducted in Malta, and only Maltese nationals who were born Maltese and currently reside in Malta were included in the study population, I was extremely cautious of the number of socio-demographic questions posed in order to ascertain anonymity. Therefore, adding questions indicating political affiliation and income to the other socio demographic question posed would have increased . This measure would in fact be an interesting contribution to further studies conducted in other European Nations especially those challenged by chronic economic scarcity, are densely or over populated, and attract more outgroups (migrants). This brings me to the last limitation that I would like to present.

So finally, replicating these studies in other European Union countries would not only corroborate our findings but adding alternative scales that measure the degree of empathy and sensitivity towards the feeling of others such as the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davies, 1983) or scales that are targeted towards measuring attitudes towards migrants and refugees such as the Attitude Scale Towards Refugees (Doğan, Erdoğan, Yunus, & KindapTepe, 2017) would enrich the results. Here it's noteworthy to mention the European Social Survey Scale (EES) which measures various aspects of attitudes towards migration: Opposition towards new immigration into the host country, Support for imposing conditions to immigration, perceived economic threat and

perceived cultural threat. Moreover, conducting longitudinal studies would provide a better understanding of how prejudiced attitudes towards migrants change not just in a geographical, and socio-economic context but also within the dimension of changing social realities over time.

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