Confronting Consumers‘ Complicity:

Psychological Reactions to Causal Involvement in Sweatshop Labor

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Erklärung

Chapter 2 beruht auf folgendem zur Publikation vorgesehenen Manuskript:

Messer, M., Flade, F., & Imhoff, R. (2021). *Confronting Consumers' Complicity: Do Confrontations With Causal Responsibility for Sweatshop Labor Raise Moral Obligation?*

Ich habe die Idee entwickelt und für alle Studien außer Studie 5 die Studienplanung vorgenommen, die Datenerhebung überwacht und die Analyse der Daten durchgeführt. Ich habe den Einleitungsteil (außer den Absatz zu *experiential distance*), den Bericht aller Studien außer Studie 5 und den Diskussionsteil des Manuskripts geschrieben. Felicitas Flade hat für Studie 5 die Studienplanung, die Datenerhebung und die Datenanalyse durchgeführt sowie den Bericht von Studie 5 und den theoretischen Hintergrund zu *experiential distance* im Manuskript geschrieben und Teile des Manuskripts überarbeitet. Roland Imhoff hat zu jedem Schritt wertvolle Vorschläge beigetragen.

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Messer, M., & Imhoff, R. (2021). *Put Your Money Where Your Responsibility Is: Does Causal Involvement in Global Poverty Motivate Action for Change?*

Ich habe die Idee entwickelt, die Studien geplant, die Datenerhebung überwacht, die Datenanalyse durchgeführt und das Manuskript geschrieben. Roland Imhoff hat zu jedem Schritt wertvolle Vorschläge beigetragen.

Mario Messer, Remagen, 19.08.2021

Abstract

Beliefs about the causes of global poverty and human rights violations predict observers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions. Previous research has focused on attributions of poverty to broad categories such as nature, poor people themselves, or societal factors, emphasizing perceived controllability by those affected by poverty as a crucial variable. But how do people think about the causal responsibility of individuals participating in complex global structures that cause the poverty of distant others? The present dissertation aims to contribute empirically to this question by focusing on the participation of consumers in global supply chains involving sweatshop labor. Chapter 2 presents a series of experiments providing evidence that involvement in the causation of sweatshop labor moderately increases judgments of moral obligation to support the harmed workers. Critically, a self-other asymmetry in the pathway from causal involvement to moral obligation was observed. Specifically, whereas participants judged abstract others who bought sweatshop-made products as more obligated to support the workers than uninvolved bystanders, they judged their own moral obligation to be high even when they were causally uninvolved. Chapter 3 focuses on behavioral outcomes of causal involvement in sweatshop labor and the role of acceptance of causal responsibility. Four experiments provided evidence that confrontations with one's own complicity increases acceptance of personal causal responsibility, which in turn is positively correlated with actual donations and signing of a petition. However, no evidence for total effects of interventions on actual behavior was found. Chapter 3 also reports empirical investigations of potential antagonistic mechanisms such as infrahumanization and legitimization, as well as sensitivity to confounding in the proposed mediation model. In Chapter 4, alternative explanations for the empirical findings, implications, and open questions are discussed.

Keywords: moral judgment, moral obligation, anti-poverty action, confrontation, causal responsibility, sweatshops

Deutsche Kurzzusammenfassung

Überzeugungen über die Ursachen von globaler Armut und Menschenrechtsverletzungen sagen die kognitiven, emotionalen und verhaltensbezogenen Reaktionen von Beobachtern vorher. Vorhergehende Forschung hat sich auf die Attribution von Armut auf grobe Kategorien wie die Natur, arme Menschen selbst oder gesellschaftliche Faktoren konzentriert und dabei die wahrgenommene Kontrollierbarkeit durch diejenigen, die von Armut betroffen sind, als entscheidende Variable betont. Aber wie denken Menschen über die kausale Verantwortung von Einzelnen, die an komplexen globalen Strukturen teilnehmen, die die Armut von anderen in weiter Ferne verursachen? Diese Dissertation hat zum Ziel, einen empirischen Beitrag zu dieser Frage zu leisten, indem sie den Blick auf die Beteiligung von Konsumenten an globalen Lieferketten richtet, die ausbeuterische Arbeitsbedingungen beinhalten. Kapitel 2 stellt eine Reihe von Experimenten vor, die belegen, dass eine Beteiligung an der Verursachung von ausbeuterischen Arbeitsbedingungen zu einem moderaten Anstieg in den Urteilen über die moralische Pflicht zur Unterstützung der geschädigten Beschäftigten führt. Dabei wurde eine Asymmetrie zwischen der Beurteilung von sich selbst und anderen in dem Pfad von kausaler Beteiligung zu moralischer Pflicht beobachtet. Während die Versuchspersonen abstrakte andere Personen, die in Sweatshops hergestellte Produkte kauften, im Vergleich zu unbeteiligten Beobachtern als stärker verpflichtet beurteilten, die Beschäftigten zu unterstützen, beurteilten sie ihre eigene moralische Pflicht als hoch, auch wenn sie nicht kausal beteiligt waren. Kapitel 3 konzentriert sich auf die verhaltensbezogenen Konsequenzen von kausaler Beteiligung an ausbeuterischen Arbeitsbedingungen und auf die Rolle der Akzeptanz von kausaler Verantwortung. In vier Experimenten fanden sich Belege dafür, dass Konfrontationen mit der eigenen Komplizenschaft die Akzeptanz persönlicher kausaler Verantwortung erhöht, welche wiederum positiv mit tatsächlichem Spendenverhalten und dem Unterschreiben einer Petition korreliert ist. Es fanden sich jedoch keine Belege für Gesamteffekte der Interventionen auf

tatsächliches Verhalten. Kapitel 3 berichtet zudem empirische Untersuchungen potenzieller antagonistischer Mechanismen wie Infrahumanisierung und Legitimierung sowie der Sensitivität gegenüber Konfundierung im vorgeschlagenen Mediationsmodell. In Kapitel 4 werden Alternativerklärungen für die empirischen Befunde, Implikationen und offene Fragen diskutiert.

Schlagwörter: moralische Urteile, moralische Pflicht, Armutsbekämpfung, Konfrontation, kausale Verantwortung, Sweatshops

Contents

Chapter 1

1. Introduction

> We see— or, in many cases, others inform us in no uncertain terms—that our most humdrum activities may harm people in myriad ways we have never thought about before. (Lichtenberg, 2010, p. 558)

The process of globalization has dramatically increased the interconnectedness between people from different parts of the world (Chiu & Kwan, 2016; Reese, Rosenmann, & McGarty, 2015). People living in the rich countries in the global North are often confronted with information about distant others suffering from poverty and human rights violations. More and more, they are faced with the negative consequences of their lifestyle for people in the global South (Lichtenberg, 2013; Rosenmann, Reese, & Cameron, 2016). Individuals in the global North[1] may thus perceive not only the dire situation of those affected, but also their own personal involvement in harmful global structures. The question of individual participation in causing poverty through unjust global structures often comes up in public debate when it comes to the consumption of products made in sweatshops. For example, after the deadly collapse of the garment factory building Rana Plaza in Dhaka, Bangladesh, *The Guardian* stated that the “link between your local shopping centre and the Dhaka factory where the clothes in it were produced is shorter than you think” before reminding consumers to “remember that the real cost of those cut-price punk-look skinny jeans might just be a life” (“Rana Plaza,” 2014). This issue raises the question of which moral conclusions are drawn from consumers’ complicity in sweatshop labor.

In a normative sense, several scholars have argued that participation in structures that produce injustice gives rise to a strong moral obligation to redress that injustice. Young

[1] It can be argued that wealthy people living in the global South may benefit from the same global structures and therefore experience similar psychological states. However, because the present research empirically focusses on reactions of participants from the global North (specifically the United States and Germany), the terms *global South* and *global North* are used in this work.

(2006), for example, analyzed consumers' political responsibility for working conditions in global supply chains, using sweatshop conditions in the textile industry as an example. She argued that “individuals bear responsibility for structural injustice because they contribute by their actions to the processes that produce unjust outcomes” (Young, 2006, p. 119). Pogge (2011a) addressed the responsibility of citizens in the global North for the global political and economic structures that their governments establish. He claimed that “we violate the human rights of billions of poor people by collaborating in the imposition of a supranational institutional scheme that foreseeably produces massive and reasonably avoidable human rights deficits” (Pogge, 2011a, p. 33). According to Pogge (2011b), this causal responsibility implies a strong moral duty to compensate and to act for social change. The core of Pogge's argument is the emphasis on negative duties, i.e., the assumption that the duty not to harm others is morally more compelling than the duty to help those in need: “Other things equal, it is worse to let an injustice persist if one is complicit in it than if one is merely an uninvolved bystander” (Pogge, 2011a, p. 16).

These arguments contain the idea of motivating people to act by convincing them of their involvement in causing poverty: As a bystander, I may see it as a good deed to help people living in poverty, but also not particularly reprehensible not to do so. It is a matter of charity. However, if I have contributed to the suffering, so the idea goes, I feel a strong moral obligation to fight against poverty, in the sense that it would be clearly wrong to refrain from doing so. Whether this reasoning is empirically valid is an important question for practitioners concerned with promoting engagement in poverty reduction.

Previous research on why people act against poverty has provided support for the idea that the representation of poverty plays a major role. Attributional analyses of reactions to poverty have highlighted the impact of peoples’ beliefs about the causes of poverty (Gonzáles & Lay, 2017; Weiner et al., 2011). For example, when observers explain global poverty by an unjust system, they are likely to experience moral outrage and be motivated to support people

affected by poverty (Thomas et al., 2009a). This strong motivation eventually manifests itself in the behavioral consequences, as a stronger commitment through political action for social change, rather than limiting oneself to charitable giving (Thomas & McGarty, 2017). The perceived causes of global poverty are thus decisive for whether and how people act against poverty.

However, the issue of potential helpers' own relation to the causes of poverty has received surprisingly little attention in psychological research. The present work sought to address this gap by pursuing the following questions: How do people in the global North deal with their own involvement in complex global structures that cause poverty and human rights violations? To what extent do they perceive themselves as causally responsible? Moreover, does highlighting one's own involvement in promoting sweatshop labor in the global South increase the moral obligation to support those harmed? Does it increase actual behavior for social change? Two series of empirical studies were conducted to provide answers to these questions.

1.1 Causal Attributions for Poverty Predict Helping

Attributional analyses of reactions to poverty have described potential helpers' responses as being guided by their evaluations of the morality of the people living in poverty. According to Weiner et al. (2011), how people explain a poor person's situation is the key variable in predicting helping behavior because the perceived causes of poverty shape beliefs about the responsibility of the potential *recipient* of help for their misfortune and thus their deservingness of help. People differ in the extent to which they explain poverty in terms of individualistic, societal, or fatalistic causes. (Gonzáles & Lay, 2017). Individualistic causes place responsibility for poverty on poor people themselves (Zucker & Weiner, 1993). According to Zucker & Weiner (1993), observers that endorse individualistic causes explain poverty in terms of laziness or alcohol and drug abuse, for example. In contrast, societal

causes are characterized by blaming characteristics of society such as discrimination or lack of education. Fatalistic causes comprise factors for which neither the affected persons nor society can be held responsible (e.g., bad luck).

For the question of whether a causal attribution promotes helping behavior or not, it is crucial to what extent the causes are seen as controllable by the person in need (Weiner et al., 2011). Causes that are controllable by the person give rise to judgments of high personal responsibility unless mitigating circumstances are present, resulting in low perceived deservingness of help (Weiner, 1995). Conversely, when potential helpers see the causes of poverty as uncontrollable, they consider those affected to deserve help (Weiner et al., 2011). Accordingly, a meta-analysis by Rudolph et al. (2004) showed a negative correlation of r = -.25 between perceived controllability by the person in need and helping for a variety of situations (including situations other than poverty).

Compared to the case of domestic poverty, some differences arise in explanations of global poverty. Whereas explaining domestic poverty by societal causes is positively related to helping (Gonzáles & Lay, 2017; Zucker & Weiner, 1993), attributing the situation of poor people in the global South to local societal causes (e.g., civil conflict and local governments) is negatively related to anti-poverty action (Hine & Montiel, 1999; Thomas & McGarty, 2018). Perceived controllability was not measured in the respective studies, but research on collective responsibility suggests that people tend to perceive outgroup members as sharing responsibility for the harmful acts of agents within their national group (Denson et al., 2006). Consistent with that, poverty caused by humans (specifically by local governments or by local conflicts vs. naturally caused poverty) increases perceived responsibility of the victims which, in turn, decreases actual donations (Zagefka et al., 2011). Presumably, outside observers see local societal causes such as conflict and government behavior as controllable by the population.

However, people not only refer to local societal causes within poor countries to explain the situation of those living in poverty, but also to international relations (Bolitho et al., 2007). Attributing poverty in the global South to international exploitation, i.e., actions of foreign countries or multinational corporations, is positively related to anti-poverty action (Hine & Montiel, 1999; Pinazo et al., 2010; Thomas & McGarty, 2018). Although the opposite relationships of local versus global societal causes with helping could be explained by differences in perceived controllability by those living in poverty and thus their deservingness to receive support, this might not be the whole story.

So far, we have seen that the perceived responsibility of those living in poverty affects helping. However, people not only evaluate potential recipients of help but also direct their attention to the *external agents* they hold responsible for causing the need (Leach et al., 2002; Thomas & McGarty, 2017). It is not far from explaining poverty through global economic structures and multinational corporations to recognizing a link to the individual consumer. It is unlikely that people in the global North see comparable connections between themselves and political structures within countries in the global South. That is, a critical difference between attributing global poverty to international exploitation as opposed to attributing it to local political structures should be to what extent people in the global North perceive themselves to share causal responsibility. To broaden the perspective from the evaluation of deservingness and responsibility of those in need of help to the question of the responsibility of *consumers*, we should dive deeper into the process of how people assign causal responsibility and blame.

1.2 Evaluations of Causal Responsibility and Blame

How do people come to a judgment about whether a person is causally responsible for a negative event? As the term responsibility has been described as highly equivocal (Malle et al., 2014), we shall first clarify what is meant by causal responsibility in the present work.

Causal responsibility refers to the extent to which a human agent has contributed to the causation of an event. Thus, the term corresponds to what has been called causal control (Alicke, 2000), agent causality (Malle et al., 2014), and personal causality (Weiner, 1995). Alicke (2000, p. 561) calls it "the actor's impact on the harmful outcomes". So causal responsibility is not yet about whether someone is blamed for a situation or whether they are responsible to respond to it. A person that clearly caused harm might nevertheless be absolved from blame if they provide convincing reasons that justify the behavior or if they acted unintentionally and were unable to prevent the outcome (Malle et al., 2014).

To what extent a person is seen as causally responsible for an event depends on several features of the situation. Alicke’s (2000) culpable control model mentions three determinants of perceived causal responsibility: uniqueness of the cause, proximity to the event, and effective causal control. Perceived causal responsibility increases with fewer additional causal factors, closer proximity to the outcome in the causal chain, and the salience of hypothetical alternative outcomes. For example, a person who alone (uniqueness) steals a purse from another person’s handbag by reaching in with their hand (spatial and temporal proximity) and it is not obvious that the purse would have disappeared without the person's action (effective causal control) should be perceived as particularly causally responsible. In contrast, we would expect causal responsibility to be significantly lower if the actor had merely distracted the victim (lower proximity) to enable his accomplice (lower uniqueness) to steal and there were many pickpockets in the area, which would have meant losing the wallet in any case (lower effective causal control). Nevertheless, people assign causal responsibility to the actor in such cases, albeit to a lesser extent (Sloman & Lagnado, 2015). That is, perceptions of causal responsibility are not necessarily dichotomous but may be graded (Malle et al., 2014).

Once an actor has been assigned some degree of causal responsibility for a negative event, the amount of blame they receive depends on the actor’s controllability of the cause

and the presence of mitigating circumstances (Weiner, 1995). Depending on whether the actor's behavior is perceived as intentional or unintentional, observers invoke different types of information in their judgments of blame (Malle et al., 2014). According to Malle and colleagues’ (2014) Path Model of Blame, when people identify an intentional norm violation, they evaluate the agent’s reasons for acting. The resulting level of blame varies with the extent to which the reasons justify the behavior. For unintentional causation, observers consider whether the actor had an obligation to prevent the outcome and whether the actor had the capacity to prevent the outcome. Thus, even unintentional causation can elicit substantial levels of blame if the actor could have foreseen the outcome and had the ability to prevent it. For the case of consumer responsibility for sweatshop-conditions, the question arises of how people assign individual causal responsibility and blame within complex causal structures involving many actors.

1.3 Causal Responsibility and Blame in Complex Causal Structures

Scholars argued about the extent to which individual citizens or consumers in the global North should be considered causally responsible for the human rights violations of the political and economic systems in which they participate (e.g., Pogge, 2014; Steinhoff, 2012). Are they “actively contributing to the persistence of massive human rights deficits” (Pogge, 2014, p. 83), or is “the link from global poverty via the global institutional order, national governments to individual responsibility […] too indirect” (Pierik, 2013, p. 606)? From an empirical perspective, there are reasons why people might deny individual causal responsibility in this context.

Specifically, the determinants of causal control according to the culpable control model (Alicke, 2000) predict low perceived causal responsibility. Uniqueness of the individual consumer or citizen is low because many other agents are involved. Proximity to the negative outcome (e.g., sweatshop conditions) is low because many additional steps are

involved in the causal structure, and consequences are spatially and temporally distant (Lagnado & Channon, 2008). Finally, effective causal control may be low because the harmful outcomes would have occurred without the individual’s involvement. In other words, observers might base their causal responsibility judgment on the consideration that conditions would be just as bad if the individual consumer had not purchased the products in question.

However, research on how people assign causal responsibility of individuals for group outcomes has shown that they ascribe some level of causal responsibility even when the individual's contribution is not critical to the outcome (Gerstenberg & Lagnado, 2010). Although perceived responsibility is highest when a person’s action is seen as pivotal to the outcome, observers also rely on whether the person’s contribution would have been critical in other hypothetical situations (Zultan et al., 2012). Specifically, judgments vary depending on how many changes would be necessary compared to the actual situation to make the person's action pivotal (Zultan et al., 2012). For a specific situation, these judgments depend not only on the number of additional causal factors, but also on people's understanding of the ways in which these factors interact to cause the outcome (Gerstenberg & Lagnado, 2010).

It follows that for the role of individual consumers in global supply chains relatively low levels of causal responsibility should be expected because the situation does not only involve multiple agents, but also a complex causal chain including more distal and more proximal causes, as well as interactions between causal factors. In sum, it can be expected that consumers participating in global supply chains are assigned some level of causal responsibility for harmful outcomes associated with the product compared to uninvolved bystanders. The exact level of perceived causal responsibility should vary depending on peoples’ beliefs about how other factors interact with individual consumers’ contribution in causing sweatshop labor and depending on the salience of alternative counterfactual outcomes. Because the present work is concerned with motivators of anti-poverty action, the

next question is how perceived causal responsibility of individuals participating in global supply chains affects the duty to support those harmed.

1.4 Causal Responsibility for Harm and the Moral Obligation to Remedy Injustice

Why might individuals be assigned a greater responsibility to remedy such injustices they are complicit in than those in which they are not? One reason might be that these cases capture different forms of morality. In the case of consumer complicity, the focus is probably on the duty to *stop harming* the sweatshop workers. On the contrary, in the case of uninvolved bystanders facing sweatshop labor caused by others, the focus is likely to be on the duty to *start helping* the workers. Paralleling the normative distinction between positive and negative duties, people differentiate between what one *should* do and *should not* do, which are referred to as prescriptive and proscriptive morality, respectively (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2009). Importantly, what one *should* do (prescriptive morality) is perceived as less mandatory than what one *should not* do (proscriptive morality; Janoff-Bulman et al., 2009).

Consequently, people typically judge harmful commissions as more immoral than harmful omissions (Jamison et al., 2020; Spranca et al., 1991). This asymmetry is also found in the moral evaluations of the persons involved. Specifically, actors committing a harmful action receive more blame than bystanders failing to prevent a negative outcome (Bostyn & Roets, 2016). Another explanation for the asymmetry between proscriptive (harming) and prescriptive (not helping) transgressions emphasizes that commissions are perceived as more causal and more intentional than omissions (Jamison et al., 2020; Kordes-de Vaal, 1996). Importantly, the difference between harmful actions and harmful omissions is most pronounced towards socially distant others (Gilead et al., 2018). Therefore, thinking about helping others as a response to previous harm instead of thinking about it in terms of providing aid might be most beneficial in the case of distant others. Applied to potential helpers’ behavior towards distant sweatshop workers: Being involved in harming workers

who make my shoes violates the stricter proscriptive obligation *not to harm* others whereas failing to support workers harmed by a third party violates the less demanding prescriptive obligation *to help* others.

When judging an involved consumer’s versus an uninvolved bystander’s moral obligation to support workers suffering from sweatshop-conditions, people might thus rely on different systems of moral regulation. For the uninvolved bystander, the judgment implicates the prescriptive system – providing support to those in need. In contrast, for the consumer of sweatshop-made products, the judgment of moral obligation additionally involves a retrospective evaluation of proscriptive immorality – having contributed to producing harm. How such retrospective evaluations of transgressions affect prospective judgments of obligations is the subject of the psychology of compensatory and retributive justice (Darley & Pittman, 2003).

According to Darley & Pittman (2003), there are two distinct types of reactions when a person has harmed another: punishment and compensation. In this model, people either favor punishment towards the perpetrator or confine themselves to demanding compensation for the victim, depending on their understanding of the perpetrator’s mental states. Which form of reaction is chosen in a particular case primarily depends on the perceived intentionality of the harmful action. Whereas people desire both punishment and compensation for intentional transgressions, they merely demand compensation for unintentional harm. However, compensation is only called for if the harmful outcome was foreseeable. The severity of reactions to harmful actions thus depends on the same types of information as judgments of blame (agent causality, intentionality, preventability; Malle et al. 2014). The more a person is blamed for a negative event, the higher their assigned obligation to remedy the situation.

To summarize, causal explanations for global poverty guide peoples’ reactions. International exploitation may imply causal involvement of individual consumers or citizens.

In absolute terms, causal responsibility can be expected to be low because people assign reduced causal responsibility for negative events when multiple causes are involved, the causal connection is complex and proximity between the person’s contribution and the outcome is low. Nevertheless, people might assign some degree of causal responsibility to the extent that they perceive a trace from the individual’s contribution to the overall outcome and depending on their representation of the interactions between causal factors involved in the system. Given some degree of causal responsibility, people might blame causally involved individuals depending on perceived foreseeability of the outcomes. Individuals that are causally involved in producing a foreseeable harm might be assigned greater moral obligation to remedy the injustice than uninvolved bystanders because the former have violated a more mandatory proscriptive obligation whereas the latter are evaluated solely according to the less strict prescriptive obligation to provide support. However, if we are interested in how people can be motivated to act against global poverty and sweatshop labor, it is not only important to know how they evaluate the moral implications of customer complicity in general. In addition, what is crucial is how they apply these judgments to themselves.

1.5 Self – Other Asymmetries in Moral Judgments

Whereas people have been shown to readily blame others for their involvement in harmful activities, research has documented quite variable reactions of people to confrontations with their own transgressions. Explanations have focused on different psychological processes to account for these differences between how people deal with their own versus others’ immorality.

One group of explanations emphasizes motivational and emotional processes. Facing our own transgressions puts us in a state of moral threat (Rothschild et al., 2017). Because for most people feeling moral is central to their self-worth (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Ellemers, 2017), people are highly motivated to escape such an unpleasant state (Zhong et al., 2009).

Whereas peoples’ responses to their own transgressions sometimes align with the prosocial reactions they expect from others, they sometimes react defensively to cope with their threatened moral identity (Ellemers, 2017).

According to Higgins (1987), the belief that one has transgressed a personal moral standard is accompanied by feelings of moral worthlessness. Such a threat to one’s moral identity triggers the need to affirm one’s central values and may in turn increase compensatory behavior (Conway & Peetz, 2012; Sachdeva et al., 2009; West & Zhong, 2015). The motivation to act in concordance with one’s moral self-expectations is subjectively experienced as a sense of moral obligation (Schwartz & Howard, 1981). Consequently, people who have harmed another are often more likely to help than others (Boster et al., 2016; Gausel et al., 2012; O’Keefe, 2000).

Sometimes, however, the opposite is true. People sometimes engage in moral disengagement to cope with their threatened morality (Ellemers, 2017). Such strategies can be applied at different stages of ethical violations (Shalvi et al., 2015). For instance, people may deny or minimize their causal responsibility by displacing or diffusing responsibility, minimize the harmful consequences for others, or dehumanize the victims (Bandura, 1999; Carrington et al., 2020). Moreover, people use various rationales to justify their consumption of sweatshop-made products when confronted with the negative outcomes (Eckhardt et al., 2010; Paharia et al., 2013). That is, defensive strategies might inhibit the acceptance of personal causal responsibility in the first place, or they might inhibit prosocial consequences at a later stage. In contrast to these approaches, which focus on the effects of peoples’ threatened moral self-images, other approaches emphasize the different types of information people use when judging themselves or others.

People use different types of information when thinking about themselves and others (Pronin, 2008). Others are perceived in terms of their overt behavior while the self is perceived according to internal states such as intentions, beliefs, and feelings (Malle et al.,

2007). When making self-judgments, people ignore their actual behavior (Kruger & Gilovich, 2004). This asymmetry results from both people having privileged access to their own internal states and at the same time being confident that their introspections are a valuable basis for self-judgments (Pronin & Kugler, 2007). The higher weight people give to their own intentions leads them to underestimate the likelihood of own unethical behavior (Epley & Dunning, 2000; Klein & Epley, 2016), deny their susceptibility to bias (Pronin & Kugler, 2007), and apply more lenient standards in moral self-evaluations compared to judgments of others (Kruger & Gilovich, 2004; Klein & Epley, 2017). As these findings suggest, peoples' judgments about their own moral obligation to support sweatshop workers might be less affected by information about their own causal responsibility compared to their judgments about others' moral obligation.

1.6 The Present Research

The general aim of the present research is to advance our understanding of the psychological processes that motivate people in the global North to act against global poverty and human rights violations within global structures. Specifically, the present research focuses on how this motivation is affected by peoples' thinking about their own causal role in unjust global structures. The following chapters report two lines of research.

Chapter 2 reports a series of six experiments focusing on judgments of moral obligation to support sweatshop workers within global supply chains. The focus was on moral obligation for two reasons: First, moral obligation is the central concept in the philosophical debate around individual involvement in global injustice (e.g., Pierik, 2013; Pogge, 2011a). Second, moral obligation has been shown to be an important predictor of action for justice (Barth et al., 2015; O'Connor et al., 2017; Sabucedo et al., 2018; Shaw et al., 2000). In a first step, it was investigated whether participants assign some level of causal responsibility to consumers that are participating in global supply chains involving sweatshop labor (compared

to uninvolved bystanders). In a next step, it was tested whether causal involvement in harming sweatshop workers increases judgments of moral obligation to support the workers. As it was expected that judgments about peoples’ own moral obligation might be less affected by information about causal involvement (Pronin & Kugler, 2007), it was tested whether abstract moral judgments about this issue generalize to judgments about peoples’ own moral obligation to act.

Chapter 3 focuses on how behavior for social change is affected by peoples’ beliefs about their own causal responsibility for poverty and human rights violations in the global South. Building on previous research showing that explaining global poverty by international exploitation predicts anti-poverty action (Hine & Montiel, 1999; Pinazo et al., 2010; Thomas & McGarty, 2018), two correlational studies are reported that explored whether attributing global poverty to international exploitation (in contrast to local political structures) is associated with acceptance of personal causal responsibility as a possible mechanism. The central question pursued in Chapter 3 is whether thinking about one’s own role in perpetuating sweatshop conditions increases actual behavior for social change. Four experiments (including one field experiment at a fashion store) on this question assessed whether participants signed an actual petition (Study 1) and how much they donated (Studies 4 to 6) to a campaign working for the improvement of working conditions in the global fashion industry. Based on previous research findings about peoples’ defensive reactions to thinking about their own transgressions (Bandura, 1999; Čehajić et al., 2009; Graton et al., 2016; O’Keefe, 2000; Paharia et al., 2013), several potential antagonistic processes were included in the experiments.

1.7 File Drawer Statement

A third line of research within the present dissertation sought to tap into different types of support towards poor people in the global South. Building on research about

autonomy-oriented versus dependency-oriented help (Maki et al., 2017; Nadler, 2016), it was hypothesized that people differentiate between support aiming for structural change and support aiming for direct help (see also Thomas & McGarty, 2018). Two studies in the research line (Studies 2 and 3 in Chapter 3) included the development of a scale aiming for the measurement of these two types of support. However, there was no evidence for these two hypothesized factors but only for one general factor capturing support towards poor people in the global South. In addition, one study (additional Study b in Chapter 3) included an experimental manipulation of the type of support to test whether different perceived causes (self vs. local political causes) differentially predict structural versus direct (financial) support. Because there was no evidence for such an interaction effect, this research question was not pursued. Materials, data, and analysis scripts are provided on OSF under https://osf.io/s6rf4/.

Chapter 2

2. Confronting Consumers' Complicity: Do Confrontations With Causal Responsibility for Sweatshop Labor Raise Moral Obligation?

Abstract

We report five experiments (*Ns* = 198; 190; 293; 778; 528), in which we investigated to what extent perceived causal involvement in harming sweatshop workers increases perceived moral obligation to support the workers. Within hypothetical scenarios as well as alleged magazine articles, target persons purchasing sweatshop-made products were contrasted with uninvolved bystanders. When participants made judgments about abstract others, causal involvement moderately increased ratings of moral obligation. However, when facing their own complicity in maintaining sweatshop conditions, the effect of causal involvement was small to non-existent. The greater sensitivity to the moral imperative of causal responsibility for indirect harm within global supply chains for others than for the self cannot be attributed to defensive processes, however. To the contrary, moral obligation for the self was constantly high, even if causal responsibility was low, presumably due to the greater reliance on internal states for the self.

> Few realize that severe poverty is an ongoing harm we inflict upon the global poor. If more of us understood the true magnitude of the problem of poverty and our causal involvement in it, we might do what is necessary to eradicate it. (Pogge, 2005, p. 1)

Imagine walking through a shopping street and being approached by an anti-poverty activist who explains that as a consumer of fashion you are contributing to the perpetuation of poor working conditions and hence involved in causing the suffering of garment workers in the global South. How much do you feel morally obligated to support the suffering workers? Now, imagine a slightly different scenario of merely witnessing how the activist delivers the

same argument to another person. How much do you think this person should feel morally obligated to act in this case? In the present paper, we sought to tackle this issue empirically in five scenario-based experiments. Specifically, we tested to what extent confrontation with one’s causal involvement increases the moral obligation to act against poverty and human rights violations and whether it has the same effect when people decide about *others’* moral obligation.

Ending poverty and promoting decent work for all have been targeted by the 193 member states of the United Nations General Assembly in their declaration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. Reaching these goals critically depends on the development of sustainable consumption patterns by citizens in the global North. Although politicized identities, emotions, and efficacy beliefs can help explain why people act against global poverty (e.g., Iyer & Leach, 2010; Thomas & McGarty, 2018), less is known about the consequences of consumers facing their complicity in maintaining sweatshop conditions.

2.1 Moral Obligation is a Key Antecedent of Increased Action Against Global Injustice

To understand why the *advantaged* act in favor of disadvantaged groups, it is essential to consider moral motivations (van Zomeren et al., 2011). Moral motivations predict collective action (Sabucedo et al., 2018), helping the poor (Gonzáles & Lay, 2017), volunteering (Ellemers & Boezeman, 2010), and the purchase of fair-trade products (O’Connor et al., 2017; Shaw et al., 2000). When moral beliefs (e.g., values or moral convictions) evoke action against injustice, this effect is mediated by a heightened sense of *moral obligation* as a proximal antecedent of behavior (Sabucedo et al., 2018). Moral obligation, the felt motivation to act in concordance with one’s moral self-expectations (Schwartz & Howard, 1981), predicts behavioral intentions in the case of actions that have consequences for the welfare of others (Rivis et al., 2009), like choosing a product that promotes good working conditions (O’Connor et al., 2017; Shaw et al., 2000). When it comes

to political action, moral obligation increases the intention to protest as well as actual participation in a demonstration (Sabucedo et al., 2018).

However, raising feelings of moral obligation to act against sweatshop conditions in global supply chains proves to be a challenge. Because it occurs within a complex global system of political and economic interdependencies, the suffering of factory workers in the global South lacks important characteristics that are crucial for the activation of moral obligation (Lichtenberg, 2010). For example, there is no personal contact involved, salience of need is low, victims are abstract, victims are members of an outgroup, perceived efficacy is low, and many other potential helpers are present (Lichtenberg, 2010; Schwartz, 1977). In short, the situation lacks psychological proximity (Nagel & Waldmann, 2013).

2.2 Facing One’s Own Involvement in International Exploitation

Some have discussed whether feelings of moral obligation among those in the global North could be increased by highlighting their causal involvement in creating and maintaining global poverty (Lichtenberg, 2010; Pogge, 2005, 2011b) and the negative consequences of their lifestyle for people in the global South (Rosenmann et al., 2016). Customer demand feeds global supply chains connecting consumers in the wealthier countries with those who produce the goods for global retailers in developing countries. In the case of the global fashion industry, it may be argued that consumers are not only bystanders witnessing the suffering of distant others, but that they are causally involved in harming those on the other end of the supply chain by their consumption choices (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Merk, 2014; Taplin, 2014).

Indeed, how people explain the existence of poverty in the global South is critical for their motivation to help (Gonzáles & Lay, 2017). When they perceive it to be caused by international exploitation, they are more willing to act (Pinazo et al., 2010). Focusing on third party perpetrators such as governments raises moral outrage and motivates political action

(Thomas & McGarty, 2018). Generally, when observers perceive *others* as having caused a foreseeable harm, they assign blame and call for compensation (Darley & Pittman, 2003). By contrast, uninvolved bystanders are seen as less morally obligated to act, because people judge failures to help (omissions) as less immoral than harmful actions (Kordes-de Vaal, 1996). Clearly, causal responsibility for harm matters when it comes to the moral obligation to help.

Moral judgments about the causal involvement of individual actors (e.g., consumers) in doing harm within complex systems such as global supply chains are understood less well. In the case of buying sweatshop-made products, harm is carried out indirectly involving countless other contributors (Lichtenberg, 2010), thus evoking more lenient moral judgments (Paharia et al., 2009). Hence, in the present case, the effect of involvement in doing harm on judgments of moral obligation to help may be reduced compared to more direct situations.

2.3 Can Perceived Causal Responsibility Activate the Moral Obligation to Act?

Nevertheless, being confronted with one’s own involvement in causing the suffering of sweatshop workers could activate the moral obligation to act, particularly when behavioral choices in a given situation are perceived to be relevant for one’s internalized values (Schwartz & Howard, 1981). One reason for this is that causal responsibility for creating another’s need establishes a sense of connection or relatedness with the victim (Schwartz, 1977). In the present case, where harm is carried out indirectly within a complex system, confrontations may raise awareness about the connection between consumers and sweatshop workers. By creating a sense of relatedness to those in need, causal responsibility promotes the perceived responsibility to relieve that need (Schwartz & Ben David, 1976). Such a sense of responsibility to become involved is a precondition for the activation of moral obligation (Schwartz, 1977; Steg & de Groot, 2010).

In addition to emphasizing the relationship to the person in need, causal responsibility for their suffering increases the need to affirm one’s central values as being involved in causing the suffering of another may be perceived as a discrepancy between one’s actions and seeing oneself as a fair person (Czopp et al., 2006; Higgins, 1987). Consequently, when people are confronted with their causal responsibility for harm done to others, they are motivated to help and compensate (Boster et al., 2016; Gausel et al., 2012; Iyer & Leach, 2010). In sum, confrontation with causal involvement in the perpetuation of poor working conditions may increase the perceived moral obligation to support distant sweatshop workers suffering from these conditions for two reasons: (1) It establishes a sense of relatedness with the workers, and (2) it increases the need to affirm one’s central values.

2.4 A Self-Other Asymmetry in the Pathway from Causation to Obligation?

Although highlighting causal responsibility should increase moral obligation due to this reason, there are still roadblocks to circumvent to accept one’s *personal* moral obligations. When it comes to judgments about the *self*, additional factors are involved that could inhibit (or strengthen) the activation of moral obligation to act. On the one hand, people might discount their own causal responsibility for sweatshop-conditions while holding others accountable. We assume that causal involvement in creating a need is most likely to increase the moral obligation to remedy this need when the causal involvement is judged as morally wrong (Darley & Pittman, 2003). Perceived wrongness depends on the extent to which consumers’ involvement in global supply chains is appraised in terms of violated moral norms (Malle, 2021).

Due to the inherent ambiguity of individual consumers’ contribution to the complex causation of sweatshop labor, people may strategically apply justifications instead of moral principles such as justice, fairness, or reciprocity when evaluating their own (vs. others’) involvement (Lammers, 2012; Shalvi et al., 2015). Beliefs that rationalize global injustice and

the use of sweatshop labor in particular are prevalent in self-related judgments (Paharia et al., 2013). Alternatively, mitigating contextual details (e.g., low availability of fair-trade alternatives) might be more salient than moral principles when thinking about one’s own involvement because people think about themselves in terms of low-level construal and about abstract others in terms of high-level construal (Eyal et al., 2008). Moreover, the effect of causal responsibility on moral obligation could be attenuated in self-judgments because of principal differences in the types of information people use when thinking about themselves and others (Malle et al., 2007; Pronin, 2008). Specifically, when making self-judgments, people ignore their actual (negative) behavior and instead refer to their internal states such as (positive) intentions, beliefs, and feelings (Pronin & Kugler, 2007).

On the other hand, perceived similarity between one’s own suffering and the suffering of an outgroup can increase prosocial behavior (Warner et al., 2014). If we have access to such similarity being perceived by a not causally involved customer who is aware of harm done to workers elsewhere, or their inner thoughts and feelings that contain empathy or guilt towards the workers, perceived moral obligation could be high irrespective of causal involvement. A precondition for this is awareness of those inner thoughts and feelings, or *experiential distance.* Experiential distance is a dimension of construal level (Fiedler, 2007) signifying how much experience with, i.e., first-hand information from, a target has been gained. While we are experientially closest to ourselves, we may usually perceive others in an experientially distant manner. This may determine differential appraisal of inner states for self and other when considering their moral obligation to act against worker exploitation. Thus, apart from a self-other asymmetry in the effect of causal involvement on moral obligation, the greater weight of internal states over information about actual behavior could result in higher judgments of moral obligation for oneself than for others, irrespective of causal involvement.

2.5 The Present Research

Seven experiments were conducted to explore to what extent consumers’ causal involvement in the perpetuation of sweatshop conditions increases their moral obligation to support workers who suffer from these conditions. Five of these studies are reported here, the others are available in the online supplements (see Appendix B). Five of seven studies investigated moral judgments about the self (all except Studies 2 and 5). To test the basic effect (i.e., when self-relevance is low) of causal involvement in the case of indirect harm within a complex economic system, five studies included judgments of others’ moral obligation (all except Studies 1 and 3).

In all studies, causal involvement of the target of judgment (i.e., the self or another person, depending on study or experimental condition) was manipulated within hypothetical scenarios or alleged magazine articles. This experimental manipulation contrasted targets who were purchasing sweatshop-made products and thereby supporting companies in creating and maintaining poor working conditions with uninvolved bystanders. The potential helping behaviors to which the moral obligation to act referred included relatively unspecific actions in support of the factory workers as well as more specific acts of donating to improve the lives of the workers.

In light of the development of the line of research, the analyses of moral obligation judgments deviated from what had been planned in the beginning for Studies 1 to 3[2]. Therefore, these analyses should be regarded as exploratory and the corresponding inferential statistics should be treated with caution (Wagenmakers et al., 2012). Based on the findings from Studies 1, 2, 3, supplementary Studies S1 and S2 and a small-scale meta-analysis including these studies, two purely confirmatory pre-registered studies were conducted. Our preregistrations for Study 4 (https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=hq56ey) and Study 5

[2] Specifically, for Studies 1 to 3 the moral obligation composite score was analyzed instead of the initially planned single item analyses. Full data is available on the Open Science Framework. Study 3 was pre-registered at aspredicted (https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=qh8p97).

(https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=38hv8r) included the study design, planned sample size, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and planned analyses. In Studies 4 and 5, we report all preregistered analyses in the main body of the manuscript. There were no deviations from the preregistered analysis plan.

While the idea of experiential distance as a mediator (Study 5) only emerged after several studies had been conducted, the concept is introduced above already for reasons of comprehensibility. All materials, de-identified raw data, and analysis scripts including additional analyses can be found on the Open Science Framework under https://osf.io/uxpvg/?view_only=5782c590514541c595e0be19951ce322. For all studies, exclusion criteria and sample sizes were set before data collection began. Sample sizes were planned to have at least 100 (Studies 4 and 5: 200) participants per cell. Sensitivity analyses are reported in the method sections.

2.6 Study 1

The main goal of the first study was to estimate the effect of causal involvement in harming sweatshop workers on the perceived moral obligation to support these workers. This study focused on judgments targeted at the self, using a vignette approach. Participants were asked to imagine either having bought a sweatshop-made product themselves (causal involvement of the self) or having witnessed others buying such products (*no* causal involvement of the self) before rating their own moral obligation to support the suffering workers. In addition, potential defensive reactions were explored.

Method

Participants

Recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk, 198 Americans participated in Study 1 (84 female, 114 male). Participants' age ranged from 19 to 70 (M = 35.94, SD = 11.66). Three additional participants were excluded from the sample because they indicated that they would

exclude their data if they were the researcher.[3] The sample size of $N = 198$ ($n_{involved} = 100$, $n_{uninvolved} = 98$) provided 90% power to detect an effect of Cohen's $d = 0.46$.

Design, Materials, and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to either the *causal involvement* or *no causal involvement* experimental condition. They were directed to an online survey about judgments in social situations, in which they read a short vignette and imagined themselves as the scenario's agent spending their vacation in a tropical country. The vignettes contained the manipulation of the participant's role in relation to poor working conditions[4]. Depending on experimental condition, they either imagined that they themselves bought a piece of jewelry at a souvenir stall (*causally involved*) or that they merely noticed other tourists buying jewelry while not buying anything themselves (*not causally involved*). Participants further imagined that a person informed them that by buying these jewelry items they [vs. the other tourists] were supporting companies in maintaining poor working conditions including hazardous working places, forced overtime, and poverty wages (see Table A8 in the Appendix for a summary of the manipulations and vignettes used in all studies).

After having read the scenario, participants answered a series of questions assessing the dependent variables in the following order. Moral obligation was measured using two items ("How strongly do you feel obligated to support the rights of the workers?", 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very strongly*; "How much do you feel responsible for the situation of the workers?", 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*; Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$). This composite was the primary dependent variable. After that, participants answered one item on causal responsibility ("How much have you contributed to causing the situation of the workers?";

[3] The same a priori set exclusion criteria were used for Studies 1 to 4.

[4] The original design contained a second independent variable (presumed knowledge about the workers' plight), but this did not have any reliable effect, *F*-test of the interaction effect between causal involvement and previous knowledge was $F(1, 194)=1.12$, $p=.292$, $\eta_p^2=0.006$, 90% CI [0.000, 0.034]. We thus collapsed across this condition. Full data and analyses are available on OSF.

1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*). Each of the items mentioned above was displayed on a separate page.[5]

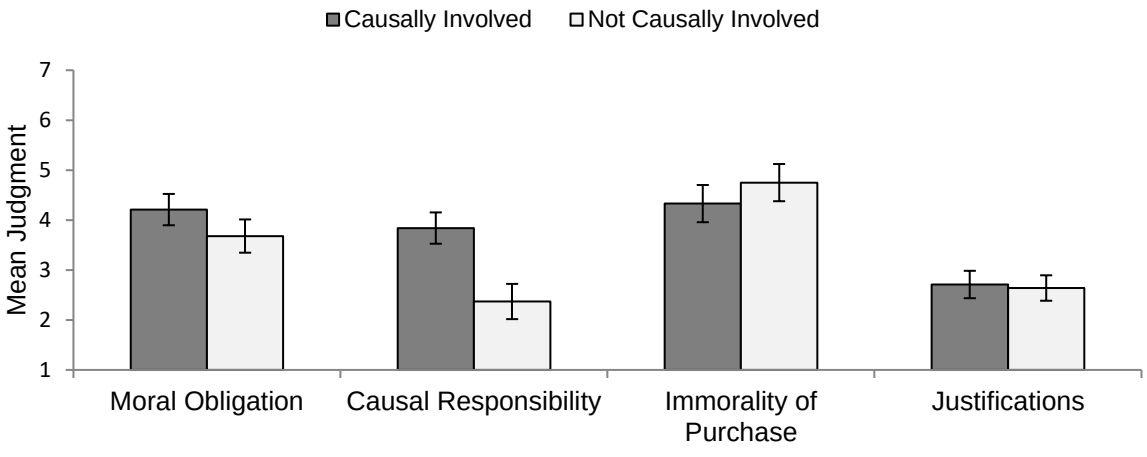
Participants then completed two measures of exculpatory tendencies: (1) a four item measure of justifications of poor working conditions (e.g., "Sweatshops are the only realistic source of income for workers in poorer countries."; 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*; Paharia et al., 2013; Cronbach's α = .84), and (2) a rating of the (im)morality of the act of buying ("How wrong was it to buy the jewelry?"; 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*). Finally, they answered two questions serving as manipulation checks and provided demographic information.

Results and Discussion

Mean ratings for all dependent variables are shown in Figure 2.1 (see Table A1 in the Appendix for means and standard deviations).

Figure 2.1

Mean Judgments of all Dependent Variables in Study 1



Note. Mean judgments (with 95% CIs) as a function of experimental condition (self causally involved vs. not causally involved).

[5] All Studies included additional exploratory measures not specifically mentioned in the current manuscript for brevity. A complete list and full data are available on OSF.

Imagining being confronted with one’s involvement substantially increased acknowledgement of causal responsibility, $t_{Welch}(192.96) = 6.17$, $p < .001$, Hedges’ $g_s = 0.87$, 95% CI [0.58, 1.17], as well as moral obligation, $t_{Welch}(195.91) = 2.26$, $p = .025$, Hedges’ $g_s = 0.32$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.60]. The large confidence interval indicates a low precision of the effect size estimate. However, confrontation with one’s own causal involvement did not increase exculpatory tendencies (perceived immorality of the act of buying: $t_{Welch}(195.84) = 1.60$, $p = .111$, Hedges’ $g_s = 0.23$, 95% CI [-0.05, 0.50]; justifications of sweatshops: $t_{Welch}(193.22) = 0.39$, $p = .697$, Hedges’ $g_s = 0.06$, 95% CI [-0.22, 0.33]). Thus, Study 1 tentatively suggests that causal involvement in harming sweatshop workers increases one’s own perceived moral obligation to support them.

2.7 Study 2

Study 2 was carried out to test whether the effect of causal involvement on moral obligation within a complex economic system including many other contributors[6] generalized to other (i.e., third, different from the self) actors. To circumvent self-identification with the actor as thoroughly as possible, a more abstract scenario was created that located the problem of poor working conditions to a fictitious planet involving fictitious societies.

Method

Participants

Participants in Study 2 were 190 MTurk users (110 female, 80 male) ranging in age from 18 to 71 years ($M = 34.53$, $SD = 12.70$). Thirteen other participants who met the exclusion criteria were excluded from the sample. The sample size of $N = 190$ ($n_{involved} = 98$, $n_{uninvolved} = 92$) provided 90% power to detect an effect of Cohen’s $d = 0.47$.

[6] To explore to what extent moral judgments show different results when a within-subjects design involving joint evaluation of targets (instead of separate evaluation in a between subjects design) is used, participants in the no causal involvement condition provided additional judgments about the causally involved target. Data and the analysis script are available on OSF.

Design, Materials, and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of only two experimental conditions (causal involvement vs. *no* causal involvement). Participants made judgments about abstract others in both conditions. First, they read a scenario about a fictitious society that inhabited a part of a planet named Epsyll. They learnt that almost all the citizens of this society knowingly consumed products – specifically stone furniture – that were produced under poor working conditions by another society in another part of the planet. The target of moral judgment depended on experimental condition. Participants in the causal involvement condition provided judgments about a member of the society causing the poor working conditions (the Mizarcs). In contrast, participants in the *no* causal involvement condition judged a member of a third society on the planet (the Dwalkhs). In this society, the questionable products were not available, but its members were nevertheless informed about the problem of poor working conditions. Before completing the judgments, participants learnt that the target of judgment had been offered the opportunity to help the factory workers by donating to one of several trustworthy charitable organizations. Moral obligation (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$) was assessed by a three-item measure on a 7-point scale (e.g., "To what extent do you think the Dwalkhs [the Mizarcs] are morally obligated to act to improve the situation of the workers?"[7]; full wording on OSF).

In addition, one item to assess perceived causal responsibility was included ("To what extent do you think the Dwalkhs [the Mizarcs] contributed to supporting the poor working conditions?"; 1 = *not at all contributed* to 7 = *very much contributed*).

Results and Discussion

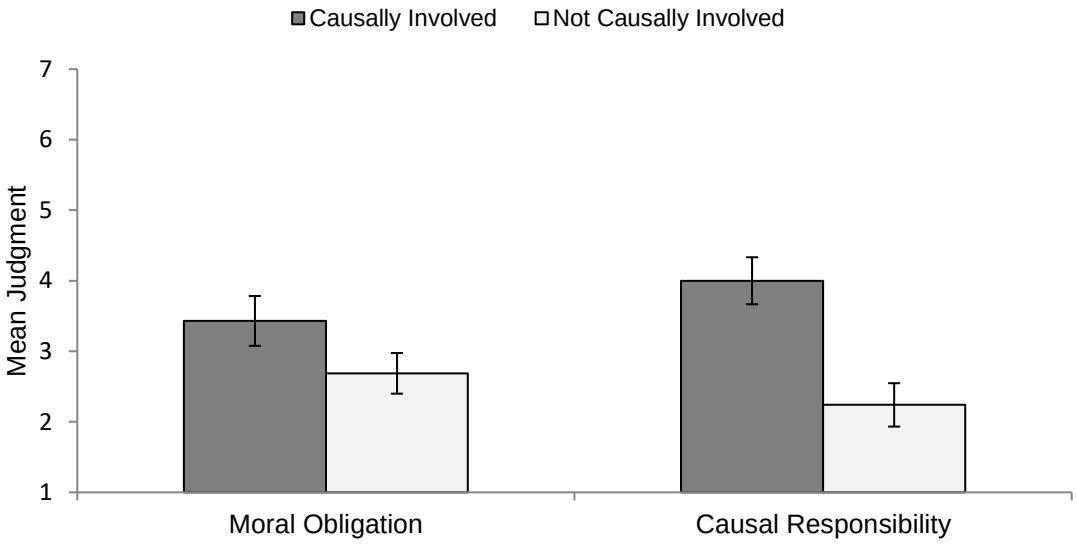
Perceived causal responsibility was higher in the *causal involvement* condition than in the *no causal involvement* condition, $t_{Welch}(185.68) = 7.59$, $p < .001$, Hedges' $g_s = 1.10$, 95%

[7] Please note that Study 1 was conducted before Sabucedo et al. (2018) published their moral obligation scale. After minor adjustments, we sought to keep the measure constant across subsequent studies (S2, 2, 3, 4). Study 5 replicated the effect using the full 5-item Sabucedo et al. (2018) measure.

CI [0.80, 1.41], as was moral obligation, $t_{Welch}(178.34) = 3.20$, $p = .002$, Hedges’ $g_s = 0.47$, 95% CI [0.18, 0.75] (Figure 2.2; see Table A4 in the Appendix for means and standard deviations). Thus, the effect of causal involvement on moral obligation generalized to “other”, third-person targets. The effect was slightly larger than in Study 1, possibly due to the highly fictitious setting or different target of judgment (other instead of self).

Figure 2.2

Mean Judgments of Moral Obligation and Causal Responsibility in Study 2



Note. Mean judgments (with 95% CIs) are shown for both experimental conditions (target causally involved vs. not causally involved).

2.8 Study 3

Study 3 aimed to replicate Study 1 – the effect of causal involvement on self-assigned moral obligation – on the societal level, as in Study 2. The context was the real-world problem of poor working conditions in the global fashion industry. Targets of judgment were again the participants themselves. It was expected that being causally involved in maintaining (vs. merely observing) poor working conditions would lead to stronger moral obligation to

help the workers. Based on the studies presented above, the effect size was expected to be smaller than in Study 2, in which judgments were about fictitious others.

Method

Participants

Participants were 293 American MTurk users (141 female, 151 male, 1 other). They were between 19 and 72 years old (M = 35.56, SD = 10.65). Ten other participants were excluded from the sample because they met the exclusion criteria. The sample size of N = 293 (n_{involved} = 149, $n_{\text{uninvolved}}$ = 144) provided 90% power to detect an effect of Cohen's d = 0.38.

Design, Materials, and Procedure

The method was highly similar to that of Study 2. The session started with a reading task that asked participants to read a short text, ostensibly taken from a recent magazine. Participants in the *causal involvement* condition read that many Americans (i.e., participants' ingroup) are buying pieces of clothing that are produced under poor working conditions, even though most of them know about the problem. By contrast, participants in the *no causal involvement* condition read about the purchase of wooden furniture by Chinese consumers involving the same problems.

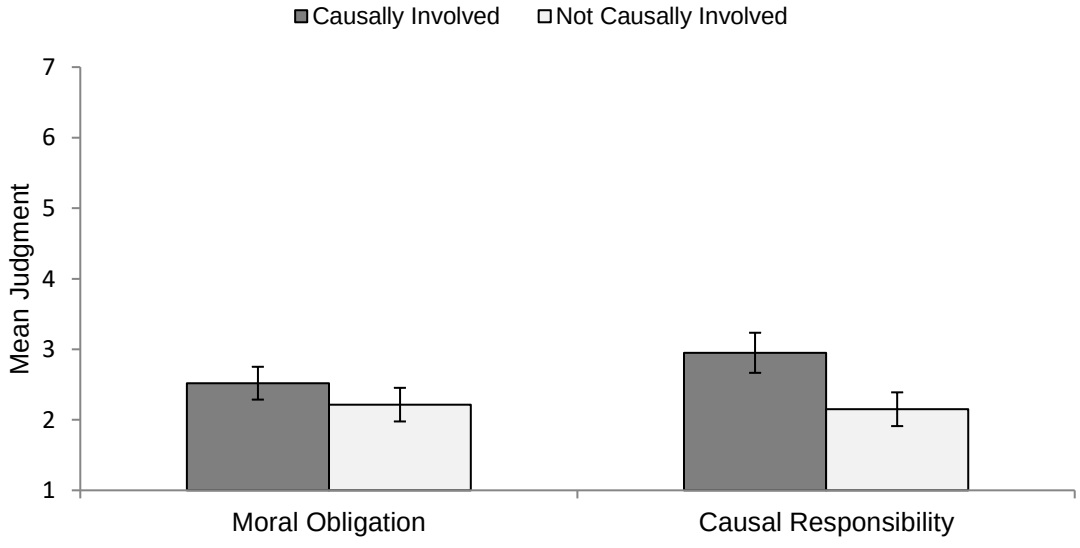
It was decided to also vary the product (clothes vs. furniture) between conditions to make it less likely for participants in the *no causal involvement* condition to see parallels to their own behavior. Similar to Study 2, the text argued that American [Chinese] consumers were "supporting companies in creating and maintaining these poor working conditions". The last paragraph of the text informed participants that they could effectively help the workers by donating to "effective organizations that are doing good work to support the rights of the factory workers in Indonesia and other South Asian countries". The same dependent measures of moral obligation and causal responsibility as in Study 2 were used, adapted to the present context where the targets of judgment were the participants themselves.

Results and Discussion

Perceived causal responsibility was higher in the causal involvement condition than in the *no* causal involvement condition, $t_{Welch}(284.38) = 4.23$, $p < .001$, Hedges' $g_s = 0.49$, 95% CI [0.26, 0.72]. However, moral obligation was not significantly higher in the causal involvement condition than in the *no* causal involvement condition, $t_{Welch}(290.51) = 1.79$, $p = .075$, Hedges' $g_s = 0.21$, 95% CI [-0.02, 0.44] (Figure 2.3; see Table A5 in the Appendix for means and standard deviations). Thus, causal responsibility of the self was acknowledged but ultimately did not result in increased moral obligation judgments. The small effect size estimate was in the same range as in Study 1 (Hedges' $g_s = 0.32$) that also involved self-ratings, but in more concrete and vivid scenarios. Compared to Study 2 (Hedges' $g_s = 0.47$, which is outside the present 95% CI), the estimated effect size was slightly smaller. Taken together, Study 2 and Study 3 suggest that the effect of causal responsibility on moral obligation may indeed be restricted to either fictitious settings or "other" targets.

Figure 2.3

Mean Judgments of Moral Obligation and Causal Responsibility in Study 3



Note. Mean judgments (with 95% CIs) are shown for both experimental conditions (self causally involved vs. *not* causally involved).

2.9 Small-scale interim Meta-Analysis

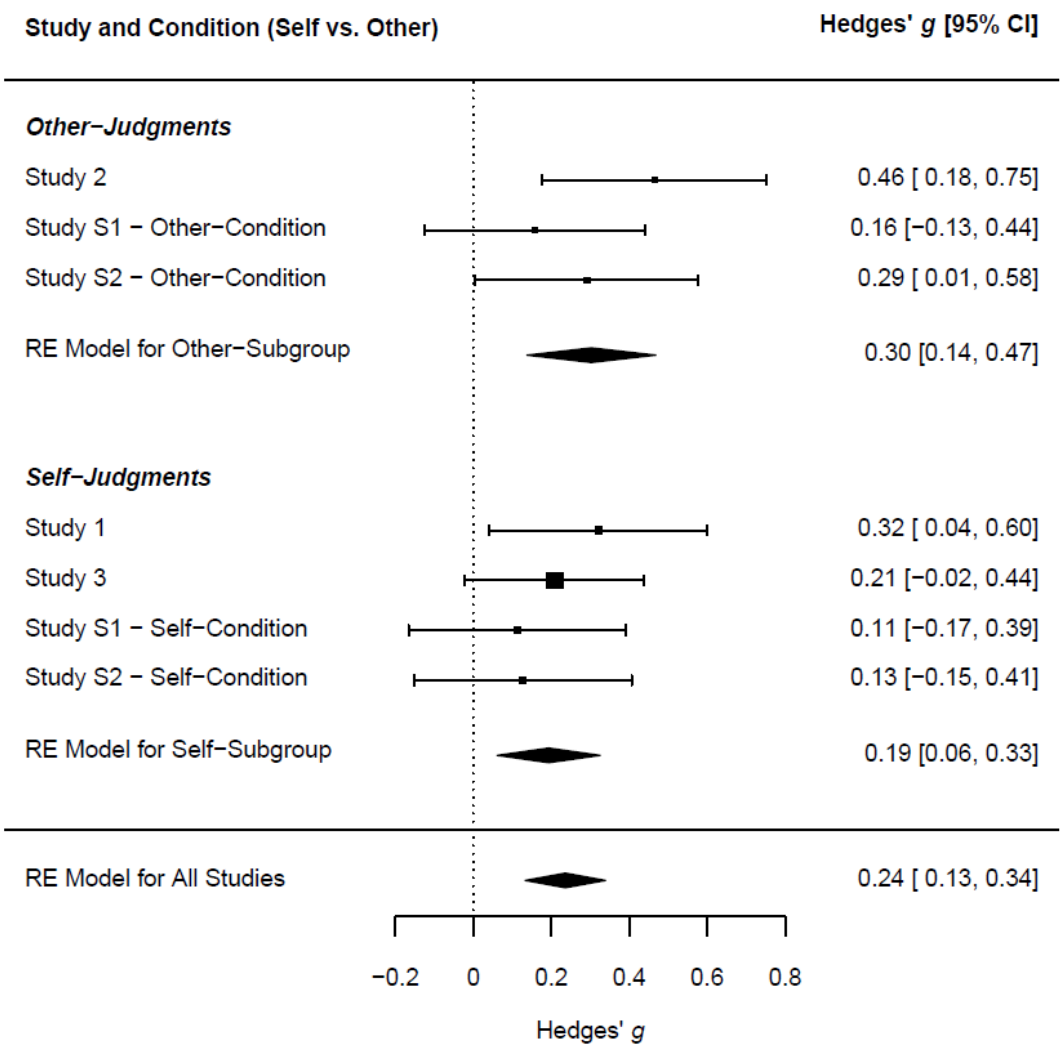
Studies 1 to 3 (and S1, S2; N_{total} = 1460) did not provide a clear picture of the effect of causal involvement in creating and maintaining poor working conditions on the perceived moral obligation to support the suffering workers. Moreover, doubts remained about a possible involvement (causal vs. not causal) x 2 target (self vs. other) interaction, in which a main effect of causal involvement could be modified by the target of judgment (Self vs. Other). To get a more precise estimate of the effect of causal involvement on perceived moral obligation, a small-scale meta-analysis including Studies 1, 2, 3, S1 and S2 was conducted. Another aim of the meta-analysis was to test the difference in effect size between self- and other-judgments.

Not all studies included a within-study manipulation of self- vs. other-judgments. Hence, for all studies the simple comparisons between the experimental conditions causal involvement and *no* causal involvement were included in the meta-analysis. In the studies that included both self- and other-judgments, the subgroups were independent and thus treated as separate studies in the meta-analysis (Borenstein et al., 2009). The meta-analysis was conducted in R (version 3.5.2; R Core Team, 2018) using the metafor package (version 2.0-0; Viechtbauer, 2010).

A random-effects model yielded support for a small effect of causal involvement on perceived moral obligation across all comparisons included in the investigated studies, Hedges' g = 0.24, 95% CI [0.13, 0.34], SE = 0.05, z = 4.49, $p < .001$ (Figure 2.4), with no indication of heterogeneity of the underlying population effect, T^2 = 0.000, 95% CI [0.000, 0.057], I^2 = 0.00%, 95% CI [0.00, 74.52]. As indicated by the large confidence intervals, precision of the estimates of heterogeneity was very low.

Figure 2.4

Forest Plot of the Effect Size Estimates in the Meta-analysis of Studies 1, 2, 3, S1, S2



Note. The forest plot is based on a random-effects model meta-analysis of the effect of causal involvement in creating and maintaining poor working conditions on the perceived moral obligation to support the suffering workers. It shows the summary effect for all comparisons included in Studies 1 to 3, S1, and S2 and the effects for the subgroups comprising other-judgments and self-judgments.

Despite the lack of heterogeneity, we obtained separate effect size estimates of separate RE Models by target (Self vs. Other) in a mixed-effects model for descriptive

reasons. The mean effect size for the RE Model for the Self-Subgroup was Hedges’ g = 0.19, 95% CI [0.06, 0.33], SE = 0.07, z = 2.88, p = .004, for the RE Model for the Other-Subgroup it was Hedges’ g = 0.30, 95% CI [0.14, 0.47], SE = 0.08, z = 3.60, p < .001. There was no significant difference between the mean effect sizes of these subgroups, estimate = 0.11, 95% CI [-0.12, 0.34], SE = 0.09, z = 1.20, p = .28 (with Knapp and Hartung adjustment).

Although the hypothesis of a differential effect of causal involvement for self vs. other targets received no meta-analytic support we speculated whether participants might have easily identified with the other person (a tourist) in the condition involving other-judgments in both supplemental studies. When other-judgments were about abstract individuals from a fictitious society (Study 2), the effect size was higher than in self-judgments regarding the analogous real-world problem of poor working conditions in the garment industry (Study 3). The following study tested this difference in a purely confirmatory manner.

2.10 Study 4

The purpose of Study 4 was to perform a confirmatory test whether the effect of causal involvement on moral obligation depends on whether one judges oneself or someone else in the context of poor working conditions in the global fashion industry. We pre-registered two hypotheses (https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=hq56ey): A) Being involved in causing (vs. merely observing) poor working conditions leads to stronger moral obligation to support the suffering workers. B) The effect of causal involvement is smaller when considering one’s own behavior compared to the judgment about others.

Method

Participants

This study included 778 American participants (379 female, 393 male, 3 other, 3 did not indicate). Again, participants were recruited from MTurk. They were between 18 and 75 years old (M = 37.73, SD = 11.78). Thirty-two other participants who met the exclusion

criteria were excluded from the sample. The sample size of $N = 778$ provided 90% power to detect a small effect of Cohen's $f = 0.12$.

Design, Materials, and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (Involvement: causal [ingroup caused poor working conditions] vs. *not* causal [outgroup caused poor working conditions]) × 2 (Target of judgment: self vs. other [i.e., an average Chinese person]) between subjects design. The study started with the same reading task that had been used in Study 3. Depending on experimental condition, participants either read that Chinese or American consumption has harmful consequences for workers in Indonesia. The text introduced both national groups but emphasized that only the consumers mentioned in the text (Chinese vs. Americans) but not the other group contributed to poor working conditions in Indonesia.

After the reading task, participants completed the dependent measures on either "an average Chinese person who is aware about the poor working conditions" or the participant themselves, depending on experimental condition. The key dependent variable was moral obligation, measured using the same 3-item scale as in Studies 2 and 3 (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$). In addition, perceived causal responsibility was assessed with the single item from Studies 2 and 3 adapted to the present conditions. Finally, participants completed a manipulation check and indicated demographic information before being thanked and debriefed.

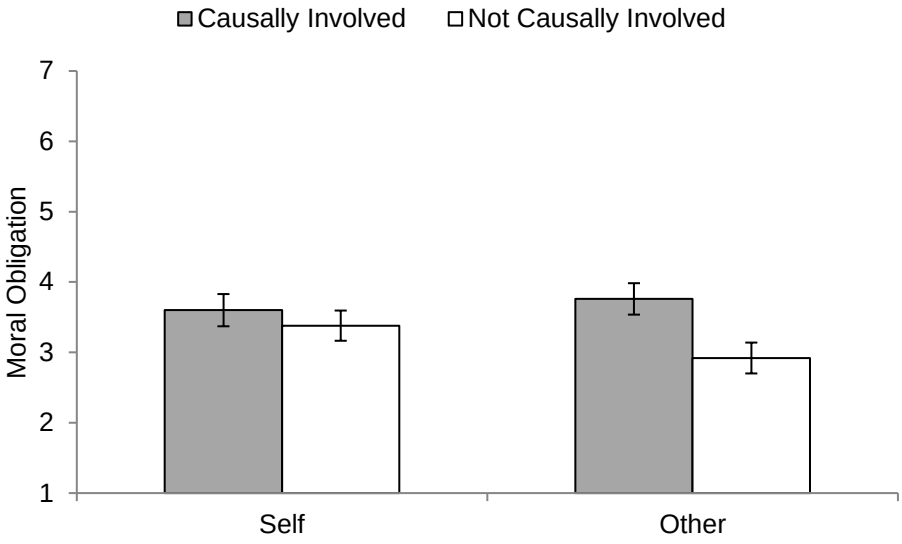
Results

As expected, perceived causal responsibility was higher when the target of judgment was a member of the group that was involved in causing the poor working conditions, $F(1, 774) = 125.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .139$, 90% CI [0.104, 0.177]. Although there was evidence for an interaction effect, $F(1, 774) = 8.64$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.011$, 90% CI [0.002, 0.026], the main effect of causal involvement on perceived causal responsibility was present both in the case of

self- (Hedges' g_s = 0.57, 95% CI [0.39, 0.77]) and other-judgments (Hedges' g_s = 1.05, 95% CI [0.84, 1.26]).

Figure 2.5

Moral Obligation Judgments in Study 4



Note. Mean moral obligation judgments (with 95% CIs) as a function of experimental group (role of target: causally involved vs. *not* causally involved in creating poor working conditions × 2 target: self vs. other).

Moral obligation scores showed the predicted main effect of causal involvement, $F(1, 774) = 21.69$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.027$, 90%[8] CI [0.011, 0.049] (Figure 2.5; see Tables A6, A9, A10 in the Appendix for descriptives and ANOVAs) as well as the predicted interaction, $F(1, 774) = 7.56$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.010$, 90% CI [0.002, 0.024]. When judging others, moral obligation ratings were higher for the causally involved than for the *not* causally involved targets, Hedges' g_s = 0.53, 95% CI [0.33, 0.74]. When judging the self, moral obligation

[8] Note that 90% CIs are reported in line with current recommendations (Lakens, 2014). Contrary to effect size estimates like Cohen's d or Hedges' g, squared estimates like r^2 or η_p^2 cannot take on negative values. Therefore, 95% CIs could include zero even in the presence of a statistically significant result and start at 0 even when the result is n.s. (as the point estimates cannot be negative, their lower bounds cannot, either). Thus, CIs for squared effect sizes of n.s. results should be reported as [.00; upper bound].

ratings were not substantially higher in the case of causal involvement, Hedges’ g_s = 0.14, 95% CI [-0.06, 0.33].

Discussion

Study 4 provided evidence that causal involvement in harming sweatshop workers has divergent effects on moral obligation dependent on whether judgments are about oneself or another person. Others were judged to be more morally obligated to support the workers when they have contributed to supporting these conditions compared to being a neutral bystander. In contrast, the self was judged to be equally obligated irrespective of being involved in causing the poor situation to some extent or not. The results support the idea that, in general, a person’s involvement in causing harm matters for how morally obligated to help they are judged, even in the case of indirect harm within global supply chains. Yet, when judgments are about the self, being causally involved or not ceases to matter.

One aspect of this pattern might deserve future scrutiny, though. Although our original reasoning (and the relevant literature) was built on the notion that moral obligation for the self is *lower* than for others in the case of causal responsibility, the observed interactive pattern seems to result from the fact that perceived moral obligation for others is lower in cases of no causal responsibility. Others are left “off the hook” more easily than the self. Put differently, perceived *own* moral obligation is high independent of causal responsibility. If one’s own perception of moral obligation does not depend on causal responsibility to the same extent as for others, it may be that moral obligation is borne out of one’s feelings of empathy with the workers or guilt for being in comparably privileged position. Study 5 tested this possibility directly.

2.11 Study 5

Study 5 was conducted as a preregistered replication of the main effect of causal involvement on judgments of moral obligations. In addition, we sought to test the mediation

of this by *experiential distance*, i.e., access to inner thoughts and feelings, a variable we suspect to be responsible for the previously observed self-other differences and the finding that in the absence of causal involvement, others were left “off the hook” of moral obligation more easily than the self.

Study 4 indicated that one’s own moral obligation is perceived to be high irrespective of causal involvement, while no causal involvement leads to lower perceived moral obligation of others. In line with these results, access to our own internal thoughts and feelings could provide access to feelings of guilt towards poorly treated workers, e.g., for our own privilege and their (not self-inflicted) misfortune, even when we are not causally responsible for their misery. Thus, we may still feel morally obligated to act. For “others”, we usually do not have the same access to these internal states, so we may consider others less morally obligated when they are not involved causally. Thus, we manipulated *experiential distance* to an “other” average US-American customer as target between conditions. This way, we also circumvented possible confounds in comparing ingroup vs. outgroup targets in previous self-other target manipulations.

Furthermore, we measured perceived moral obligation by means of the established scale by Sabucedo et al. (2018) and explored whether causal involvement and perceived moral obligation affected donation behavior. We pre-registered two main hypotheses (https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=38hv8r): A) Being involved in causing (vs. merely observing) poor working conditions leads to stronger moral obligation to support the suffering workers. B) The effect of causal involvement is smaller when considering an experientially close other’s behavior compared to the judgment about an experientially distant other.

Method

Participants

N = 811 American participants completed the study on MTurk. Preregistered criteria led to the exclusion of n = 283 datasets (detailed breakdown see online supplements on OSF).

The final sample of N = 528 (309 female, 214 male, 4 diverse, 1 did not indicate) were between 18 and 77 years old (M = 41.56, SD = 13.01). The target sample size of N = 800 was determined in advance to find the interaction of causal involvement x self-other (Study 4: η_p^2 = .027) and the meta-analytical main effect of causal involvement on moral obligation (Hedges' g = .24) with 90% power. The final dataset still had 75% power to detect the preregistered interaction and 78% power to detect the meta-analytical main effect.

Design, Materials, and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (Involvement: ingroup caused poor working conditions vs. outgroup caused poor working conditions) × 2 (Target of judgment: close other vs. distant other) between subjects design. The study started with a reading task similar to the one in Study 3. Depending on experimental condition, participants read that the global (implying also the US-American ingroup) consumption of cocoa products or exclusively Asian (mainly the Chinese outgroup) consumption of azuki bean products has harmful consequences for farmers of the respective raw beans in West Africa. The text on cocoa was a written summary of a docuseries episode ("Rotten") to provide a realistic manipulation of causal involvement. It was adapted for the *not causally involved* condition by replacing "cocoa" with "azuki bean". A few lines were added to emphasize that azuki beans were almost exclusively traded and consumed by Asians, especially the Chinese, to make the point that US-Americans were not causally involved. After the reading task, participants completed a short text comprehension manipulation check. The questions differed between conditions only in the kind of bean referred to.

In the second, cross-cutting manipulation of experiential distance, participants were instructed to "try to put yourself in the position of the described protagonist. What are the protagonist's interests, intentions, and feelings?" (experientially close condition) or "try to create a visual mental image of the scene described in the text." (experientially distant condition). The described scene either was an average US-American customer shopping for

chocolate (and choosing a non-fair-trade bar) in the causal involvement condition or canned tomatoes in the no causal involvement condition. After reading the shopping scene, they were asked to note their impressions in an open response. In both conditions, a statement of customer awareness about poor working conditions was included right before the moral obligation measure.

After another manipulation check, participants completed measures of perceived experiential distance (11 items, e.g., “I can imagine why the customer made this decision.”; Cronbach’s α = .88) and psychological distance (1 item, adapted from Pronin & Ross, 2006; “What was your visual perspective on the scene?”; 1 = *mostly the customer’s point of view* to 7 = *mostly my point of view*), and then the two main dependent measures of causal involvement (4 items, adapted from Messer & Imhoff, 2021; e.g., “The customer is causally responsible for what is happening to [cocoa farmers/ azuki bean farmers] in the global South.”; 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*; Cronbach’s α = .94) and moral obligation (5 items, adapted from Sabucedo et al., 2018; e.g., “To mobilize against the poor working conditions of West Africa [cocoa/ azuki bean] farmers constitutes a moral obligation to the US-American customer.”; 1 = *totally disagree* to 5 = *totally agree*; Cronbach’s α = .88). Afterwards, participants could choose what amount of their bonus payment they wanted to donate to a foundation concerned with West African cacao/Azuki worker’s rights. After completing demographic questions and questions about their cacao/Azuki bean consumption, their previous knowledge about the issue and data quality, they were debriefed (and in the Azuki condition informed that their donation would go towards cocoa workers instead).

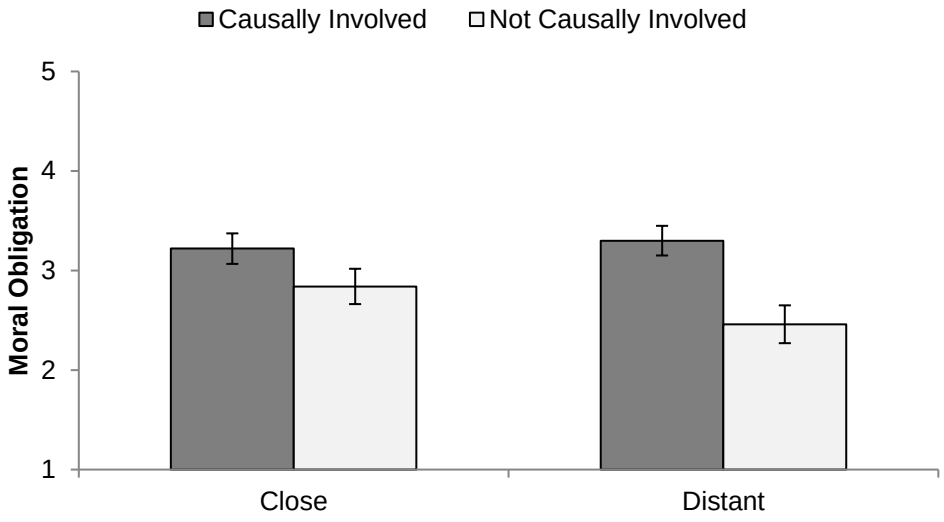
Results

The dependent measures were subjected to separate 2 (target of judgment: causally involved vs. *not* causally involved in creating poor working conditions) × 2 (target of judgment: close other vs. distant other) ANOVAs. As expected, perceived causal responsibility was higher when the target of judgment was a member of the group that was

involved in causing the poor working conditions, $F(1, 524) = 81.70$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .135$, 90% CI [0.093, 0.180]. The interaction effect did not become significant, although the effect size was comparable to the one in Study 4, $F(1, 524) = 3.42$, $p = .065$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.006$, 90% CI [< 0.001, 0.023]. Participants acknowledged causal responsibility both in the judgment of close (Hedges' $g_s = 0.62$, 95% CI [0.39, 0.85]) and distant others (Hedges' $g_s = 0.98$, 95% CI [0.71, 1.26]).

Figure 2.6

Moral Obligation Judgments in Study 5



Note. Mean moral obligation judgments (with 95% CIs) as a function of experimental group (role of target: causally involved vs. *not* causally involved in creating poor working conditions × 2 target: close vs. distant other).

Moral obligation scores showed the predicted main effect of causal involvement, $F(1, 524) = 49.74$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.087$, 90% CI [0.052, 0.127] (Figure 2.6; see Tables A7, A11, A12 in the Appendix for descriptives and ANOVAs). In addition, the 2 (Involvement: causal vs. not causal) × 2 (Target: close other vs. distant other) interaction, $F(1, 524) = 6.82$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.013$, 90% CI [0.002, 0.033] showed that the effect of causal involvement on

perceived moral obligation was lower when the customer was perceived as experientially close. Moral obligation ratings were higher for the causally involved than for the *not* causally involved targets both when judging distant others, Hedges’ g_s = 0.91, 95% CI [0.64, 1.18], and when judging close others, Hedges’ g_s = 0.37, 95% CI [0.14, 0.60], but the effect was larger for the judgment of distant others.

As predicted, the effect of causal involvement on moral obligation was mediated by perceived causal involvement. The standardized regression coefficient between causal involvement and perceived causal involvement was statistically significant (β = .73, $t(526) = 8.90$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .13$, $F(1, 526) = 79.19$, $p < .001$), as was the standardized regression coefficient between perceived causal involvement and moral obligation (β = .65, $t(526) = 18.83$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .45$, $F(2, 525) = 215.83$, $p < .001$). The standardized indirect effect was β = .47. The unstandardized indirect effect based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples was significant (b = .49, 95% CI [.37, .61]). The effect of causal involvement on moral obligation was reduced from $\beta = .57$, $p < .001$, to $\beta = .10$, $p = .17$ when perceived causal involvement was entered as an additional predictor.

The effect of experiential distance on moral obligation was partially mediated by perceived experiential distance, but not psychological distance. The standardized regression coefficients between experiential distance and both perceived experiential distance (β = .46, $t(246) = 3.73$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .05$, $F(1, 246) = 13.91$, $p < .001$) and psychological distance (β = 1.06, $t(246) = 9.81$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .28$, $F(1, 246) = 96.19$, $p < .001$) were statistically significant, as was the standardized regression coefficient between perceived experiential distance and moral obligation ($\beta = .16$, $t(244) = 2.45$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .05$, $F(3, 244) = 4.72$, $p = .003$), but not psychological distance and moral obligation ($p = .76$). The standardized indirect effect of experiential distance was $\beta = .07$. The unstandardized indirect effect based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples was significant (b = .08, 95% CI [.01, .17]). The effect of experiential distance on moral obligation in the absence of causal involvement was reduced

from $\beta = .38$, $p = .005$, to $\beta = .30$, $p = .03$, when perceived experiential distance was entered as an additional predictor.

While donation behavior was correlated with both perceived causal involvement ($r = .13$, $p = .004$) and moral obligation ($r = .19$, $p < .001$), participants did not donate more when their causal involvement was implied by framing their ingroup of US Americans as causally involved ($t(525) = 1.38$, $p = .17$). However, there was a significant indirect effect of causal involvement through moral obligation ($\beta = .57$, $t(525) = 6.79$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .08$, $F(1, 525) = 46.06$, $p < .001$) on donation behavior ($\beta = .18$, $t(525) = 4.12$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .03$, $F(2, 525) = 9.46$, $p < .001$). As this indirect effect was not qualified by a total effect, the b path of the model might have become significant not due to the hypothesized indirect effect, but due to a common confound of perceived moral obligation and donation behavior. By means of a L.O.V.E. (*left out variable error*) analysis (Mauro, 1990), the size of such a confound necessary to explain the b path can be estimated. An unobserved confounding variable that correlates approximately r = .57 with both perceived moral obligation and donation behavior would be necessary to reduce the observed indirect effect to zero. As such a strong confound is unlikely to exist, the hypothesized indirect effect gains further credibility (detailed analysis in online supplement on OSF).

Discussion

Pre-registered Study 5 confirmed that the influence of causal involvement on moral obligation is dependent on the target of judgment. In Study 4, in the causal involvement condition, relative to the no causal involvement condition, higher moral obligation was assigned to others but not to the self. Study 5 provided evidence for a possible explanation for this self-other discrepancy. While again, others were judged to be more morally obligated to the workers when causal involvement was present, this effect was attenuated when participants felt experientially close to the target of judgment. Thus, (perceived) access to the inner thoughts and feelings of the judged consumer reduced the impact of causal involvement

on their perceived moral obligation. This may explain the previously discovered self-other discrepancy. Two mediations underpinned the construct validity of both the causal involvement manipulation and the experiential distance manipulation. Furthermore, there was a small but significant indirect effect of causal involvement through moral obligation to act on actual donation behavior. Thus, at least for others, it may be more acceptable to not act against poor worker conditions on the other end of the supply chain when they are not causally involved, because they seem less morally obligated from afar.

The effect size of the predicted interaction effect on moral obligation was of similar magnitude as the one found in Study 4, Cohen’s $f = 0.11$ (Study 4: Cohen’s $f = 0.10$). The results solidify the idea that even an indirect causal involvement through participation in a global supply chain increases perceived moral obligation to help the workers. However, the results also point to and clarify a boundary condition of this effect: Internal thoughts and feelings may override the propensity to perceive less moral obligation if causal involvement is not present.

2.12 General Discussion

In seven studies, we investigated how individual participation in global supply chains involving poor working conditions affects judgments of moral obligation. The present research shows that people consider individual causal involvement to be relevant, even when harm is carried out indirectly through a chain of numerous actors. In general, participants saw individuals who contributed to causing sweatshop conditions as more morally obligated to act than uninvolved others who merely witnessed the suffering of the workers.

However, the hope of increasing consumers' own sense of moral obligation to act by confronting them with their own involvement in causing sweatshop conditions received no support. Although causal involvement moderately increased ratings of moral obligation when participants made judgments about abstract others (Studies 2,4 and 5), the effect of causal

involvement was small to non-existent when facing their own complicity in maintaining sweatshop conditions (Studies 1, S1, S2, 3, and 4). Interestingly, people acknowledged their own causal responsibility almost as much as they accepted the causal responsibility of others. In their moral obligation judgments, however, they neglected information about causal responsibility in the case of self-judgments.

There are several possible reasons why this was the case. First, confrontation with the own causal involvement might have failed to establish a sense of relatedness with the sweatshop workers, which is a necessary step in the activation of moral obligation (Schwartz, 1977). Although this explanation is possible in principle, we consider it unlikely because the confrontations led to a strong increase in acceptance of causal responsibility. Second, an existing effect of causal involvement could have been masked by a parallel process, e.g., an increase in moral outrage in the *no* causal involvement condition where third parties (other tourists or Chinese consumers) were made responsible for the workers' plight. However, additional analyses in Study 3 revealed that the information that others are involved in harming sweatshop workers did not increase moral outrage (see online materials). Third, participants might have justified their own participation in an economic system based on sweatshop conditions. Yet, although people are more likely to endorse justifications when considerations about sweatshop conditions are self-relevant (Paharia et al., 2013), the present results showed no or only a small increase in exculpatory tendencies in response to confrontation with own causal involvement (Studies 1, S1, S2).

Rather, we suggest that the observed self-other asymmetry might be explained by the general tendency of people to value thoughts and ignore information about actual behavior when making *self*-judgments but to rely on actual behavior in *other*-judgments (Pronin & Kugler, 2007). In other-judgments, supporting sweatshop workers is seen as a generous but not obligatory act if the behavioral information indicates that the target person is *uninvolved*, whereas it is regarded as a moral obligation, if the behavioral information indicates that others

are *involved* in causing harm. Possibly, people hold causally involved others responsible for their involvement because they perceive their behavior as negligent, or even construe their intentions as malevolent (Klein & Epley, 2017). In contrast, people consider their *own* involvement irrelevant when judging their moral obligation. Irrespective of this behavioral information, they base their self-judgments on their internal states such as feelings, beliefs, and intentions (Pronin & Kugler, 2007). Even in the case of causal responsibility for harm, people may see themselves as being guided by ethical intentions (Klein & Epley, 2017). Study 5 provides evidence that confirms this account in the context of ascription of moral obligation.

Unexpectedly, we observed some indications that, although people seem to be more lenient in what their own (vs. others') causal involvement implies for the moral obligation to act, they generally seem to have higher expectations regarding their own moral obligation compared to that of others. Moral obligation tended to be comparably high in the case of self-judgments and decreased in the case of no causal involvement only in other-judgments (in fact, there was a main effect of self vs. other in Studies S1 and S2, and a tendency in Study 4). Such a self-other main effect in moral obligation judgments may be present in addition to the asymmetry in the effect of causal responsibility discussed above, resulting in the observed overall pattern. Possibly, such higher expectations of the self reflect the anticipated negative self-evaluations in case of not helping. This interpretation fits well with research showing that people *believe* that they would feel worse than others after acting immorally (Klein & Epley, 2017).

The present research makes a descriptive and explanatory contribution to the normative debate about whether individual citizens in the global North should feel responsible for global poverty and what the benefits of confrontations could be (e.g., Lichtenberg, 2010; Pierik, 2013; Pogge, 2014). Our findings about how people actually perceive the implications of their causal involvement show that in general, people do infer greater moral obligation

from causal involvement in maintaining global injustice, but less so when it comes to their *own* participation. Future research may show whether the *general* acceptance of the moral implications of causal responsibility can be used to increase this effect in individuals’ *own* feelings of moral obligation. For example, this might be achieved by promoting reflective (vs. intuitive) judgment through the use of joint evaluation (Paharia et al., 2009; Paharia et al., 2013) of abstract and self-relevant presentations of consumers’ involvement in causing sweatshop conditions. Possibly, people infer increased moral obligation from their own contribution to the suffering of sweatshop workers when they have judged other individual contributors to an analogous problem in an abstract form before.

The present results have important implications for those trying to increase people's sense of moral obligation to act against sweatshop conditions in global supply chains. People may agree in principle that the contribution of consumers to the harm done to distant workers implies a stronger moral obligation to help than the situation of an uninvolved witness of the workers’ plight. This general agreement, however, cannot easily be applied to the moral conclusions that people draw from their own complicity in the perpetuation of sweatshop labor.

Chapter 3

3. Put Your Money Where Your Responsibility is: Does Causal Involvement in Global Poverty Motivate Action for Change?

Abstract

Representations of global poverty predict action for social change. We investigated whether perceived personal causal responsibility for poverty in the global South among people in the global North increases support towards those affected by poverty and human rights violations. Two correlational studies (N = 194, 192) show that attributing poverty to international exploitation (but not local political causes) is positively related to acceptance of personal causal responsibility, which in turn is positively correlated with anti-poverty action intentions. In four experiments (1 field experiment at a fashion store, N = 194, 195, 198, 200), we gained support for an indirect effect of interventions that draw attention on participants' own role in perpetuating sweatshop conditions on actual behavior aimed at social change via acceptance of personal causal responsibility. However, there were no total effects of these interventions on behavioral outcomes. We empirically investigated four potential suppression mechanisms and sensitivity to confounding in the proposed mediation model. In summary, acceptance of causal responsibility constitutes a significant link between perceived causes of poverty and prosocial behavior, but direct applicability to interventions could not be demonstrated.

Whereas the involvement of citizens and consumers in the global North in causing poverty and human rights violations in the global South has been discussed extensively in the philosophical literature (e.g., Lichtenberg, 2010; Pogge, 2011b), it has been largely neglected in empirical psychological research on anti-poverty action. Social psychology has provided insights on how representations of suffering and perceived causes of global poverty may motivate helping behavior. For example, focusing on the plight of poor people promotes

sympathy and giving, whereas focusing on unfair systems causing poverty promotes moral outrage and political action (Thomas & McGarty, 2018). Although many scholars have pointed to appraisals of responsibility for others' disadvantage as antecedents of feelings of guilt and self-focused anger (e.g., Leach et al., 2002; Thomas et al., 2009a), these contributions focused on the role of the respective emotions. Empirical research centering on the role of perceived personal causal responsibility in motivating anti-poverty action among people in the global North is lacking.

Poverty and sweatshop conditions in the global South are an integral part of the global economic system. The fashion industry is one example that has received particular attention (Bartley & Child, 2014). Many garment workers in the global South encounter poverty wages, excessive overtime and insecure workplaces (ILO, 2017; Merk, 2014; Taplin, 2014). The business strategy of fast fashion connects consumers in the global North with sweatshop workers in the global South (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006). However, the problem of sweatshop conditions in global supply chains is predominantly framed as the suffering of disadvantaged people perpetuated by third parties, such as governments and corporations, which might prevent consumers from acting for social justice (Carrington et al., 2020). Less is known about the consequences of how people in the global North think about their own role in global supply chains.

In the present paper, we investigated to what extent thinking about their own responsibility for poverty and human rights violations in the global South leads people in the global North to take action for social change. Specifically, we tested whether attributing poverty in the global South to international exploitation compared to local political causes is associated with acceptance of personal causal responsibility. Moreover, we examined whether directly focusing on one's own causal responsibility (vs. local political causes) promotes anti-poverty action intentions as well as actual political actions and donations through increased acceptance of personal causal responsibility.

3.1 Representations of Global Poverty Predict Responses to Humanitarian Disadvantage

Inequality can be framed in different ways with important consequences for how people respond to it (Bruckmüller et al., 2017). For example, descriptions of inequality can focus on the suffering of disadvantaged people or on the advantage of a person’s ingroup. Because a privilege framing may threaten the self-image of advantaged people, they prefer to perceive inequality in terms of others’ disadvantage (Lowery et al., 2007). A disadvantage framing allows advantaged people to avoid experiencing their own position as unearned or themselves as responsible for social inequalities (Powell et al., 2005). Consequently, such a view of inequality appears to be prevalent (Bruckmüller & Braun, 2020).

However, compared to a disadvantage framing, a focus on ingroup advantage can promote positive attitudes towards establishing intergroup equality by eliciting feelings of guilt or self-focused anger (Iyer et al., 2003; Leach et al., 2006; Powell et al., 2005). That is, perceiving inequality in terms of one’s own advantage represents poverty not just as a problem of poor people, but also as one that involves oneself. Particularly in the context of sweatshop labor, we expect a focus on own advantages to promote perceived causal responsibility of the self by drawing attention to consumer demand for cheap products.

In contrast, when inequality is framed in terms of others’ disadvantage, the causes are not specified. It is therefore crucial to note that reactions to poverty vary considerably depending on how the suffering of poor people is explained. When poverty is attributed to causes that are controllable by those affected by poverty, such as lack of effort, helping is unlikely because potential help givers are more likely to feel anger towards the person in need (Rudolph et al., 2004). In contrast, when poverty is explained through factors that cannot be controlled by people living in poverty, such as discrimination or low wages, sympathy and helping behavior is increased (Weiner et al., 2011).

However, in the case of *global* poverty, people differentiate between different dimensions of situational causes (Harper, 1996). Specifically, people may explain poverty in

the global South by *local* situational causes such as political instability or by causes that involve *global* actors such as multinational companies (Bolitho et al., 2007). Whereas attributions to local governments fail to promote helping behavior, attributing poverty in the global South to the activities of corporations and institutions in the global North is correlated with helping behavior and, more specifically, anti-poverty activism (Hine & Montiel, 1999; Pinazo et al., 2010; Thomas & McGarty, 2018). Thus, blame directed at a third party does not suffice to elicit support for those in need – it seems to be crucial that the causes lie outside the affected countries.

We suggest, that blaming international exploitation predicts support because it implies that people in the global North share causal responsibility for the workers' plight. Focusing on international exploitation involves perceiving the global North as part of the problem, which should increase the personal relevance and psychological proximity of the issue. As consumers and citizens, people may consider themselves as partially responsible for the practices of brands and economic policies of their governments (Lichtenberg, 2010; Pogge, 2014).

3.2 Causal Responsibility for Harm Promotes Prosocial Behavior

We expect that perceiving oneself as involved in causing harm to people in the global South triggers a strong motivation to engage with the issue because personal causal responsibility for harm done to others poses a threat to people's moral self-image (Rothschild & Keefer, 2017; Zhong et al., 2009). When people perceive a discrepancy between their moral self-image and their actions, they experience a need to restore their morality (West & Zhong, 2015). In addition, personal causal responsibility creates a sense of connectedness to the victims (Schwartz, 1977; Weiner, 1995). If opportunities to address the harm are present, people are motivated to repair the damage or compensate for it (Boster et al., 2016; Gausel et al., 2012; Iyer & Leach, 2010; O'Keefe, 2000; Wohl et al., 2006). Thus, thinking about one's

own responsibility for the perpetuation of human rights violations should increase behaviors aimed at benefiting those harmed.

3.3 Antagonistic Processes

Apart from increased acceptance of causal responsibility and prosocial actions, confrontations with personal responsibility for moral violations can elicit defensive reactions (Čehajić et al., 2009). When opportunities for moral improvement are perceived to be lacking, people tend to reduce the threat to their moral self-image by engaging in exonerating cognitions (Ellemers, 2017). For example, consumers may minimize or legitimize the negative consequences people in the global South are experiencing (Bandura, 1999; Paharia et al., 2013). Moreover, people may deny those who are harmed unique human characteristics, i.e., they may engage in infrahumanization (Haslam & Loughnan, 2014). Such moral disengagement processes result in reduced levels of support towards those who suffer (Sainz et al., 2020) and enable people to continue unethical behavior while feeling moral (Shalvi et al., 2015). Resentment and reactance might be another negative reaction to helping requests after being reminded of personal causal responsibility for harm because people might believe that they are the target of manipulation attempts (Graton et al., 2016; O’Keefe, 2000). Thus, thinking about one’s personal causal responsibility for poverty and human rights violations in the global South could trigger antagonistic processes that could suppress prosocial effects of increased acceptance of responsibility (see Čehajić et al., 2009).

3.4 The Present Research

In two correlational and four experimental studies, we investigated how representations of poverty and human rights violations in the global South relate to perceived personal causal responsibility and support for social change. An initial field experiment conducted with consumers who had just shopped at a Primark store, tested whether letting

consumers focus on their own advantage (vs. workers’ disadvantage) increased acceptance of personal causal responsibility and, in turn, intentions to act for social change. Importantly, we also measured actual behavior. Specifically, we assessed whether participants signed a petition in support of a living wage for textile workers.

Two correlational studies investigated the relationship between perceived causes of global poverty, acceptance of personal causal responsibility, and intentions to act against global poverty. We hypothesized that perceived international exploitation is positively correlated with acceptance of personal causal responsibility. In contrast, we expected that attributing poverty in the global South to local political structures would be negatively related to acceptance of causal responsibility. Moreover, we sought to replicate previous findings that perceived international exploitation is positively correlated with anti-poverty action, whereas perceiving local structures as important causes is not (Hine & Montiel, 1999; Pinazo et al., 2010; Thomas & McGarty, 2018). We argue that this finding can be explained by differences in acceptance of personal causal responsibility.

Next, three experimental studies tested whether support for social change is increased when people think about their personal causal responsibility for human rights violations and poverty in the global South (vs. local political causes) – specifically, for sweatshop conditions in the fashion industry. In addition to intentions to engage in political action, we again assessed actual behavior – donations dedicated to structural change in global supply chains. We hypothesized the effects of responsibility focus on action intentions and donations to be mediated by acceptance of personal causal responsibility for the situation of the sweatshop workers.

Furthermore, we reasoned that thinking about one’s own (vs. local governments’) responsibility for human rights violations in global supply chains may also trigger defensive reactions. Self-focus could increase infrahumanization of sweatshop workers, minimization of the negative consequences people in the global South are experiencing, resentment and

reactance towards donation requests, or the feeling of being overwhelmed by the demands of acting ethically in a globalized economy. Such negative reactions to reminders of personal causal responsibility were expected to decrease action intentions and donations. Thus, prosocial and defensive paths could work in opposite directions resulting in an unchanged level of prosocial outcomes overall.

We disclose all measures, manipulations, and data exclusions. Studies 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 included additional exploratory measures not specifically mentioned in the current manuscript for brevity. We provide all materials and a complete list of all additional measures for all studies on the Open Science Framework (OSF) under https://osf.io/eybxj/?view_only=55633ea766794639b24c1fe562798519. We also provide de-identified raw data, analysis scripts and two additional studies on the OSF project page. For all studies, exclusion criteria and sample sizes were set before data collection began. Sample sizes were planned to have $N = 200$ in the correlational studies and 100 participants per cell in the experiments. Sensitivity analyses are reported in the method sections showing the minimum detectable effect sizes with 80% power at $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed).

3.5 Study 1

In the first study, we tested whether framing sweatshop conditions in the global fashion industry in terms of participants’ advantage (vs. workers’ disadvantage) increased acceptance of personal causal responsibility. In addition, we expected participants in the advantage framing condition to express higher levels of political action intentions and to be more likely to sign an actual petition in support of a living wage for textile workers than participants in the disadvantage framing condition. We hypothesized these effects to be mediated by acceptance of personal causal responsibility. We sought to test our predictions in a realistic setting where the issue of sweatshop conditions has high salience and personal

relevance for participants. Thus, Study 1 was a field experiment with consumers who had just shopped at a Primark store serving as participants.

Method

Participants

In Study 1, participants were 194 consumers leaving a Primark store in a German city (147 female, 46 male, 1 did not indicate). Mean age was 23.47 (*SD* = 9.98, range 13 to 78). No participants were excluded from the sample. The sample size ($n_{advantage}$ = 96, $n_{disadvantage}$ = 98) provided 80% power to detect an effect of Cohen's *d* = 0. 40. For the mediation analysis, power was 90% to detect two small to medium paths equal to 0.26 (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007; Schoenemann et al., 2017).

Manipulation of Advantage vs. Disadvantage Framing

Having agreed to participate in a short survey, participants were given a paper-pencil questionnaire. The questionnaires were prepared in such a way that the experimenter was blind to the conditions. After reading a short introduction about the globalized fashion industry, participants in the advantage framing condition were asked to think about how they personally benefit from globalized textile production. Participants in the disadvantage framing condition were asked to think about how the workers in textile factories in the global South are disadvantaged by globalized textile production. Participants were asked to write down their initial thoughts. To strengthen our manipulation, participants were then asked to indicate their agreement (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) to five statements reflecting either their personal advantage or workers' disadvantage due to the globalized garment industry, depending on condition (Powell et al., 2005). For example, participants in the advantage framing condition indicated their agreement to the statement "I benefit from the globalized textile production, because I can buy cheap clothes." A sample statement from the disadvantage framing condition read, "The textile workers in the poor countries can hardly live on their wages."

Measures

On the next page, all participants read a short text about the poor working conditions textile workers in the global South are facing before completing the following measures.

Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility. Acceptance of personal causal responsibility for the situation of the textile workers was measured with two items (Cronbach’s α = .81). A sample item is “My decisions and my behavior contribute to the persistence of poverty among the textile workers” (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

Action Intentions. Based on previous research on anti-poverty action (Thomas et al., 2012), we compiled a list of six possible activities that people could engage in to act against sweatshop conditions in the global South. Participants indicated on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) whether they were going to take action to support the textile workers by performing the respective activity (e.g., “signing petitions or writing letters to draw attention to the situation of the textile workers”; α = .69).

Actual Anti-Poverty Behavior. After returning the questionnaire, participants were asked whether they were willing to sign a petition in support of the textile workers. They were shown an actual petition for which signatures were collected at the time of data collection by the Clean Clothes Campaign. The petition called on companies and political decision-makers to ensure that garment workers are paid a living wage. The experimenter recorded whether participants signed the petition by filling in their name, address, e-mail and signature. We a priori decided not to record this data when participants were influenced in their decision by other participants, resulting in a sample size of $N = 168$ for the analyses of actual behavior. Participants were assured that their personal information on the list of signatures would be kept strictly separate from the survey data, thus ensuring the anonymity of their questionnaire answers. After the data collection was completed, all lists of signatures were sent to the Clean Clothes Campaign.

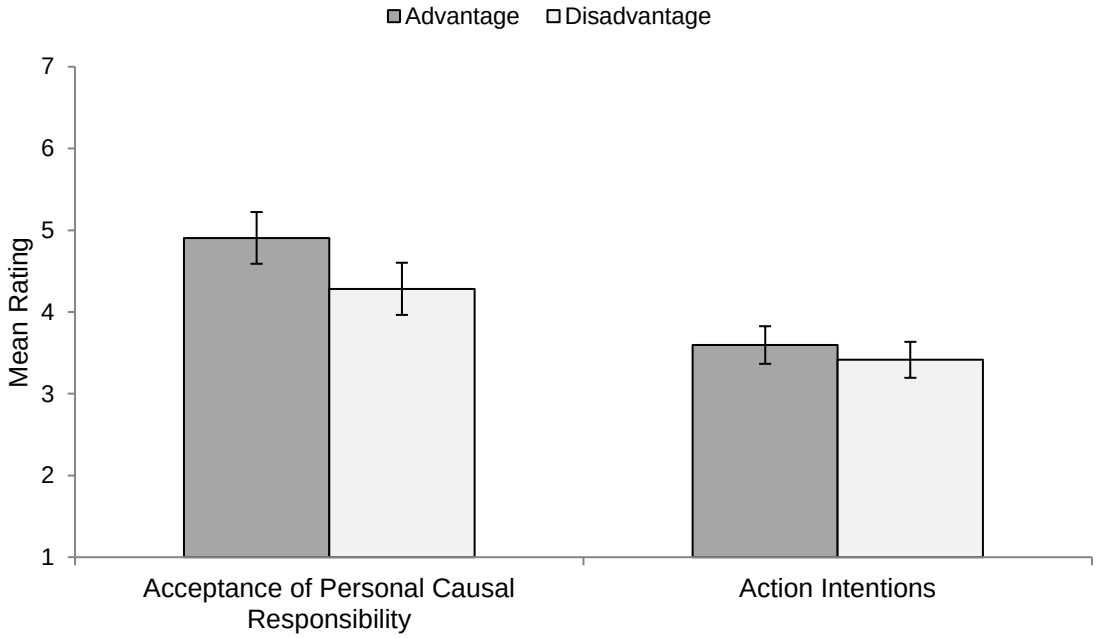
Results

As hypothesized, acceptance of personal causal responsibility was significantly higher in the advantage framing condition than in the disadvantage framing condition, $t_{Welch}(191.00) = 2.72$, $p = .007$, Hedges’ $g_s = 0.39$, 95% CI [0.11, 0.67] (see Figure 3.1; see Table C1 in the Appendix for means and standard deviations). However, in contrast to our hypothesis, there was no significant difference between experimental conditions in action intentions, $t_{Welch}(190.34) = 1.11$, $p = .267$, Hedges’ $g_s = 0.16$, 95% CI [-0.12, 0.44]. Next, we tested whether the proportion of participants signing the petition was higher in the advantage (vs. disadvantage) framing condition. Across conditions, 101 of 168 participants (60.12%) signed the petition. In contrast to our hypothesis, there was no significant difference between conditions, χ^2 (1, $N = 168$) = 0.96, $p = .328$. Descriptively, the proportion was even higher in the disadvantage framing condition (63.86%) than in the advantage framing condition (56.47%).

Nevertheless, we tested the hypothesized indirect effects using PROCESS 3.5 (Model 4, 5000 bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals; Hayes, 2018). Because a total effect can be composed of multiple indirect processes that may have different signs, the absence of a total effect does not preclude the existence of a specific hypothesized indirect effect (Rucker et al., 2011). Consistent with our mediation hypothesis, there were significant indirect effects of framing condition on action intentions, $b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.25], and on the actual signing of the petition, $b = 0.18$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.44], through increased acceptance of personal causal responsibility. The correlation of acceptance of personal causal responsibility with action intentions was $r = .28$, $p < .001$, and that with signing of the petition was $r = .22$, $p = .005$.

Figure 3.1

Mean Ratings of Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility and Action Intentions in Study 1



Note. Mean ratings (with 95% CIs) are shown for both experimental conditions (advantage vs. disadvantage framing).

Discussion

Study 1 confirmed our prediction that framing sweatshop conditions in terms of advantages of the self (vs. workers’ disadvantage) increases acceptance of personal causal responsibility. Moreover, as expected based on our mediation hypothesis, there was a significant positive indirect effect of advantage (vs. disadvantage) framing on intentions to act in support of the sweatshop workers and on actual signing of a petition through acceptance of personal causal responsibility. However, our framing manipulation did not increase action intentions or actual behavior, overall.

How can we interpret the observed indirect effect in absence of a total effect? The observed indirect effect is a necessary condition for the proposed mediation model. However,

the result of a significant indirect effect does not confirm that acceptance of causal responsibility is the actual mediator between framing condition and behavioral outcomes (Fiedler et al., 2011). Although our mediation hypothesis is based on theory and empirical findings, alternative explanations are possible. Possibly, the indirect effect is based on a spurious correlation between acceptance of causal responsibility and the dependent variables due to an unobserved confounding variable (MacKinnon & Pirlott, 2015). We examine this possibility below in a separate section on sensitivity to confounding.

Although we cannot rule out this explanation, another, theoretically more interesting, explanation is possible. There might be antagonistic processes that create a suppression effect (MacKinnon et al., 2000; Rucker et al., 2011). For example, focusing on the role of the self in the persistence of global inequality (vs. on the disadvantage of sweatshop workers) might also elicit defensive reactions that might itself reduce action intentions and behavioral outcomes (Branscombe et al., 2007; Čehajić et al., 2009). We empirically explored this possibility in Studies 4 to 6 by including several candidates for opposite processes in our analyses. In the general discussion, we critically discuss the observed indirect effect and possible alternative explanations.

Study 1 demonstrated that consumers in the global North focusing on their own advantage (vs. disadvantage of sweatshop workers in the global South) showed increased levels of acceptance of personal causal responsibility for poverty and human rights violations in the global South. Building on this finding, we reasoned that there should be differences in the degree of responsibility acceptance depending on the specific causes people claim for the existence of poverty in the Global South. In the next two studies, we examined how different perceived causes of poverty in the global South are related to acceptance of personal causal responsibility.

3.6 Study 2

Study 2 investigated the relationship between acceptance of personal causal responsibility and different perceived causes of poverty in the global South. Specifically, we tested whether attributing poverty in the global South to international exploitation is positively related to acceptance of causal responsibility for the situation of those living in poverty. In addition, we expected perceived local political causes to be negatively related to acceptance of causal responsibility.

Method

Participants

One-hundred ninety-four American users of Amazon MTurk participated in Study 2 (102 female, 92 male). Mean age was 36.93 (*SD* = 12.69) with a range from 18 to 68. Six additional participants were excluded from the sample because they indicated that they had answered randomly or purposely false, or that they would exclude their data if they were the researcher[9]. The sample size of $N = 194$ provided 80% power to detect an effect of Cohen's $f^2 = 0.06$ in a linear multiple regression analysis with four predictors.

Measures

Participants were directed to an online survey about perceptions of global issues and were informed that for their session the issue of poverty in the global South had been selected. They were asked to complete the following measures.

Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility. Acceptance of personal causal responsibility for poverty in the global South was measured with four items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$). We adapted the two items from Study 1 and added two new items (e.g., "I am involved in violating the human rights of people in poor countries", 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

[9] The same a priori set exclusion criteria were used for all studies that followed.

Perceived Causes of Poverty in the Global South. Participants rated the importance of 23 possible causes of poverty in the global South (1 = *very weak or unimportant cause* to 7 = *very strong or important cause*). Our measure included 20 items reported by Hine & Montiel (1999) and three additional items we created that more clearly reflect causes related to exploitation by the global North. Based on an exploratory factor analysis[10], we created four scales (see Table D1 in the Appendix for exact wording of the final 14 items and their corresponding factor loadings) reflecting attributions of poverty in the global South to international exploitation (four items, e.g., “Economic policies in the rich countries”, α = .87), to local political structures in the global South (four items, e.g., “Government corruption in the developing countries”, α = .78), to those living in poverty (four items, e.g., “Laziness and lack of effort among people in developing countries”, α = .80), and to nature (two items, e.g., “High prevalence of pests and insects in developing countries”, α = .69).

Results

The descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of all measures are reported in Table 3.1. We conducted a regression analysis with perceived personal causal responsibility as the dependent variable including all four causes of poverty as predictor variables. As expected, perceived international exploitation predicted acceptance of causal responsibility positively, $b = 0.42$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(189) = 4.76$, $p < .001$, controlling for the other three causes. Also as expected, attributing poverty to local political structures in the global South predicted causal responsibility negatively, $b = -0.41$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(189) = -3.61$, $p < .001$. In addition, seeing the reasons for poverty in those who are affected by it positively predicted personal causal responsibility, $b = 0.26$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(189) = 3.38$, $p < .001$, whereas attributing poverty to nature was no significant predictor, $b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(189) = 0.50$, $p = .620$, when accounting for the shared variance with the other causes.

[10] See our OSF project page.

Discussion

The results of Study 2 provide initial correlational support for our hypothesis that attributing poverty in the global South to international exploitation is associated with increased acceptance of personal causal responsibility for the situation of those affected by poverty. Moreover, blaming local governments was negatively related to acceptance of causal responsibility, thus being in line with our reasoning that this view on global poverty might help people to avoid facing their own causal contribution. We thus extended the results of Study 1 by showing how different causal explanations for the disadvantage experienced by poor people in the global South are related to acceptance of personal causal responsibility.

Table 3.1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility and Perceived Causes of Poverty in the Global South in Study 2

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. Causal Responsibility	2.71	1.61	-			
2. International Exploitation	4.86	1.36	.28**	-		
3. Local Political Structures	5.82	0.97	-.15*	.20**	-	
4. Internal to Poor People	3.31	1.52	.17*	-.15*	.10	-
5. Nature	4.38	1.46	.21**	.34**	.07	.27**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

3.7 Study 3

In the next study, we extended our analysis of the relationship between perceived causes of poverty in the global South and acceptance of personal causal responsibility to intentions to act against poverty as potential consequences. Specifically, we tested whether

attributing poverty to international exploitation predicts action intentions. We hypothesized this relationship to be mediated by acceptance of personal causal responsibility. In addition, we tested whether blaming local political structures showed an opposite indirect effect on action intentions via decreased causal responsibility. Furthermore, we sought to replicate the results of Study 2 including a confirmatory test of the factorial structure of the perceived causes of poverty in the global South.

Method

Participants

One-hundred ninety-two American MTurkers participated in Study 3 (82 female, 105 male, 3 other, 2 did not indicate). Mean age was 33.15 (*SD* = 11.12) with a range from 18 to 68. Eleven additional participants who met the exclusion criteria were excluded from the sample. The sample size of $N = 192$ provided 80% power to detect an effect of Cohen's $f^2 = 0.06$ in a linear multiple regression analysis with four predictors. For the mediation analysis, power was ~90% to detect two small to medium paths equal to 0.26 (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007; Schoenemann et al., 2017).

Measures

Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility. We used a seven-item measure to assess acceptance of personal causal responsibility for poverty in the global South (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$). We added three new items to the four-item measure used in Study 2. Three items were reverse-coded (e.g., "I don't think that the suffering of the poor in the global South is a result of my actions.").

Perceived Causes of Poverty in the Global South. Participants rated the same list of possible causes of poverty in the global South as in Study 2, corresponding to the dimensions international exploitation ($\alpha = .89$), local political structures in the global South ($\alpha = .87$), internal to poor people ($\alpha = .80$), and nature ($\alpha = .76$).

Action Intentions. We used the same list of six political actions as in Study 1. Participants indicated on a 7-point scale (1 = *definitely not true of me* to 7 = *definitely true of me*) whether they were going to take action against poverty in the global South by performing the respective activity (α = .85).

Results

A confirmatory factor analysis with AMOS 26 showed a good fit of the factorial structure of the perceived causes of poverty in the global South as established in Study 2, $\chi^2(71, N = 192) = 117.79$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.66$, RMSEA = .06, CFI = .96. We therefore conclude that the factorial structure of our measure is reliable. The descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of all measures are reported in Table 3.2. In a multiple regression analysis including all four causal dimensions as predictors, perceived international exploitation predicted acceptance of causal responsibility positively, $b = 0.40$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(187) = 5.67$, $p < .001$, whereas attributing poverty to local political structures in the global South predicted causal responsibility negatively, $b = -0.33$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(187) = -3.79$, $p < .001$. Explaining poverty in the global South by factors internal to poor people, $b = -0.11$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(187) = -1.49$, $p = .138$, or by nature, $b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(187) = 0.99$, $p = .325$, did not significantly predict causal responsibility in the regression model.

Moreover, consistent with previous research (Hine & Montiel, 1999; Pinazo et al., 2010; Thomas & McGarty, 2018), perceived international exploitation predicted the intention to act against poverty in the global South, $b = 0.53$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(187) = 7.40$, $p < .001$, controlling for the other causes. Attributing global poverty to local political causes was a negative predictor, $b = -0.20$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(187) = -2.22$, $p = .027$. Furthermore, acceptance of personal causal responsibility was positively correlated with the intention to act against poverty in the global South, $r = .48$, $p < .001$. We separately tested the indirect effects of perceived international exploitation and local political structures on action intentions via acceptance of personal causal responsibility using PROCESS 3.5 (Hayes, 2018). In each

regression model (model 4), we included the other three causal dimensions as covariates. As hypothesized, there was an indirect effect of perceived international exploitation on action intentions via causal responsibility, $b = 0.15$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [0.08, 0.23]. Moreover, results were in line with the assumption of an opposite indirect effect of explaining poverty in the global South by local political structures on action intentions via decreased acceptance of causal responsibility, $b = -0.12$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [-0.21, -0.05].

Table 3.2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility, Perceived Causes of Poverty in the Global South, and Action Intentions in Study 3

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Causal Responsibility	3.16	1.31	-				
2. International Exploitation	4.95	1.42	.35**	-			
3. Local Political Structures	5.66	1.13	-.07	.43**	-		
4. Internal to Poor People	3.04	1.43	-.17*	-.26**	-.08	-	
5. Nature	4.14	1.59	.02	.15*	.28**	.41**	-
6. Action Intentions	3.78	1.40	.48**	.49**	.10	-.11	.12

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Discussion

The results of Study 3 replicate our findings from Study 2 that attributing poverty among people in the global South to international exploitation is associated with higher acceptance of personal causal responsibility, whereas perceived local political causes are associated with decreased causal responsibility. The results of the mediation analyses are in line with our reasoning that acceptance of causal responsibility may explain the increased

levels of anti-poverty behaviors associated with explaining global poverty by international exploitation compared to blaming local governments (Hine & Montiel, 1999; Pinazo et al., 2010; Thomas & McGarty, 2018). However, due to the correlational nature of the study, the results did not provide evidence on whether focusing on the contribution of the self in causing poverty and human rights violations in the global South indeed *increases* acceptance of causal responsibility and prosocial outcomes.

3.8 Study 4

While Studies 2 and 3 centered on the correlates of attributing global poverty to *international exploitation*, we looked at the consequences of focusing more directly on the *self* in Study 4[11]. Moreover, we included actual donations dedicated for social change as a behavioral outcome. As in Study 1, we chose the issue of sweatshop conditions in the global fashion industry as an example of human rights violations and poverty in the global South. Participants focused either on their own causal responsibility for poverty and human rights violations in the global South as consumers and citizens or on the causal effects of local political structures.

We hypothesized that considering their own causal responsibility (vs. local political causes) would lead participants to accept causal responsibility to a higher degree which, in turn, would increase action intentions and actual donations. Based on the observed indirect effect in absence of a total effect on behavioral outcomes in Study 1, we sought to empirically investigate a potential suppression effect. We reasoned that self-focus might also elicit opposite indirect effects. As a potential antagonistic process, we included a measure of infrahumanization to explore whether thinking about their own causal responsibility (vs. local political causes) leads participants to deny unique human characteristics to those who are

[11] We conducted two more studies trying to manipulate responsibility focus within a reading task instead of letting participants generate reasons themselves. A subsequent thoughts generating task on this issue revealed that also participants in the condition focusing on local governments generated thoughts about their role as consumers. Therefore, we concluded that the manipulation was not successful and results should not be interpreted.

harmed, which in turn should decrease prosocial outcomes (Čehajić et al., 2009; Sainz et al., 2020).

Method

Participants

In Study 4, 195 American MTurkers participated (79 female, 110 male, 1 other, 5 did not indicate). Mean age was 33.70 (*SD* = 11.23, range 18 to 71). Five additional participants who met the exclusion criteria were excluded. The sample size (n_{self} = 97, n_{local} = 98) provided 80% power to detect an effect of Cohen's *d* = 0. 40. For the mediation analysis, power was 80% (Schoenemann et al., 2017) expecting a correlation of *r* = .20 between the experimental manipulation and acceptance of causal responsibility (Čehajić et al., 2009) and *r* = .40 between the mediator and action intentions (based on Study 3).

Manipulation of Responsibility Focus

Participants started by reading a short text about poor working conditions in the global garment industry stressing the human rights violations taking place in the factories. We manipulated responsibility focus by leading participants to focus either on their own causal responsibility for poor working conditions in the global garment industry or on the responsibility of local governments in the producing countries. Depending on experimental condition, participants were asked to generate and write down one to three ways in which they themselves [vs. the governments of the respective countries] are responsible for the situation of the textile workers presented in the text.

Measures

Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility. We assessed acceptance of personal causal responsibility with the single item "How much do you believe you are responsible for what is happening to textile workers in the global South?" Participants answered this question using a slider ranging in decimals of 10 from *0%* to *100%* (Čehajić et al., 2009).

Infrahumanization. We used a measure of infrahumanization that has been used in previous research showing that people who are motivated to deny full humanness to others do so by denying their capability to experience secondary emotions (Haslam & Loughnan, 2014). Participants were asked to indicate “the extent to which you believe textile workers in the global South, in general, are likely to feel the given emotion” (e.g., Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006; Čehajić et al., 2009). They rated 16 emotion words on a 7-point scale from 0 = *very unlikely* to 7 = *very likely*. The list contained eight primary emotions (four positive and four negative, e.g., “joy” and “fear”) and eight secondary emotions (four positive and four negative, e.g., “remorse” and “admiration”). Only the ratings of secondary emotions were used, with lower scores indicating infrahumanization (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .69$).

Action Intentions. Participants indicated how likely they were to engage in six behaviors to support the rights of textile workers in the global South using a slider ranging in decimals of 10 from *0%* to *100%* (e.g., “Ask your favorite brands what they do to ensure decent working conditions in the factories where their clothes are made.”, $\alpha = .90$).

Donation. After providing demographic information, participants were informed that the survey included a bonus of $0.25. They were asked whether they were willing to donate a part or the entire bonus to the Clean Clothes Campaign “to help them to improve working conditions in the global garment industry”. Participants chose their donation amount in a drop-down list containing six options from *donate $0.00, keep $0.25* to *donate $0.25, keep $0.00* in $0.05 steps. They were assured that donations to the Clean Clothes Campaign and bonus payments in MTurk would be carried out exactly as described. Finally, participants were debriefed about the one-sided view of responsibility for sweatshop conditions they were exposed to at the beginning of the study.

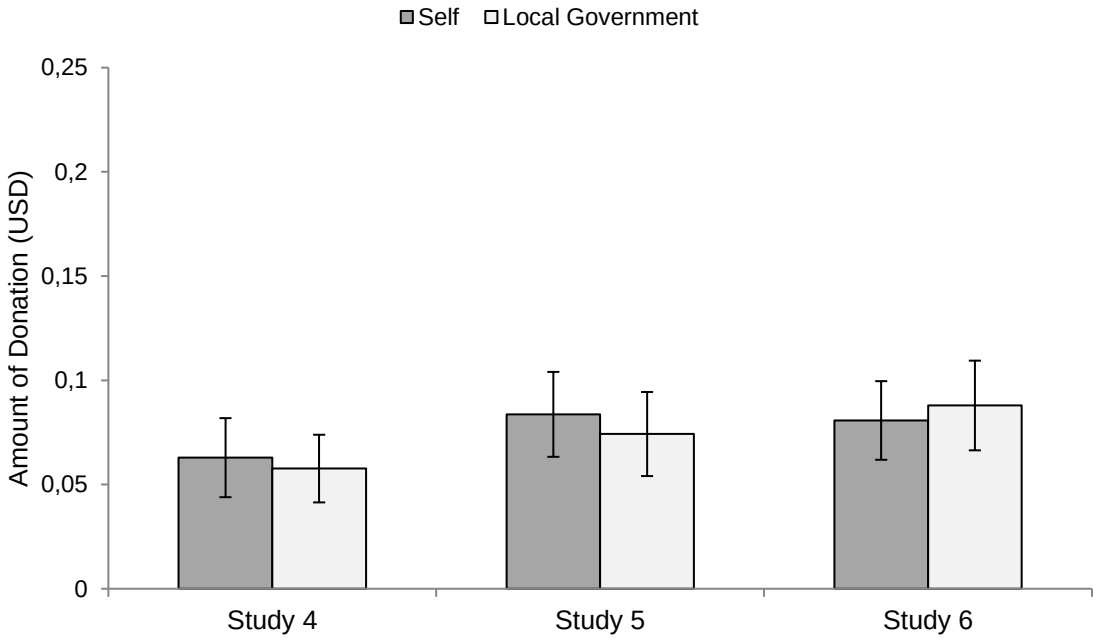
Results

Inspection of participants’ open-ended answers revealed that those who were asked to generate ways in which they themselves are responsible for the situation of the textile workers

mainly referred to buying the products and not protesting human rights violations. Participants who were asked to focus on local political causes emphasized that the governments of the respective countries fail to create and enforce laws that protect the garment workers.

Figure 3.2

Mean Donation Amounts in Studies 4, 5, and 6



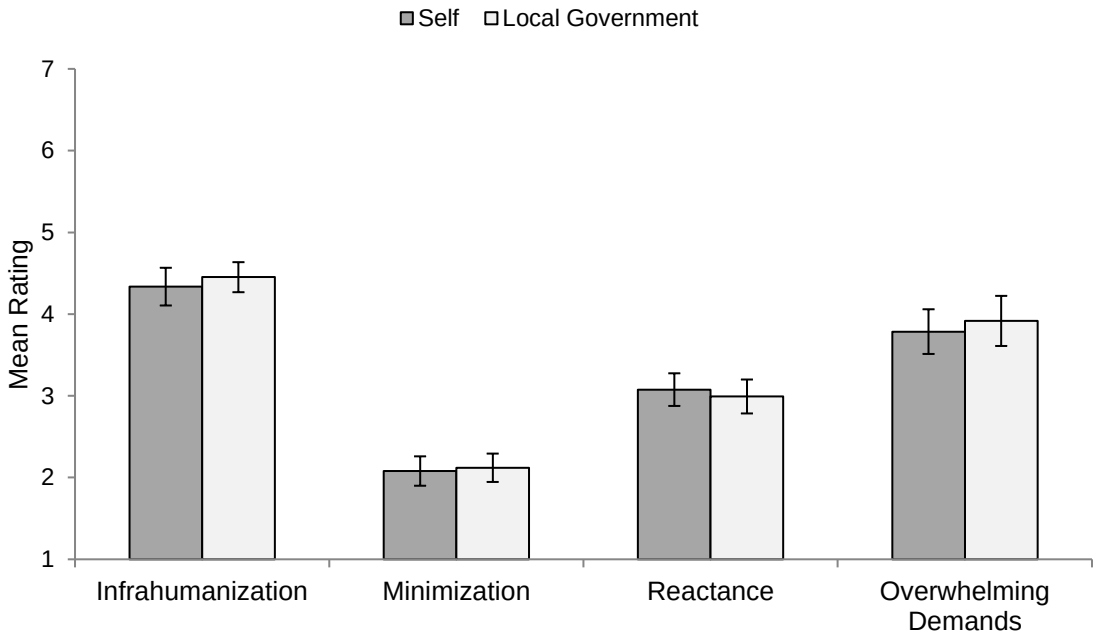
Note. Mean donation amounts (with 95% CIs) are shown for both experimental conditions (focus on causal responsibility of the self vs. local government).

As hypothesized, acceptance of personal causal responsibility was higher for participants who focused on their own causal responsibility than for those who focused on the causal responsibility of local governments, $t_{Welch}(184.86) = 2.82$, $p = .005$, Hedges' $g_s = 0.40$, 95% CI [0.12, 0.69] (see Table C2 in the Appendix for means and standard deviations). Moreover, there was a significant indirect effect of the experimental manipulation on action intentions, $b = 4.45$, $SE = 1.72$, 95% CI [1.29, 7.95], and on actual donations, $b = 0.012$, $SE = 0.005$, 95% CI [0.003, 0.023], through increased acceptance of causal responsibility. The

correlation of acceptance of personal causal responsibility with action intentions was $r = .40$, $p < .001$, and that with donation amount was $r = .34$, $p < .001$. However, there were no total effects of the experimental manipulation on action intentions, $t_{Welch}(190.52) = 0.45$, $p = .651$, Hedges' $g_s = 0.06$, 95% CI [-0.21, 0.34], or actual donations, $t_{Welch}(188.21) = 0.41$, $p = .682$, Hedges' $g_s = 0.06$, 95% CI [-0.22, 0.34] (see Figure 3.2 for donation amounts).

Figure 3.3

Mean Ratings of Potential Antagonistic Processes in Studies 4, 5, and 6



Note. Mean ratings (with 95% CIs) are shown for both experimental conditions (focus on causal responsibility of the self vs. local government). Infrahumanization data is from Study 4, minimization and reactance from Study 5, and the data on overwhelming demands from Study 6.

Next, we tested whether the absence of total effects could be explained by an opposite indirect effect of a focus on responsibility of the self (vs. local governments) on support towards the factory workers via increased infrahumanization. Results showed no effect of the

experimental manipulation on infrahumanization, $t_{Welch}(183.42) = -0.77$, $p = .443$, Hedges' $g_s = -0.11$, 95% CI [-0.39, 0.17] (see Figure 3.3). Also contrary to our expectations, infrahumanization did not correlate (negatively) with action intentions ($r = .05$, $p = .479$) or actual donations ($r = -.10$, $p = .155$).

Discussion

The results of Study 4 extend the correlational findings of Study 3 by demonstrating the consequences of actively confronting one's personal role in maintaining sweatshop conditions. Thinking about own causal responsibility for human rights violations and poverty in the global South increased acceptance of personal causal responsibility which, in turn, predicted the intention to support sweatshop workers in the form of political action. Importantly, perceived causal responsibility was also positively correlated with actual donations for structural change in global supply chains. However, we note that effect size estimates were small and imprecise. We argue that acceptance of personal causal responsibility is not simply a manipulation check but a dependent variable in its own right. As previous research has shown, confrontations with one's own transgressions do not necessarily lead to acceptance of responsibility (Čehajić et al., 2009; Schumann & Dweck, 2014).

Critically, as in Study 1, the effect of the focus manipulation was limited to indirect effects while it did not lead to increased action intentions or donations overall. Our reasoning that the absence of a total effect on behavioral outcomes in presence of an indirect effect might be explained by a suppression effect of infrahumanization was not confirmed. In contrast to this idea, infrahumanization was not increased by thinking about one's own causal responsibility. Although this candidate for a suppression effect received no support in Study 4, the operation of suppression effects is still feasible. We therefore sought to empirically explore other possible antagonistic processes that might be elicited by focusing on the causal responsibility of the self in the following studies.

3.9 Study 5

Based on the observed pattern in Study 1 and Study 4 showing indirect effects of self-focus on anti-poverty action in absence of total effects, we investigated two possible mechanisms that might suppress the total effects. We tested two potential defensive processes that might operate in opposition to increased acceptance of personal causal responsibility as a response to thinking about one's own causal responsibility for sweatshop conditions. Specifically, we tested whether a focus on own causal responsibility for poor working conditions increases the tendency to minimize or legitimize the negative consequences factory workers in the global South are experiencing (Bandura, 1999; Paharia et al,. 2013). In addition, we tested whether self-focus increases resentment and reactance (O'Keefe, 2000). We reasoned that both mechanisms might decrease action intentions and actual donations, thereby cancelling out the prosocial path via acceptance of personal causal responsibility (Graton et al., 2016; Jost et al., 2017; Kardos et al., 2016). [12]

Method

Participants

Participants were 198 American MTurkers (92 female, 103 male, 3 did not indicate). Mean age was 32.06 (*SD* = 11.20, range 18 to 70). Three additional participants who met the exclusion criteria were excluded. The sample size (n_{self} = 101, n_{local} = 97) provided 80% power to detect effects of Cohen's d = 0.40.

Manipulation of Responsibility Focus

We used the same procedure to manipulate responsibility focus (self vs. local political causes) as in Study 4.

[12] We conducted an additional study that was almost identical to Study 5 but failed to provide evidence for an effect of the experimental manipulation on acceptance of causal responsibility using a single item measure. We report the study on OSF.

Measures

Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility. We used the same four-item measure as in Study 2, adapted to the specific context of poor working conditions in the fashion industry (Cronbach’s α = .91).

Minimization. We measured the tendency to minimize and legitimize sweatshop conditions by asking participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed to six statements, three of which were adapted from measures of modern racism reported by Powell et al. (2005; e.g., “The textile workers are getting too demanding in their push for better working conditions.”, “I think the working conditions in the global garment industry are a sort of necessary evil.”, α = .76). Participants answered these items on a 7-point scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Reactance. We created a list of ten statements to tap into the perception of being the target of manipulation attempts and associated negative reactions of resentment and irritation (e.g., “In this study I was able to make free and independent decisions.” (reverse-coded), “It annoyed me being asked to think about the working conditions in the global garment industry.”, α = .77). Participants indicated their agreement from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Action Intentions. The intention to act to support the rights of textile workers in the global South was assessed using the same measure as in Study 4.

Donations. We assessed actual donations the same way as in Study 4.

Results

In line with our hypothesis and consistent to Study 4, responsibility acceptance was significantly higher in the self-focus condition than in the local political causes condition, $t_{Welch}(195.34) = 4.18$, $p < .001$, Hedges’ $g_s = 0.59$, 95% CI [0.31, 0.88] (see Table C3 in the Appendix for means and standard deviations). Again, there was an indirect effect of the experimental manipulation of responsibility focus on action intentions, $b = 5.59$, $SE = 1.69$,

95% CI [2.54, 9.11], and actual donations, $b = 0.014$, $SE = 0.006$, 95% CI [0.004, 0.026], through increased acceptance of causal responsibility. As in Study 1 and Study 4, action intentions, $t_{Welch}(194.48) = 1.30$, $p = .194$, Hedges' $g_s = 0.18$, 95% CI [-0.09, 0.46], and donations, $t_{Welch}(195.98) = 0.65$, $p = .519$, Hedges' $g_s = 0.09$, 95% CI [-0.19, 0.37], did not differ between experimental conditions (see Figure 3.2 for donation amounts).

In contrast to the idea that minimizing sweatshop conditions might act as a suppressor variable, minimization did not differ between conditions, $t_{Welch}(194.92) = -0.31$, $p = .754$, Hedges' $g_s = -0.04$, 95% CI [-0.32, 0.23] (see Figure 3.3). The same applied to reactance, $t_{Welch}(195.32) = 0.57$, $p = .568$, Hedges' $g_s = 0.08$, 95% CI [-0.20, 0.36]. As expected, minimization correlated negatively with action intentions ($r = -.30$, $p < .001$). In contrast to our hypotheses, minimization did not correlate significantly with donations ($r = -.13$, $p = .070$) and reactance was unrelated to both measures of behavioral outcomes ($r = -.12$, $p = .092$, and $r = -.12$, $p = .081$).

Discussion

Study 5 replicated the pattern of an indirect effect of responsibility focus on anti-poverty action through acceptance of personal causal responsibility in absence of a total effect, as observed in Study 1 and Study 4. Our reasoning that self-focus might elicit defensive reactions in the form of minimizing the injustice sweatshop workers are experiencing or in the form of resentment and reactance were not confirmed. As such, two further candidates for opposite indirect effects that might cancel out the positive indirect effect through acceptance of causal responsibility received no support.

3.10 Study 6

In Study 6, we investigated another potential mechanism that might be responsible for the lack of a total effect of responsibility focus on behavioral outcomes despite the presence of an indirect effect, as observed in the previous studies. We tested whether thinking about

one's own causal responsibility for poor working conditions in the global South increases the feeling of being overwhelmed by the demands of acting ethically in a globalized economic system, which might itself inhibit action for social change (Carrington et al., 2020; Lichtenberg, 2010).

Method

Participants

Participants in Study 6 were 200 American MTurk users (96 female, 102 male, 2 did not indicate) ranging in age from 18 to 73 years (M = 35.31, SD = 12.54). Three other participants who met the exclusion criteria were excluded from the sample. The sample size of N = 200 (n_{self} = 109, n_{local} = 91) provided 80% power to detect an effect of Cohen's d = 0.40.

Manipulation of Responsibility Focus

We used the same procedure to manipulate responsibility focus (self vs. local political causes) as in the previous studies.

Measures

Participants completed the same four-item measure of acceptance of causal responsibility (Cronbach's α = .92) as in Study 5 and the same measures of action intentions (α = .86) and donations as in Studies 4 and 5. The feeling of being overwhelmed by the problem of sweatshop labor was measured with five items (overwhelmed, paralyzed, helpless, powerless, hopeless; α = .86). We adapted a measure from Batson et al. (1987) presenting participants with a list of 26 emotion adjectives[13] and asking them to "indicate to what extent you have felt this way while thinking about this issue" (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely*).

Results

Replicating Study 4 and Study 5, acceptance of personal causal responsibility was higher in the self-focus condition than in the local political causes condition,

[13] The list included adjectives related to empathy, distress, anger, and guilt not analyzed in the present manuscript. Materials and data are available on OSF.

$t_{Welch}(192.68) = 3.10$, $p = .002$, Hedges’ $g_s = 0.44$, 95% CI [0.16, 0.72] (see Table C4 in the Appendix for means and standard deviations). Again, self-focus (vs. local political causes) showed an indirect effect on action intentions, $b = 4.79$, $SE = 1.84$, 95% CI [1.60, 8.85], and donations, $b = 0.011$, $SE = 0.005$, 95% CI [0.003, 0.021], through increased acceptance of personal causal responsibility. As in the previous studies, there were no total effects of the experimental manipulation on action intentions, $t_{Welch}(193.12) = 0.68$, $p = .498$, Hedges’ $g_s = 0.10$, 95% CI [-0.18, 0.37] , or actual donations, $t_{Welch}(188.63) = -0.49$, $p = .623$, Hedges’ $g_s = -0.07$, 95% CI [-0.35, 0.21] (see Figure 3.2 for donation amounts).

We tested whether focusing on their own causal responsibility increased peoples’ feeling of being overwhelmed by the demands of acting ethically within global economic systems, which in turn could reduce their willingness to act. Results provided no evidence for this hypothesis. There was no significant difference in the degree of feeling overwhelmed between experimental conditions, $t_{Welch}(189.91) = -0.63$, $p = .534$, Hedges’ $g_s = -0.09$, 95% CI [-0.37, 0.19] (see Figure 3.3). Neither was there a significant negative correlation between feeling overwhelmed and action intentions ($r = .06$, $p = .366$) or donations ($r = .05$, $p = .463$).

Discussion

Results of Study 6 replicated the indirect effect of focus on one’s own causal responsibility for sweatshop conditions (vs. local political causes) on support towards sweatshop workers through increased acceptance of causal responsibility. As in the previous studies, there was no total effect of the experimental manipulation on action intentions or donations. Our hypothesis that self-focus might trigger the feeling of being overwhelmed by the demands of the issue as a parallel process that could decrease prosocial outcomes was not supported by the data. Thus, a fourth candidate for an opposite indirect effect between self-focus and behavioral outcomes that might create a suppression effect received no support.

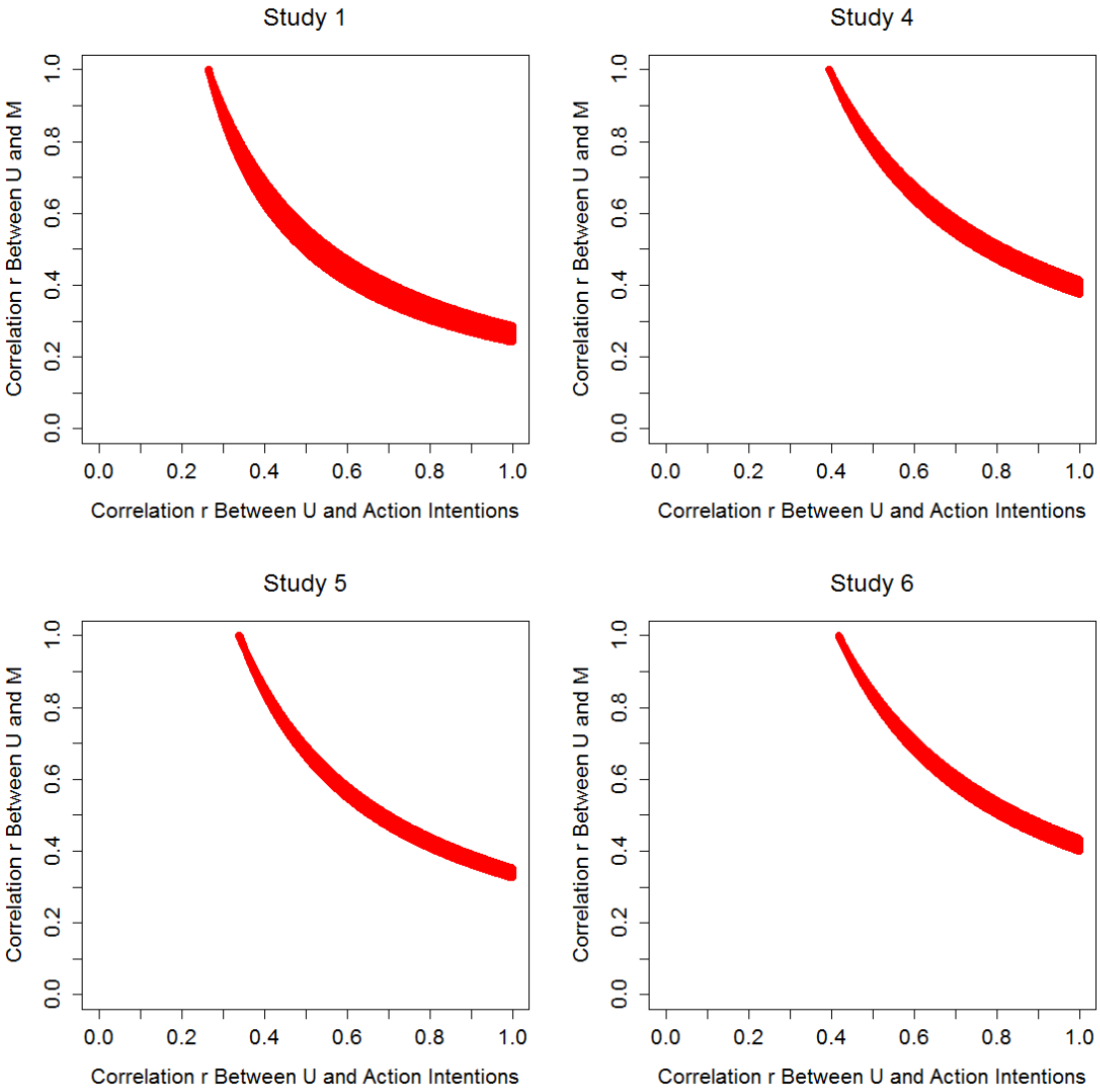
3.11 Sensitivity of Indirect Effects to Confounding

Across four experimental studies, we consistently found the pattern of an indirect effect of self-focus on behavioral outcomes via acceptance of personal causal responsibility in absence of a total effect. Four candidates for a suppression effect that might have cancelled out the observed positive indirect effect received no support. We thus empirically explored the possibility that the observed indirect effects were due to confounding between acceptance of causal responsibility and behavioral outcomes (MacKinnon & Pirlott, 2015). All mediation analyses rest on the assumption that there are no unobserved confounding variables of the relation between mediator and dependent variable (Fiedler et al., 2011). Sensitivity analysis can be used to investigate how potential confounding variables can affect an observed indirect effect (Loeys et al., 2015).

To estimate the robustness of the observed indirect effects, we assessed sensitivity to confounding between the mediator and the dependent variable. We applied the *left out variables error* method (LOVE) using the R-syntax provided by MacKinnon & Pirlott (2015). The LOVE method allows researchers to determine how high the correlations between a hypothetical confounding variable and both the mediator and the dependent variable would have to be for the indirect effect to become zero (MacKinnon & Pirlott, 2015). The LOVE method can be used to create plots showing possible combinations of these hypothetical correlations that would reduce the indirect effect to zero (Cox et al., 2013). Based on the size of these correlations, researchers can judge how likely it is that unmeasured confounding is an explanation for the observed indirect effects.

Figure 3.4

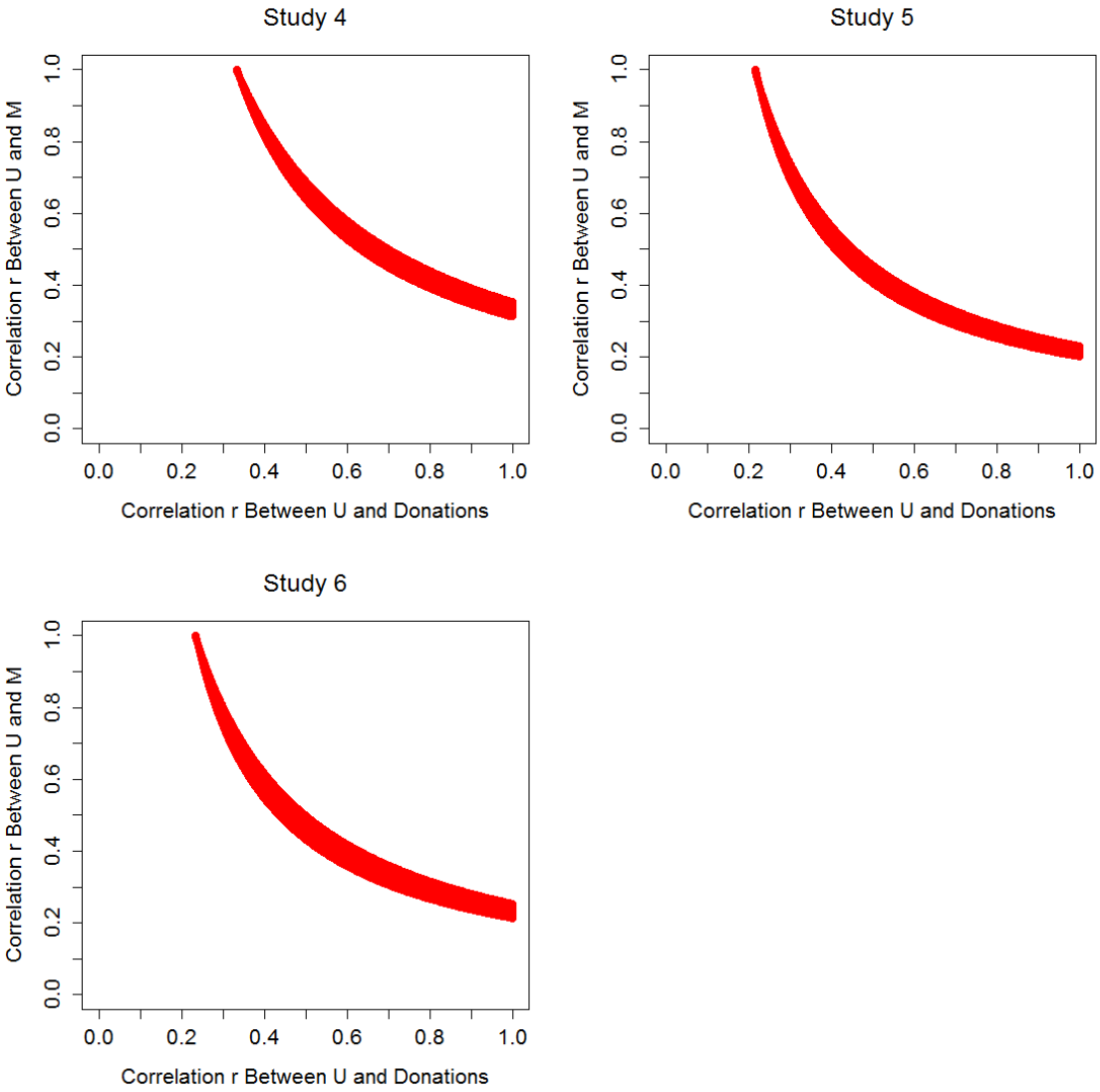
Left Out Variables Error (LOVE) Plots for the Indirect Effect of Self-Focus on Action Intentions Through Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility in Studies 1, 4, 5, and 6



Note. The plotted curves represent combinations of the correlation between a hypothetical confounding variable (U) and action intentions as the dependent variable (x-axis) and the correlation between U and the hypothesized mediator acceptance of personal causal responsibility (M, y-axis). Any combination of these correlations that falls onto the line would reduce the observed indirect effect to zero.

Figure 3.5

Left Out Variables Error (LOVE) Plots for the Indirect Effect of Self-Focus on Amount of Donations Through Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility in Studies 4, 5, and 6



Note. The plotted curves represent combinations of the correlation between a hypothetical confounding variable (U) and amount of donations as the dependent variable (x-axis) and the correlation between U and the hypothesized mediator acceptance of personal causal responsibility (M, y-axis). Any combination of these correlations that falls onto the line would reduce the observed indirect effect to zero.

Figures 3.4 and 3.5 show LOVE plots obtained for the indirect effects of the experimental manipulation of self-focus on both action intentions (Figure 3.4) and actual donations (Figure 3.5) in Studies 1, 4, 5, and 6[14]. The plotted lines show combinations of correlations between a hypothetical confounding variable *U* and the dependent variable (i.e., action intentions or amount of donations; x-axis), and between *U* and the hypothesized mediator acceptance of personal causal responsibility *M* (y-axis). For example, in Study 1 an unobserved confounding variable that correlates approximately $r = .50$ with both acceptance of personal causal responsibility and action intentions would be necessary to reduce the observed indirect effect to zero (see upper left in Figure 3.4). As can also be seen, sensitivity to confounding was slightly lower in Study 4 (see upper right in Figure 3.4). For example, a correlation of $r = .60$ between a confounder and both acceptance of causal responsibility and action intentions would be necessary to reduce the indirect effect to zero. In Studies 5 and 6, sensitivity to confounding fell between the results of Studies 1 and 4.

LOVE plots for the mediation analyses involving actual donations as dependent variable showed comparable results (see Figure 3.5). For example, a given hypothetical correlation between *U* and *M* of $r = .50$ would require a correlation of about $r = .65$ between *U* and amount of donation in Study 4 to reduce the indirect effect to zero. These results of the sensitivity analyses suggest that confounding between the mediator and the dependent variables could explain the observed indirect effects only by assuming relatively high correlations between a confounding variable and both the mediator and the dependent variables.

Based on these results, we examined plausible variables that might confound the relation between acceptance of personal causal responsibility and behavioral outcomes. For example, social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto et al., 1994), i.e., the preference for intergroup inequality as a generalized political attitude, might explain both to what extent

[14] We did not obtain a LOVE plot for the analysis involving actual behavior in Study 1 (i.e., whether participants signed a petition) because binary dependent variables are not supported by the LOVE method (Cox et al., 2013).

people accept causal responsibility for sweatshop conditions and the degree of action for social change (Ho et al., 2012). An analysis of SDO data included in Studies 2 and 3 showed that the correlations between SDO and acceptance of causal responsibility were r = -.09 and r = -.32, respectively, and that the correlation between SDO and action intentions was r = -.40. Accordingly, these correlation coefficients are substantially smaller than those suggested by the sensitivity analyses.

Moreover, we explored whether moral identity could be a possible confounding variable explaining the relation between the proposed mediator and the dependent variables. Additional analyses of moral identity data in Study 5 revealed that moral identity correlated r = .20 with acceptance of personal causal responsibility, r = .37 with action intentions, and r = .10 with actual donations. These small to moderate correlations correspond to the size of correlations between moral identity and donation behavior reported in previous research (e.g., r = .28, Aquino & Reed, 2002). Thus, moral identity is also not a likely candidate for a confounding variable explaining the relation between acceptance of personal causal responsibility and prosocial outcomes. Similarly, the correlation of social desirability with (self-reported) charitable donations has been shown to be approximately r = .30 (e.g., Musch et al., 2012), implying that a correlation of at least r = .70 with acceptance of causal responsibility is required to reduce the observed indirect effect to zero. In summary, correlations with a third variable would have to be significantly higher than those shown for some plausible variables to completely explain the observed indirect effects.

3.12 General Discussion

In two correlational and four experimental studies, we investigated the role of acceptance of personal causal responsibility in the relationship between perceived causes of poverty in the global South and action for social change. Correlational results confirmed the finding from previous research that attributing poverty in the global South to international

exploitation compared to local political causes is related to increased levels of anti-poverty action (Hine & Montiel, 1999; Pinazo et al., 2010; Thomas & McGarty, 2018). We extended this evidence by providing results consistent with the idea that acceptance of personal causal responsibility mediates this relationship. These findings show that explaining poverty in the global South by international exploitation is not limited to other-focused attention directed at third parties as perpetrators, but also involves self-focused acceptance of personal causal responsibility.

This finding helps explain why not all perceived third-party causation (international vs. local) is equally associated with anti-poverty action but applies primarily to perceived international exploitation. People who explain poverty through the actions of actors in the global North accept personal causal responsibility to a greater degree than those who focus on local political causes. Consistent with this view, other research has shown that increased moral outrage towards international exploitation may be explained by moral identity concerns due to personal causal responsibility (Rothschild & Keefer, 2017). We therefore suggest that acceptance of personal causal responsibility constitutes an important link between representations of poverty in the global South and action for social change.

Extending these correlational findings, we showed experimentally that thinking about the personal contribution to causing sweatshop conditions in global supply chains (vs. local political causes) or merely about the own benefits increased acceptance of personal causal responsibility.[15] The acknowledgement of personal causal responsibility, in turn, predicted political action intentions as well as the signing of a petition and actual donations dedicated to structural change in global supply chains. All four experiments provided evidence consistent with an indirect effect of self-focus on behavioral outcomes via acceptance of personal causal responsibility.

[15] A meta-analysis across Studies 1, 4, 5, 6, and two additional studies (see OSF) showed a moderate effect in a random-effects model, Hedges’ $g = 0.41$, 95% CI [0.27, 0.56], $SE = 0.07$, $z = 5.57$, $p < .001$.

However, all four experimental studies consistently showed no total effect of focusing on the causal responsibility of the self (vs. local political causes) on behavioral outcomes.[16] Therefore, we investigated whether four potential opposite processes (i.e., suppressor variables, Rucker et al., 2011) could explain this lack of a total effect, despite the existence of an indirect effect through acceptance of causal responsibility. We found no evidence that thinking about one's own causal responsibility for sweatshop conditions increases infrahumanization, minimization of the negative consequences people in the global South are experiencing, resentment and reactance towards donation requests, or the feeling of being overwhelmed by the demands of acting ethically in a globalized economy. Thus, the present results provide no empirical support for the idea that a positive indirect path via acceptance of causal responsibility is cancelled out by other indirect paths with an opposite sign. Nevertheless, we cannot rule out the possibility that other unmeasured variables could have produced a suppression effect.

Alternatively, unmeasured third variables might explain the relation between responsibility acceptance and behavioral outcomes (Loeys et al., 2015). In that case, the observed indirect effects would be due to spurious correlations between the proposed mediator and the dependent variables. To test the robustness of the observed indirect effects against unmeasured confounding variables, we computed sensitivity analyses using the LOVE method (Cox et al., 2013). These sensitivity analyses showed that large correlations of about $r = .50$ between a hypothetical confounding variable and both the mediator and the dependent variable would be necessary to reduce the indirect effects to zero (MacKinnon & Pirlott, 2015). If one of these two correlations were lower (e.g., $r = .30$), the other would have to be higher ($r = .70$ in Study 1).

[16] For action intentions, the effect size in a random-effects model meta-analysis across Studies 1, 4, 5, 6, and an additional study (see OSF) was Hedges' $g = 0.11$, 95% CI [-0.02, 0.23], $SE = 0.06$, $z = 1.65$, $p = .098$. For donation amounts, the effect size across Studies 4, 5, 6, and two additional studies (see OSF) was Hedges' $g = 0.06$, 95% CI [-0.06, 0.19], $SE = 0.06$, $z = 1.00$, $p = .316$.

For some plausible third variables (SDO, moral identity, social desirability), we have shown that substantially lower correlations are to be expected ($|rs| \leq .40$). In addition, we note that our dependent variables included measures of actual behavior, thereby reducing the likelihood that their correlations with acceptance of personal causal responsibility are substantially confounded by common method variance. In summary, although we cannot rule out the possibility of confounding, the sensitivity analyses performed show that it is unlikely that the relationship between the proposed mediator and dependent variables can be attributed to spurious correlations alone.

Rather, empirical research has provided extensive causal evidence that perceived causal responsibility for harm actually *increases* prosocial behavior. In contexts other than poverty in the global South or sweatshop conditions, numerous experiments examining the effect of transgressions on prosocial behavior have shown that people who believe they have harmed another are more likely than others to engage in helping behavior (for meta-analyses see Boster et al., 2016; O'Keefe, 2000). Although these studies typically did not explicitly measure acceptance of causal responsibility, evidence showing that transgressions increase feelings of guilt suggests that in these settings participants in the transgression (vs. no transgression) conditions accepted causal responsibility for the harm done to another person (Cryder et al., 2012). Thus, we argue that previous research supports the proposed causal relationship between acceptance of causal responsibility for sweatshop conditions and action in favor of the harmed workers.

Taken together, the present studies provide tentative support for an indirect effect of an intervention that makes people think about their own causal responsibility for sweatshop conditions (vs. local political causes) on action for social change via acceptance of personal causal responsibility. However, even after examining potential suppression effects and sensitivity to confounding, it remains an open question why stimulating self-focus did not increase action overall, although it did increase acceptance of personal causal responsibility

which itself was positively related to action. Future research may provide insights under which conditions (if any) people in the global North are actually more likely to respond with prosocial behavior to interventions involving confrontations with their personal causal responsibility for poverty and human rights violations in the global South. As research on peoples’ reactions to their own moral transgressions suggests, providing opportunities for future improvement may promote prosocial instead of defensive responses (Ellemers, 2017; Gausel et al., 2012; Schumann & Dweck, 2014).

Conclusion

Acceptance of personal causal responsibility constitutes an important link between perceived causes of poverty in the global South and anti-poverty action. It would be fruitful for research on action against poverty and human rights violations in the global South to focus more on how people in the global North perceive their own causal responsibility. In terms of practical applications, the present research did not provide evidence that encouraging people to think about their own causal responsibility for poverty in the global South is effective in increasing anti-poverty behavior although it does increase acceptance of personal causal responsibility. It remains an open question why the observed indirect effects of such interventions on action via acceptance of personal causal responsibility are not reflected in increased action overall.

Open Practices

All materials and data for all studies reported in this manuscript are publicly available on the Open Science Framework (OSF): https://osf.io/eybxj/?view_only=55633ea766794639b24c1fe562798519.

Chapter 4

4. General Discussion

Drawing on the societal and philosophical debate on the moral imperative of consumer complicity in global injustice, two lines of research were presented to make an empirical contribution to this issue and to fill the corresponding gap in the psychological literature. Consumer complicity was defined as supporting companies in creating and maintaining poor working conditions (such as hazardous working environments, forced overtime, and low wages that are not enough to live on, in spite of excessive working hours) by buying their products. The central question was to what extent individual complicity (vs. being an uninvolved bystander) in sweatshop labor as a case of global injustice increases the moral obligation (Chapter 2) and actual behavior (Chapter 3) to help those suffering from this injustice. Thus, the focus was on whether causally involved individuals are seen as more obligated to help workers suffering from sweatshop conditions than uninvolved bystanders. Or, in other words, whether helping is considered a moral necessity for a causally involved person (a mandatory compensation), whereas it is considered a merely optional act of charity for a person who is not involved in causing the workers' plight.

Firstly, the present studies of both empirical chapters provide evidence that people assign causal responsibility to individuals for the negative outcomes of a complex global system they are involved in. Secondly, when people make abstract moral judgments about others, causal involvement in structural injustice increases the moral obligation to support those harmed (Studies 2, 4, and 5 in Chapter 2). Thirdly, the studies reported in Chapter 2 provide evidence for a self-other asymmetry in the pathway from causal involvement in sweatshop labor to judgments of moral obligation to act (Studies 4 and 5). Specifically, whereas abstract others were deemed to have a stronger moral obligation to support sweatshop workers when they were complicit than when they were uninvolved, no such

difference was found for participants’ judgments of their own (or, in Study 5, close others’) moral obligation. As a caveat, it should be noted that a self-other asymmetry received no support in the supplementary studies S1 and S2, as well as the internal meta-analysis including these studies and Studies 1 to 3, possibly because the targets of judgment in the other-condition in Studies S1 and S2 were concrete individuals presented through vivid vignettes (see supplementary report of Studies S1 and S2 in Appendix B). However, the pre-registered and adequately powered Studies 4 and 5 reported in Chapter 2 provided convincing evidence for an increased effect of causal involvement when judging distant or average others compared to the self (or close others).

In addition to this asymmetry, ratings of participants’ *own* moral obligation were found to be high irrespective of causal responsibility. That is, moral obligation was only *decreased* when judging *others* who were causally uninvolved. Thus, on the one hand, the results from Chapter 2 suggest that peoples’ own (vs. others’) moral obligation to support sweatshop workers is less influenced by individual involvement in causing the poor working conditions. On the other hand, the results suggest that people generally have higher expectations regarding their own moral obligation to help compared to that of others. Study 5 in Chapter 2 provided evidence consistent with the idea that access to internal thoughts and feelings can explain why one’s own moral obligation to help does not depend on causal responsibility for the workers’ plight, whereas it does when judging the moral obligation of others. Justifications of sweatshop labor in response to causal involvement of the self as a possible alternative explanation for the attenuated effect of causal involvement on peoples’ own (vs. others’) moral obligation received no empirical support (Study 1, S1, and S2 in Chapter 2).

Consistent with the self-other asymmetry in the effect of causal involvement on moral obligation, the four experiments reported in Chapter 3 consistently provided no evidence for a total effect of making people think about their own harmful contribution to global injustice on

actual behavior for social change (Studies 1, 4, 5, and 6). Moreover, in line with the results about justifications in Chapter 2, no evidence was found for the hypothesis that this result can be explained by defensive reactions such as infrahumanization of those harmed (Čehajić et al., 2009; Haslam & Loughnan, 2014), and minimization and legitimization of sweatshop-conditions (Bandura, 1999; Paharia et al., 2013). In the following, alternative explanations, implications, and open questions shall be discussed.

4.1 Individual Causal Responsibility for Structural Injustice

To start with the causal responsibility stage, the present findings contribute to the literature on how people perceive individuals' causal responsibility for group outcomes (Gerstenberg & Lagnado, 2010; Zultan et al., 2012). In all studies manipulating causal involvement of consumers (Studies 1 to 5 in Chapter 2 and Studies 4 to 6 in Chapter 3), causal involvement increased perceived personal causal responsibility for sweatshop conditions. The present research thus provides evidence that people do assign causal responsibility to individual consumers even in a complex causal chain such as the causation of sweatshop conditions. This result is noteworthy because theories of causal responsibility (e.g., Alicke, 2000) would predict very low ratings at best because of the extremely large number of additional causes, the complexity of the causal chain including high psychological distance between consumer and negative outcome, and the low salience of counterfactual situations that would make the consumer's individual behavior critical to the outcome (Sloman & Lagnado, 2015). Yet the findings also raise new questions about peoples' representations of the causal function of structural injustice.

How exactly do people perceive the individual causal impact of consumers? For instance, people might belief that consumers are causally responsible because they make an economic contribution by transferring money to companies that use sweatshop labor. Another possibility could be that causal responsibility is understood in terms of political processes.

Young (2006), for example, reasoned that individuals bear responsibility for structural injustice due to their participation in the social processes that produce these outcomes. In this sense, individuals are perceived to contribute to global injustice through their social influence. Possibly, such different beliefs about the nature of consumers' causal impact on sweatshop conditions may be associated with different types of remedial action. Specifically, perceiving consumers' causal responsibility in terms of economic processes might promote avoidance of sweatshop-made products (boycott) or *ethical consumption* (Andorfer & Liebe, 2012). Focusing on social influence, on the other hand, might promote political action (Thomas & McGarty, 2018). Nikolic & Lagnado (2015) report results that point in this direction by showing that peoples' beliefs about the causal function of complex economic structures predict the perceived effectiveness of different actions, for example changing consumer behavior. However, as the present results also show, confronting consumers with their own complicity does not automatically translate into prosocial consequences.

4.2 Self-Other Asymmetry in the Effect of Causal Responsibility on Prosocial Outcomes

For abstract moral judgments, there was a clear prediction: Individuals should be judged to have a stronger moral obligation to fight cases of poverty and human rights violations in which they are complicit (by supporting companies in creating sweatshop conditions) than those in which they are merely uninvolved bystanders. This is because people perceive the proscriptive moral rule of not harming others as a mandatory obligation and judge those who violate this duty to owe compensation to those harmed (Darley & Pittman, 2003), whereas the prescriptive duty to help others in need is seen as commendatory and not strict (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2009), especially when it comes to distant others (Gilead et al., 2018). For peoples' judgments about their own moral obligation, two opposite predictions were conceivable. On the one hand, people might take information about their causal involvement in global injustice into account when judging their moral obligation to act,

just as for judgments about others. Based on self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), norm activation theory (Schwartz, 1977; Schwartz & Howard, 1981), and the literature on moral self-regulation (Zhong et al., 2009) we could expect that facing one's own involvement in global injustice would increase feelings of moral obligation to support those harmed because of an increased sense of connectedness and the need to affirm one's morality. On the other hand, people might engage in various moral disengagement strategies to cope with their threatened moral self-image (Bandura, 1999; Ellemers, 2017; Shalvi et al., 2015) and thus discount information about their complicity.

To elucidate this question, Chapter 2 focused on judgments of *moral obligation* to support the workers suffering from structural injustice. A self-other asymmetry in the effect of causal involvement on moral obligation emerged. As predicted, causal involvement in harming sweatshop workers increased moral obligation to support the workers in judgments about *others*. In contrast, in judgments about their *own* moral obligation to act, participants did not hold themselves accountable for their causal involvement. Specifically, moral obligation was equally high regardless of causal involvement. Although there was no ceiling effect (e.g., in Study 4 in Chapter 2, means were 3.60 and 3.38 on a 7-point scale), causal involvement did not increase individuals' own moral obligation. In line with this finding, in Chapter 3, thinking about their own causal responsibility for sweatshop labor did not significantly increase participants *actual behavior* for social change (i.e., signing a petition or donating to an organization supporting workers' rights). Thus, these results provided no evidence for the idea that facing one's own complicity activates feelings of moral obligation and compensatory behavior in the context of structural global injustice.

The present research thus makes an important empirical contribution to the largely normative discussion on whether individual consumers and citizens in the wealthy countries should be considered causally responsible and therefore particularly obligated to act against global poverty and sweatshop labor in particular (e.g., Lichtenberg, 2010; Pierik, 2013;

Pogge, 2014; Satz, 2005; Steinhoff, 2012; Wringe, 2018; Young, 2006). The results regarding participants’ judgments about abstract others are in line with Pogge’s (2011a) intuition that “other things equal, it is worse to let an injustice persist if one is complicit in it than if one is merely an uninvolved bystander” (p. 16). However, the results also suggest that although people may share this moral intuition in principle (i.e., from an abstract third-person perspective), their conclusions regarding their own complicity may be different.

4.3 Why Might People Discount Their Own Causal Responsibility?

The present results provide evidence that the effect of causal involvement on moral obligation is attenuated in the case of self-judgments (and close others) compared to judgments about (distant) others. We will focus on this finding, before discussing the observed overall pattern of moral obligation means which also suggests that subjects showed higher expectations of themselves (vs. others) in terms of a general obligation to help (and leave only others “off the hook” in the case of no causal involvement). Personal causal responsibility for sweatshop labor seems to be less relevant for one’s own moral obligation towards the workers than for the moral obligation of other potential helpers. Which processes might be involved that could allow people to discount their own causal responsibility for sweatshop-conditions while holding others accountable for their involvement? As reported in Chapter 3, no evidence for explicit (or even antisocial) defensive mechanisms that could have inhibited prosocial reactions towards sweatshop workers such as infrahumanization of those harmed (Čehajić et al., 2009; Haslam & Loughnan, 2014), and minimization and legitimization of sweatshop-conditions (Bandura, 1999; Paharia et al., 2013) was found. Similarly, justifications for sweatshop labor did not differ between causally involved and uninvolved participants in Study 1 (as well as in Studies S1 and S2) in Chapter 2. It is conceivable that when participants thought about themselves, more subtle processes led them

not to perceive their participation in global supply chains involving sweatshop labor as a moral violation.

First, it should be noted that such processes could operate at different stages in the sequence from confronting causal involvement to judgments of moral obligation to support the workers. Adopting Malle's (2021) framework of moral judgments, thinking about the self versus others may impact a), the evaluation of the situation of sweatshop workers and consumers' causal involvement (if present), b), the consideration of the issue in relation to norms and values, c), the wrongness judgment of the target person's action (or inaction), and d), the blame judgment about the target person. Finally, thinking about the self and others may differ in the extent to which judgments about the moral obligation to support the workers are influenced by potential blame assigned to the target person. That is, the present question involves, on the one hand, a past-focused moral judgment about complicity (in the causal involvement condition), and, on the other hand, a more future-focused judgment about the moral obligation to help, which is presumably influenced by additional processes (Schwartz, 1977).

At the first stage of this sequence – perceived causal responsibility – there was only evidence for a small self-other asymmetry. Across all studies in Chapters 2 and 3, participants acknowledged individual causal responsibility, even when they made judgments about themselves. Moving further in the sequence, several theoretical accounts would predict that less blame is assigned to the self relative to others for causal involvement in harm. Differences in the assignment of blame for one's own vs. others' causal involvement could be one way to explain the observed self-other asymmetry in moral obligation.

According to construal level theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010), people are more likely to use abstract moral principles when thinking about psychologically distant situations. On the other hand, when psychological distance is low, the contextual details of the specific situation are expected to be more salient. When these details are suitable to mitigate the immorality of a

transgression, a concrete (vs. abstract) mindset leads to more lenient moral judgments (Eyal et al., 2008). Psychological distance, and thus abstract thinking, increases with social distance, temporal distance, and hypotheticality, for example (Trope & Liberman, 2010).

In the studies reported in Chapter 2, judgments about hypothetical societies (Study 2) and socially distant Chinese persons (Study 4) might have activated an abstract mindset that led participants to interpret consumer complicity in terms of violated moral principles of fairness. In contrast, self-judgments might have activated low-level representations of the purchase situation that led participants to take into account mitigating contextual details (e.g., price or lack of alternative offers).[17] Thus, self- vs. other-judgments might differ in construal level which, in turn, moderates the impact of moral principles and mitigating contextual details on perceived immorality of consumer complicity. This line of reasoning would explain peoples' neglect of causal involvement in self-judgments with a failure to use moral principles.

Within the framework of construal level theory, another possibility emerges. Given the complexity of global injustice and the high distance (psychologically as well as physically) between consumers and negative outcomes of global supply chains, shouldn't this issue activate high-level construal per default? Based on construal level theory, we might expect that people think about consumer complicity in terms of moral principles, regardless of whether thinking about others or themselves. However, abstract thinking does not necessarily result in moral outcomes (Eyal et al., 2014; Gong & Medin, 2012; Žeželj & Jokić, 2014). In contrast to the above reasoning, it has been shown that increased distance reduces feelings of moral obligation to help others (Nagel & Waldmann, 2013). Psychological distance reduces critical antecedents of moral obligation such as personal contact, salience of need, shared group membership, perceived efficacy, and dependence on specifically the potential helper's

[17] In the referred studies, social distance was manipulated as first-person vs. third-person perspective for moral judgments about others (e.g., Eyal et al., 2008), whereas the present studies compared judgments about the self vs. others.

support (Greene, 2003; Lee & Feeley, 2016; Lichtenberg, 2010; Schwartz, 1977). That is, psychological distance does not necessarily result in more moral outcomes despite a potentially resulting emphasis on abstract moral norms.

In addition to the above-mentioned aspects related to decreased altruistic emotional reactions and efficacy beliefs, another problem might arise with the abstractness of consumer complicity. The link between the activation of abstract principles and moral outcomes is less clear than initial research based on construal level theory suggested (Alper, 2020). According to Lammers (2012) abstract thinking increases hypocrisy. Specifically, an abstract mindset allows people flexibility in interpreting their own transgressions by strategically choosing an abstract principle that is perceived as justifying the action (Lammers, 2012). The inherent ambiguity of consumers' relation to sweatshop labor thus enables people to apply self-serving justifications (Shalvi et al., 2015). That is, even when consumer complicity is considered in terms of abstract principles, people may apply moral principles such as justice, fairness, or reciprocity only when thinking about others, but instead they may use abstract economic justifications such as employment and long-term economic development in the global South (Carrington, 2020; Paharia et al., 2013) when thinking about their own causal involvement. In sum, in the framework of construal level theory, the observed self-other asymmetry might be explained by differential reliance on fairness-principles. This neglect of fairness principles in self-judgments could be explained by either a failure to use abstract (moral) principles at all or by people strategically using different abstract principles in a self-serving manner. This interpretation, however, is not able to explain why moral obligation of the self was generally high compared to that of others without introducing additional processes.

4.4 Differential Reliance on Internal States and Behavioral Information

As suggested by the results reported in Chapter 2 (Study 5), the observed self-other asymmetry in the pathway from causal involvement to moral obligation might be better

explained by principal differences in the types of information people use when thinking about themselves and others. Specifically, people focus on information about overt behavior when evaluating others and focus on internal states such as feelings, intentions and reasons for their behavior when evaluating themselves (Malle & Pearce, 2001; Malle et al., 2007; Pronin, 2008). This differential use of information may have led participants to apply their knowledge of causal involvement to their judgments about the moral obligation of others, but to ignore this knowledge when it comes to taking action themselves. Consistent with this interpretation, Study 5 in Chapter 2 provided tentative evidence that access to internal states reduces the impact of causal involvement on judgments of moral obligation.

An open question, however, is on which internal states involved consumers and uninvolved bystanders focus. One possibility is that the access to thoughts made reasons for buying sweatshop-made products salient (Malle, 2011) resulting in a focus on mitigating circumstances regarding their own (vs. others') complicity, which ultimately would explain the reduced impact of causal involvement on moral obligation. Another possibility is that people focused on positive intentions, or at least the absence of malevolent motives when being confronted with their own (vs. others') causal involvement (Klein & Epley, 2017).

According to the above reasoning, it is conceivable that in judgments about themselves, people did not perceive their causal involvement as a moral transgression in the first place, i.e., they did not assign blame to themselves. Another possibility is that people did blame themselves for their causal involvement in global injustice but did not use this information in their future-oriented judgments of moral obligation to act and, consequently, did not let it influence their actual behavior. More consistent with the overall empirical pattern in moral obligation judgments (i.e., constantly high for the self), however, is the hypothesis that access to internal states evokes thoughts about one's own advantaged position compared to sweatshop workers, irrespective of causal responsibility. That is, it is conceivable that participants blamed themselves not only in the case of causal involvement but also for their

relative advantage in the case of no causal involvement. The present research is unable to differentiate between these possibilities because moral judgments (i.e., wrongness or blame) about the prior involvement in causing sweatshop-conditions were not included in the studies. Future research may elucidate at which point in the sequence from perceiving causal involvement to judgments of moral obligation to act the observed self-other asymmetry occurs and which processes are involved.

A first step could be to separate past-oriented moral judgments about consumers' causal involvement (i.e., wrongness or blame) and the more future-oriented judgment about the moral obligation to support the sweatshop workers in order to test the role of assignments of blame in the relationship between causal responsibility and moral obligation, and to localize the divergence between self- and other-judgments more precisely. Another step could be to measure potential mediators suggested by the possible explanations for the self-other asymmetry discussed above (e.g., access to and use of internal states, intentionality, salience of moral principles, salience of mitigating contextual details). For example, future studies could assess the reasons participants provide for their moral obligation judgments. One possible way would be to code open-ended responses for the use of internal states versus behavioral information, or abstract principles (moral rules versus justifications) and contextual details. Another option would be to assess perceived access to internal states and perceived reliance on these states in moral obligation judgments. As an experimental approach, one could manipulate the availability of such information, which might be responsible for the neglect of causal involvement information in self-judgments. For instance, participants making other-judgments could be provided with detailed information about the circumstances of the target person's causal involvement in structural injustice. If the observed self-other asymmetry is caused by differences in the availability of these types of information, making them available when thinking about others should reduce the asymmetry.

4.5 Future Directions

The discussion so far has shown that confrontations with causal responsibility in the case of sweatshop labor do not necessarily increase moral obligation and action for social change. This result supports the skepticism of authors such as Lichtenberg (2010), Pierik (2013), and Young (2006) that talking about individuals’ involvement in structural injustice in terms of liability and blame is effective in motivating support. In terms of the distinction between prescriptive and proscriptive morality (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2009), the present results suggest that when it comes to themselves, people seem to be more sensitive to the prescriptive form (one should help suffering others), while they are more likely to evaluate others based on the proscriptive form (one should not harm others). Possibly, people are less harm-focused regarding their own moral obligation compared to that of others. At the same time, the finding that moral obligation for the self was constantly high suggests that people are more receptive to the prescriptive moral obligation to care for suffering others (which is seen as a matter of personal choice rather than a strict obligation; Janoff-Bulman et al., 2009) than to their involvement in causing the suffering. Future research could investigate to what extent the self-other asymmetry in the impact of causal involvement on moral obligation is due to differences in proscriptive vs. prescriptive moral regulation when thinking about oneself vs. others in relation to global injustice.

If emphasizing consumers’ own causal involvement is ineffective in motivating support, would it be advisable, then, to refrain from addressing consumer complicity and instead focus on the positive duty to help others who are suffering and leave the causes aside? After all, one might conclude from the results of Chapter 2 that one's sense of moral obligation is high when confronted with the suffering of others, regardless of what caused it. This conclusion would probably be ill-advised. Though empathic responses, for example, may play a greater role in one's own sense of moral obligation (as discussed in Chapter 2), there are reasons to suggest that focusing solely on the suffering of those affected is not likely to

motivate actual commitment to social change. To recall, the literature suggests that for consumers the psychological proximity of harmful consequences of global supply chains is low and thus activation of moral obligation is limited (Greene, 2003; Lichtenberg, 2010; Nagel & Waldmann, 2013; Schwartz, 1977). This ultimately creates a situation where apathy toward the suffering of distant others is more likely than action (Gilead et al., 2018). In line with this reasoning, we observed relatively low donation amounts in the studies reported in Chapter 3. Mean donation amounts were only between $0.06 and $0.09 out of a maximum possible $0.25 paid as a bonus. Moreover, even when suffering is presented in a way that elicits compassion toward victims (e.g., Lee & Feeley, 2016), resulting prosocial behavior tends to be limited to benevolent support, or in other words, charity and giving (Thomas & McGarty, 2017). Rather than focusing on the plight of victims, political action aimed at changing unjust structures requires a focus on the causes of injustice (Thomas & McGarty, 2017).

Regarding the goal of motivating anti-poverty action among wealthy people in the global North, there is obviously a dilemma (Lichtenberg, 2010). Framing the need for action in terms of positive goals or moral ideals (i.e., to help poor people) can promote action activation tendencies (Does et al., 2011), but may also fail to motivate action for social change because the duty to help may be perceived as not mandatory (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2009). By contrast, being involved in violating the strict duty not to harm others could be expected to activate feelings of moral obligation to compensate in a more mandatory form (Gilead et al., 2018; Schwartz, 1977; Zhong et al., 2009). However, people may also neglect information about their own complicity, as the present results have shown. Could there be a way to frame individual involvement in global injustice so that it activates a strong sense of moral obligation (i.e., in a mandatory form), and ultimately action for social change?

Future research might differentiate in more detail between specific representations of individual involvement. Young (2006), for example, distinguished a social connection model

from a liability model of responsibility. According to Young’s (2006) social connection model, consumers’ responsibility for sweatshop labor can be conceptualized in terms of participation in social processes that perpetuate the structural conditions that enable sweatshop-conditions. Whereas the liability model conceptualizes responsibility as causal connections between specific consumers’ actions and harmful outcomes, and involves assignments of blame to individual consumers, the social connection model understands responsibility as shared responsibility of all persons participating in the social processes that produce injustice (Young, 2006). Thus, understanding responsibility for sweatshop labor in terms of social connections emphasizes that all consumers of sweatshop-made products share responsibility due to the structural political and economic conditions. Such an emphasis on shared responsibility instead of individual causal responsibility might be less likely to evoke defensive reactions (which were not shown in the present studies anyway; Pierik, 2013; Young, 2006). In addition, it might draw attention to the unfair structures in which one participates rather than to individual wrongdoing, thus promoting political action (Thomas & McGarty, 2017).

It may be fruitful to connect the present research on individual causal involvement with the literature on collective action against global poverty. Whereas previous research on anti-poverty action focused mostly on other-focused states (e.g., victim suffering, responsibility of third parties, responsibility of victims themselves), the present research focused on peoples' perceptions of their own complicity in creating poverty. However, the present work neglected other important predictors of collective efforts. Integrating representations of causal involvement in an unfair global system with social identities, group-based emotions, and group efficacy beliefs, which are important motivators of anti-poverty action (e.g., Thomas et al., 2010), may allow for a more nuanced understanding of the processes triggered by focusing on one’s own causal involvement.

For example, a social identity containing a clear norm about which moral obligations arise from causal involvement in global poverty might be a strong predictor of action for social change (Thomas et al., 2010). Moreover, the likelihood of prosocial consequences as well as the type of support should depend on the specific emotions associated with personal causal involvement (Leach et al., 2002; Thomas et al., 2009a; Van de Vyver & Abrams, 2015). For example, future research could investigate under what conditions understanding causal involvement in terms of individual purchase behavior predicts guilt and shame (or a *guilty conscience*, Rees et al., 2015) and under what conditions focusing on the structural conditions one is involved in predicts moral outrage (Rothschild et al., 2017). Such different representations can be expected to predict different types of behavioral reactions to causal involvement in structural injustice (Iyer et al., 2007; Thomas & McGarty, 2018; Van de Vyver & Abrams, 2015). For example, thinking about causal involvement in sweatshop labor in terms of specific individual purchase behavior might predict boycott, whereas thinking about it in terms of participation in social processes might predict political forms of collective action.

Efficacy beliefs are also likely to exert an important influence on peoples’ reactions to their causal involvement in global poverty. It can be expected that efficacy beliefs increase acceptance of personal causal responsibility and prosocial behavior. Research has shown that people are more likely to accept personal causal responsibility and are more willing to constructively address the issue when they see opportunities to improve (Schumann & Dweck, 2014; van der Lee et al., 2016; van der Toorn et al., 2015; Wohl et al., 2006). Such a focus on future improvement is facilitated by perceiving a moral failure in terms of a specific action instead of the result of a stable immoral identity (Conway & Peetz, 2012; Gausel et al., 2016). Moreover, social identification with a group acting for social change can increase group efficacy beliefs (Thomas et al., 2009b). Group efficacy beliefs should be especially important in the present case due to the size and complexity of the problem which can only be

solved through collective action (Lichtenberg, 2010; Young, 2006). In the present case, it might be of particular interest to differentiate between different types of efficacy beliefs – specifically between group efficacy beliefs and participative efficacy beliefs, i.e., “the belief that one can make a difference through one’s own contribution to the collective efforts aimed at achieving group goals” (van Zomeren et al., 2013, p. 619).

4.6 Conclusion

The present research began with the question of whether people infer a stronger moral obligation to help distant others suffering from injustice when they face their own complicity in it compared to seeing themselves as uninvolved bystanders. Thinking about consumer complicity in abstract situations, people indeed belief that causal involvement in structural injustice increases the moral obligation to support sweatshop workers. However, the present research suggests that information about individual involvement in causing sweatshop conditions ceases to matter when it comes to their own obligation to act, and ultimately their own actual behavior for social change. Thus, this dissertation makes an empirical contribution to the question of how people think about individuals' involvement in complex causes of distant others’ plight. At the same time, it illustrates the importance of understanding more precisely the relationship between assignments of causal responsibility and the conclusions people draw about their own moral actions.

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Appendix A

Means and Standard Deviations for all Analyses in all Studies in Chapter 2

Table A1

Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) of all Dependent Variables as a Function of Causal Involvement of the Self in Study 1.

Dependent Variable	Causally Involved	Not Causally Involved
Moral Obligation	4.21 (1.65)	3.68 (1.64)
Causal Responsibility	3.84 (1.76)	2.37 (1.58)
Immorality of Purchase	4.33 (1.87)	4.75 (1.86)
Justifications	2.71 (1.24)	2.64 (1.43)

Note: All dependent variables range from 1 to 7.

Table A2

Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) of all Dependent Variables as a Function of Causal Involvement of the Target of Judgment and Self- vs. Other-Judgment in Study S1.

	Self		Other	
Dependent Variable	Causally Involved	Not Causally Involved	Causally Involved	Not Causally Involved
Moral Obligation	3.88 (1.38)	3.73 (1.36)	3.61 (1.44)	3.39 (1.36)
Causal Responsibility	4.39 (1.69)	3.05 (1.72)	4.54 (1.67)	2.54 (1.78)
Justifications	2.75 (1.34)	2.39 (1.22)	2.62 (1.16)	2.53 (1.20)

Note: All dependent variables range from 1 to 7.

Table A3

Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) of all Dependent Variables as a Function of Causal Involvement of the Target of Judgment and Self- vs. Other-Judgment in Study S2.

	Self		Other	
Dependent Variable	Causally Involved	Not Causally Involved	Causally Involved	Not Causally Involved
Moral Obligation	3.66 (1.74)	3.44 (1.59)	3.00 (1.56)	2.57 (1.34)
Causal Responsibility	4.35 (1.86)	2.91 (1.84)	4.08 (1.79)	2.53 (1.81)
Justifications	3.12 (1.46)	2.99 (1.54)	3.26 (1.53)	3.08 (1.55)

Note: All dependent variables range from 1 to 7.

Table A4

Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) of all Dependent Variables as a Function of Causal Involvement of the Target of Judgment in Study 2.

Dependent Variable	Causally Involved	Not Causally Involved
Moral Obligation	3.43 (1.73)	2.69 (1.46)
Causal Responsibility	4.00 (1.63)	2.24 (1.55)

Note: All dependent variables range from 1 to 7.

Table A5

Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) of all Dependent Variables as a Function of Causal Involvement of the Self in Study 3.

Dependent Variable	Causally Involved	Not Causally Involved
Moral Obligation	2.52 (1.45)	2.22 (1.46)
Causal Responsibility	2.95 (1.77)	2.15 (1.46)

Note: All dependent variables range from 1 to 7.

Table A6

Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) of all Dependent Variables as a Function of Causal Involvement of the Target of Judgment and Self- vs. Other-Judgment in Study 4.

	Self		Other	
Dependent Variable	Causally Involved	Not Causally Involved	Causally Involved	Not Causally Involved
Moral Obligation	3.60 (1.63)	3.38 (1.54)	3.76 (1.60)	2.92 (1.54)
Causal Responsibility	3.67 (1.83)	2.63 (1.81)	4.67 (1.64)	2.89 (1.73)

Note: All dependent variables range from 1 to 7.

Table A7

Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) of all Dependent Variables as a Function of Causal Involvement of the Target of Judgment and Self- vs. Other-Judgment in Study 5.

	Close Other		Distant Other	
Dependent Variable	Causally Involved	Not Causally Involved	Causally Involved	Not Causally Involved
Moral Obligation	3.22 (1.00)	2.84 (1.06)	3.30 (0.82)	2.46 (1.03)
Causal Responsibility	4.04 (1.61)	2.99 (1.79)	4.13 (1.47)	2.53 (1.77)

Note: Causal Responsibility ranges from 1 to 7 on a 7-point scale, Moral Obligation ranges from 1 to 5 on a 5-point scale.

Table A8

Summary of studies in this line of research.

Study	Target	Causal Involvement [no involvement]	Vignette
S1	Self vs. Other	Self: You [other tourists] vs. Other: a tourist [other tourists]	buy jewelry
S2	Self vs. Other	Self: You [other tourists] vs. Other: a tourist [other tourists]	buy jewelry
1	Self	You [other tourists]	buy jewelry
2	Other	Mizarcs [Dwalkhs]	buy stone furniture
3	Self	American ingroup vs. [Chinese outgroup]	buy clothing vs. buy wooden furniture
4	Self vs. Other	American ingroup vs. [Chinese outgroup]	buy clothing vs. buy wooden furniture
5	Close vs. Distant Other	Cocoa [Azuki beans]	buy cocoa products vs. Azuki bean products

Note: All studies featured a causal involvement between subjects manipulation orthogonal to the Target manipulation (if more than one Target condition).

Table A9

Fixed-Effects ANOVA results of Study 4 using causal responsibility as a criterion.

Predictor	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*	η_p^2	η_p^2 90% CI [LL, UL]
(Intercept)	9351.64	1	9351.64	3036.18	<.001	.797	[.78, .81]
Involvement	385.92	1	385.92	125.29	<.001	.139	[.10, .18]
Target	78.01	1	78.01	25.33	<.001	.032	[.01, .05]
Involvement x Target	26.62	1	26.62	8.64	.003	.011	[.00, .03]
Error	2383.97	774	3.08				

Note: LL and UL represent the lower-limit and upper-limit of the partial η_p^2 confidence interval, respectively.

Table A10

Fixed-Effects ANOVA results of Study 4 using moral obligation as a criterion.

Predictor	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*	η_p^2	η_p^2 90% CI [LL, UL]
(Intercept)	9066.11	1	9066.11	3646.37	<.001	.825	[.81, .84]
Involvement	53.92	1	53.92	21.69	<.001	.027	[.01, .05]
Target	4.29	1	4.29	1.73	.19	.002	[.00, .01]
Involvement x Target	18.79	1	18.79	7.56	.006	.010	[.00, .02]
Error	1924.43	774	2.49				

Note: LL and UL represent the lower-limit and upper-limit of the partial η_p^2 confidence interval, respectively.

Table A11

Fixed-Effects ANOVA results of Study 5 using causal responsibility as a criterion.

Predictor	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*	η_p^2	η_p^2 90% CI [LL, UL]
(Intercept)	6046.40	1	6046.40	2187.47	<.001	.807	[.79, .82]
Involvement	225.83	1	225.83	81.70	<.001	.135	[.09, .18]
Target	4.40	1	4.40	1.59	.21	.003	[.00, .02]
Involvement x Target	9.46	1	9.46	3.42	.07	.006	[.00, .02]
Error	1448.39	524	2.76				

Note: LL and UL represent the lower-limit and upper-limit of the partial η_p^2 confidence interval, respectively.

Table A12

Fixed-Effects ANOVA results of Study 5 using moral obligation as a criterion.

Predictor	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*	η_p^2	η_p^2 90% CI [LL, UL]
(Intercept)	4509.87	1	4509.87	4653.78	<.001	.899	[.89, .91]
Involvement	48.205	1	48.21	49.74	<.001	.087	[.05, .13]
Target	2.882	1	2.88	2.97	.09	.006	[.00, .02]
Involvement x Target	6.607	1	6.61	6.82	.01	.013	[.00, .03]
Error	507.796	524	.97				

Note: LL and UL represent the lower-limit and upper-limit of the partial η_p^2 confidence interval, respectively.

Appendix B

Supplementary Studies S1 and S2

The main purpose of Studies S1 and S2 was to explore to what extent the effect of causal involvement in harming sweatshop workers on moral obligation is smaller in self-judgments than in other-judgments. Therefore, both studies included moral obligation judgments about another person who either supported poor working conditions through their purchasing behavior or not. Study S2 was a close replication of Study S1 involving a change in the assessment of moral obligation. Specifically, moral obligation in Study S2 was conceptualized as the obligation to perform a specific and costly behavior in order to support the workers who suffer from poor working conditions: paying into a fund to raise their wage to a living wage.

Method

Participants

Participants in Study S1 were 391 MTurk users (203 female, 186 male, 1 other, 1 did not answer). Mean age was 36.43 (*SD* = 12.24) with a range of 18 to 72 years. Fourteen other participants matching the exclusion criteria were excluded from the sample. The sample size of $N = 391$ provided 90% power to detect a small to medium effect of Cohen's $f = 0.16$.

In Study S2, 388 MTurk users (202 female, 184 male, 1 other, 1 did not answer) participated. Mean age was 33.44 (*SD* = 11.47) with a range of 18 to 76 years. Thirteen other participants were excluded from the sample for the above mentioned reasons. The sample size of $N = 388$ provided 90% power to detect an interaction effect of Cohen's $f = 0.16$ as in Study S1.

Design, Materials, and Procedure

The method was identical in Study S1 and Study S2, except for the changes in the material described below. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (role of agent: causally involved vs. *not* causally involved in creating poor working

conditions) × 2 (agent: self vs. other) between subjects design. For the self-condition, the same scenarios as in Study 1 were used, asking participants to imagine themselves in the situation. In the other-condition, the agent of the scenarios was "a tourist" who either bought a sweatshop-made product or witnessed other tourists buying such products, depending on causal involvement condition.

After having read the scenario, participants provided moral judgments about the scenario's agent. Depending on experimental condition, the target of moral judgment was either the participant themselves, or the tourist described in the scenario. The primary dependent variable was a three-item measure of moral obligation (Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$[18] in Study S1 and .82 in Study S2). This measure comprised the following items: "To what extent do you think you are [the tourist is] morally obligated to act to improve the situation of the workers?" (1 = *not at all obligated* to 7 = *absolutely obligated*), "To what extent do you think you are [the tourist is] morally responsible for the poor working conditions?" (1 = *not at all responsible* to 7 = *absolutely responsible*), and "How acceptable would it be for you [the tourist] to refrain from acting to improve the situation of the workers?" (1 = *totally unacceptable* to 7 = *totally acceptable*). In Study S2, the third item was replaced by an item assessing blame for inaction to emphasize a strong understanding of moral obligation instead of a merely supererogatory sense (Suppose you [the tourist] refrained from paying into the fund. How much would you blame yourself [the tourist] for failing to help the workers?"; 1 = *no blame at all* to 7 = *a great deal of blame*). In addition, one item to assess perceived causal responsibility was included ("To what extent do you think you have [the tourist has] contributed to supporting the poor working conditions?"; 1 = *not at all contributed* to 7 = *very much contributed*).

The most important change in the materials in Study S2 involved making the moral obligation measure more specific and costly. On this account, the last sentence of the

[18] Internal consistency of the moral obligation scale was higher in the following studies (Cronbach's $\alpha > .82$) where the third item (acceptability of inaction) was replaced by an item assessing blame for inaction.

scenario, which contained the offer to support the workers, now read: "You [The tourist] could effectively help the workers by paying into a fund that has been set up by them to raise their wage to a living wage." The items of the moral obligation scale were adapted to match that specific behavior (e.g., "To what extent do you think you are [the tourist is] morally obligated to support the workers by paying into the fund?"). After providing their moral judgments, participants completed the same measure of justifications of poor working conditions as in Study 1[19], a manipulation check, and demographic questions.

Results and Discussion

Results of Study S1 and Study S2 were highly similar. Mean moral obligation judgments are displayed in Figure B1 (see Table A2 and Table A3 in the Appendix for means and standard deviations). There was no convincing evidence for a substantial effect of causal involvement on moral obligation. Across the self vs. other conditions, moral obligation was not significantly higher in the causal involvement condition than in the *no* causal involvement condition in Study S1, $F(1, 387) = 1.81$, $p = .179$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.005$, 90% CI [0.000, 0.022], whereas there was very slight evidence for a small increase in moral obligation in response to causal involvement in Study S2, $F(1, 384) = 4.02$, $p = .046$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.010$, 90% CI [0.000, 0.033].

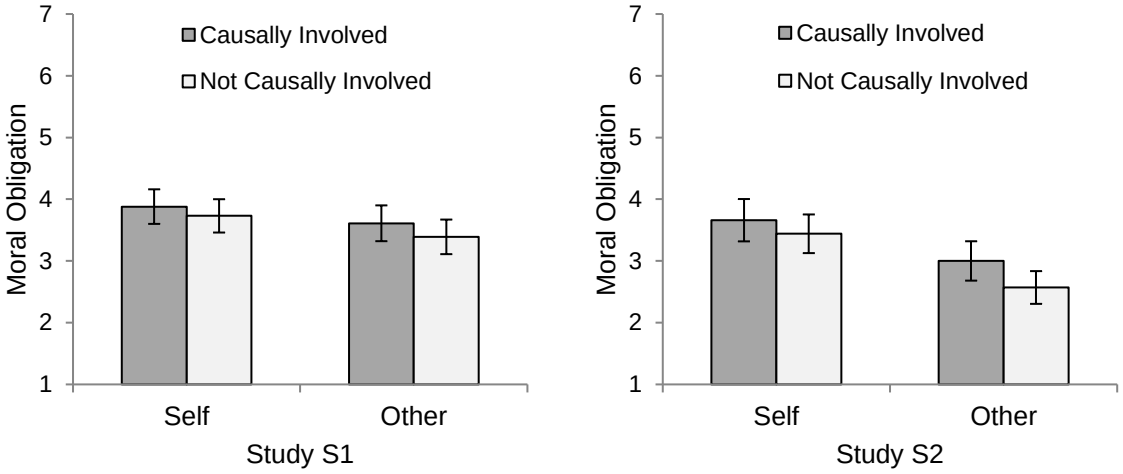
Contrary to expectations, there was no evidence for a substantial difference between the effect sizes in judgments about the self and others (interaction causal involvement of the agent by self vs. other judgments: $F(1, 387) = 0.06$, $p = .810$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.000$, 90% CI [0.000, 0.006] in Study S1 and $F(1, 384) = 0.45$, $p = .503$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$, 90% CI [0.000, 0.013] in Study S2). The estimated effect size of causal involvement in the self-condition was Hedges' $g_s = 0.11$, 95% CI [-0.17, 0.39] in Study S1 and Hedges' $g_s = 0.13$, 95% CI [-0.15, 0.40] in Study S2. The large CIs included negative values but also the positive small to medium effect size estimate found in the self-judgments in Study 1. Results in the other-condition were

[19] In Study S2, the justification of sweatshops scale was shortened due to time constraints, keeping only the two items that best fitted the content of the scenario (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$).

highly similar to those in the self-condition, Hedges’ g_s = 0.16, 95% CI [-0.13, 0.44] in Study S1 and only descriptively larger in Study S2, Hedges’ g_s = 0.29, 95% CI [0.01, 0.58].

Figure B1

Moral Obligation Judgments in Study S1 and Study S2



Note. Mean moral obligation judgments (with 95% CIs) as a function of experimental group (role of agent: causally involved vs. *not* causally involved in creating poor working conditions × 2 agent: self vs. other) in Study S1 (left panel) and Study S2 (right panel).

As expected, perceived causal responsibility was substantially higher in the causal involvement condition than in the *no* causal involvement condition, $F(1, 387) = 92.38$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.193$, 90% CI [0.137, 0.249] in Study S1 and $F(1, 384) = 64.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .145$, 90% CI [0.094, 0.198] in Study S2, with no indication of a differential effect per condition, $F(1, 387) = 3.62$, $p = .058$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.009$, 90% CI [0.000, 0.031] in Study S1 and $F(1, 384) = 0.07$, $p = .785$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.001$, 90% CI [0.000, 0.008] in Study S2. Regarding justifications of sweatshops in the self-condition, there was very slight evidence for a small effect of causal involvement in Study S1, $t_{Welch}(192.59) = 1.98$, $p = .050$, Hedges’ g_s = 0.28,

95% CI [0.00, 0.56], but not in Study S2, $t_{Welch}(195.54) = 0.62$, $p = .539$, Hedges’ $g_s = 0.09$, 95% CI [-0.19, 0.36].

The results of judgments about others in Studies S1 and S2 require explanation. Here, in contrast to our expectation, causal involvement did not increase moral obligation in the case of other-judgments; effect sizes did not differ significantly between self- and other-judgments. One reason for this could be that in Studies S1 and S2, other-judgments were made about *concrete* individuals presented through vivid vignettes, whereas Studies 2 and 4 presented participants with *abstract* societal-level information and asked them to judge an average member of the respective society. Previous research has shown that self-other differences disappear when the target of judgment is a specific other person compared to an average or typical other (Alicke et al., 1995; Epley & Dunning, 2000; Hsee & Weber, 1997). Confronted with concrete and vivid representations of others, people are more likely to adopt the other person’s perspective (Hsee & Weber, 1997). Specifically, when people take the perspective of a specific identified wrongdoer, they show increased understanding and more lenient moral judgments, whereas they apply general considerations in the case of unidentified wrongdoers (Gino & Galinsky, 2012; Kogut, 2011). Although these findings suggest that the absence of a self-other asymmetry in Studies S1 and S2 may be due to increased levels of identification with specific (vs. abstract) others, this interpretation remains speculative because we have not assessed identification with others.

Appendix C

Means and Standard Deviations for all Analyses in Studies 1, 4, 5, and 6 in Chapter 3

Table C1

Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) of Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility and Action Intentions as a Function of Advantage vs. Disadvantage Framing in Study 1

	Advantage	Disadvantage
Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility	4.90 (1.58)	4.28 (1.60)
Action Intentions	3.60 (1.14)	3.41 (1.11)

Note: All dependent variables range from 1 to 7.

Table C2

Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) of all Dependent Variables as a Function of Focus on Causal Responsibility of the Self vs. Local Government in Study 4

	Self	Local Government
Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility [a]	28.66 (26.80)	18.78 (21.88)
Action Intentions [a]	48.73 (28.66)	46.96 (25.82)
Amount of Donation (USD) [b]	0.06 (0.10)	0.06 (0.08)
Infrahumanization [c]	4.34 (1.16)	4.45 (0.93)

[a] Values range from 0 to 100. [b] Values range from 0 to 0.25. [c] Values range from 1 to 7.

Table C3

Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) of all Dependent Variables as a Function of Focus on Causal Responsibility of the Self vs. Local Government in Study 5

	Self	Local Government
Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility [a]	3.71 (1.49)	2.82 (1.51)
Action Intentions [b]	51.38 (25.77)	46.48 (27.04)
Amount of Donation (USD) [c]	0.08 (0.10)	0.07 (0.10)
Minimization [a]	2.08 (0.92)	2.12 (0.87)
Reactance [a]	3.08 (1.02)	2.99 (1.04)

[a] Values range from 1 to 7. [b] Values range from 0 to 100. [c] Values range from 0 to 0.25.

Table C4

Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) of all Dependent Variables as a Function of Focus on Causal Responsibility of the Self vs. Local Government in Study 6

	Self	Local Government
Acceptance of Personal Causal Responsibility [a]	3.54 (1.54)	2.87 (1.51)
Action Intentions [b]	48.35 (25.71)	45.90 (25.14)
Amount of Donation (USD) [c]	0.08 (0.10)	0.09 (0.10)
Overwhelming Demands [a]	3.79 (1.46)	3.92 (1.49)

[a] Values range from 1 to 7. [b] Values range from 0 to 100. [c] Values range from 0 to 0.25.

Appendix D

Table D1

Final Items and Corresponding Factor Loadings of the Four Scales Used to Assess Perceived Causes of Poverty in the Global South in Studies 2 and 3 in Chapter 3

	Study 2				Study 3			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1. Factor 1: International Exploitation								
Economic policies in the rich countries	**.85**				**.83**			
Exploitation of developing countries by foreign countries	**.84**	.11			**.74**	.13		
First world financial-economic institutions	**.75**	-.13			**.88**		.10	
Exploitation of developing countries by multinational corporations	**.67**		-.16	.12	**.80**		-.12	
2. Factor 2: Local Political Structures								
Government corruption in the developing countries		**.77**	-.11			**.81**		
Government inefficiency or incompetence in developing countries		**.75**	.14			**.79**		
Political instability in developing countries	-.11	**.71**	-.14	.16		**.83**		
Dominant political/economic ideology in developing countries	.12	**.53**	.21	-.14	.16	**.67**	.11	
3. Factor 3: Causes Internal to Poor People								
Laziness and lack of effort among people in developing countries			**.77**				**.94**	-.14
Lack of motivation for self-improvement in developing countries	.12		**.72**		.17		**.60**	.13
Lack of intelligence			**.69**				**.73**	
Lack of sexual impulse control among poor in developing countries	-.10		**.61**	.18	-.12		**.47**	.21
4. Factor 4: Nature								
High prevalence of pests and insects in developing countries				**.82**				**.89**
Illness and physical handicap among poor in developing countries	.23			**.53**				**.62**

Note: Factor loadings below |.10| are not displayed. Values are taken from principal axis factor analyses with oblique rotation (promax) involving the final 14 items.