Abstract of thesis entitled:

A Case of Shifting Moral Standards: How Biculturalism Shapes Morality

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Morality has long been thought of as individual, stable and resistant to change. However, recent developments within Cultural Psychology suggest otherwise, by showing that contextual influences may shape people's judgments. I suggest that culture is one of the most powerful contextual influences because of its long term nature in shaping people's cognitions, behaviors, perceptions and feelings. Therefore, by combining the theoretical frameworks of the Social Categorization Theory and the Dynamic Constructivist Approach, I conducted three studies to investigate if biculturalism can result in the adherence to two (different) moral frameworks. In study one, I tested this idea by investigating if Dutch Muslims' identification with the mainstream Dutch culture and their identification with the Muslim culture are differentially related to the moral foundations – Individualizing foundations which are moral norms that protect individuals from harm and unfairness, and binding foundations which protect the integrity of the ingroup. Expected was that the Muslim identity, which is strongly rooted in moral norms, would be positively related to all moral foundations. On the other hand, the Dutch identity was expected to be unrelated to the individualizing foundations and negatively related to the binding foundations, because the Dutch culture is strongly rooted in personal freedom instead of moral norms. In study two, I implemented a frame-switching paradigm by confronting Dutch Muslims with either mainstream Dutch or Muslim cultural icons to see if cultural salience

influences their adherence of the moral foundations. Lastly, in study three, I randomly assigned Dutch Muslims to two groups. Both groups were presented with similar stories portraying three moral transgressions of the individualizing foundations and three moral transgressions of the binding foundations. However, in one group the transgressors had typical Dutch names, while in the other group the transgressors had typical Muslim names. Expected was that a stereotypical name from the Dutch culture or the Muslim culture would manipulate cultural salience, and hence bicultural's moral judgment. Expected was that in study 2 and study 3, biculturals would exhibit a stronger or weaker adherence to the moral foundations and moral judgments in line with the salient identity, respectively. The results of study 1 were as expected: the Muslim identity was positively related to both moral foundations, while the Dutch identity was unrelated to the individualizing foundations and negatively related to the binding foundations. However, study 2 and study 3 showed surprising results. Instead of a stronger or weaker adherence to the moral foundations in line with the salient identity, cultural salience had an unexpected effect. Biculturals that identified strongly with the Muslim culture endorsed the binding foundations less strongly when the Dutch culture was salient (study 2) and judged moral transgressions falling within the binding foundations less severely when the transgressor was Dutch as opposed to Muslim (study 3). However, Muslim biculturals judged moral transgressions falling within the individualizing foundations less severely when the transgressor was Muslim as opposed to Dutch (study 3). I discuss the implications of these results.