

ABSTRACT:

## **MOTIVATED MOTIVE SELECTION IN THE LYING-DICTATOR GAME**

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A large body of evidence suggests that people are willing to sacrifice personal material gain in order to adhere to a moral motive such as fairness or truth-telling. Yet less is known about what happens when moral motives are in conflict. We hypothesize that in such situations, individuals engage in what we term ‘motivated motive selection’, choosing to adhere to the motive that most closely aligns with their personal interest. We test this hypothesis using a laboratory experiment that induces in subjects a conflict between two of the most-studied moral motives: fairness and truth-telling. Our experimental design has the attractive features of being both parsimonious and closely related to both the classic dictator and lying games, implying comparability with a wealth of benchmark evidence. In line with our hypothesis, our results suggest that participants are more likely to adhere to the motive that is more in line with their self-interest.