

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Study S1

In this study, we addressed the possibility that the empathic distress measure anchored responses to the subsequent measure of pain forecasts. In other words, we sought to rule out the possibility that the lack of a difference in predicted pain between present and future others' suffering was not due to a study design artifact. To test this, we conducted an exact replication of Study 1 using only the pain measure as the dependent variable.

Methods

Participants

A total of 401 participants were recruited from Prolific Academic and received \$0.30 for their participation. Eight participants were excluded for failing the attention check, leaving a final sample of $N = 393$ (189 female, 204 male; $M_{\text{age}} = 39.68$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 14.13$; 79.1% White, 7.4% Asian, 5.6% Black, 4.1% Mixed, 3.1% Other).

Procedure

The procedure was identical to that used in Study 1, with the exception that the empathic distress measure was removed.

Results & Discussion

Replicating Study 1, there was no difference in predicted pain between the present condition ($M_{present} = 7.51$, $SD_{present} = 0.81$) and future condition ($M_{future} = 7.41$, $SD_{future} = 0.84$; $t(391) = 1.19$, $p = .235$, $d = 0.12$, 95% CI = [-0.06, 0.26]).

In both Study 1 and Study S1, people predict that the intensity of pain stemming from an identical event to be invariant across time. Of note, the obtained miniscule effect sizes found are consistent, suggesting that the lack of randomization of question order in Study 1 had no effect on responses.

Study 2: Additional Analyses

Using a 2 (present vs. future condition) x 3 (moral discounting at 25, 50, and 100 years) mixed ANOVA, we found main effects of condition ($F(1, 2004) = 46.49$, $p < .001$) and the three moral discounting items ($F(2, 2004) = 19.94$, $p < .001$) but no interaction ($F(2, 2004) = 0.10$, $p = .90$). This demonstrates that the future condition reported less moral discounting than the present condition across all three time points (see Figure S1).

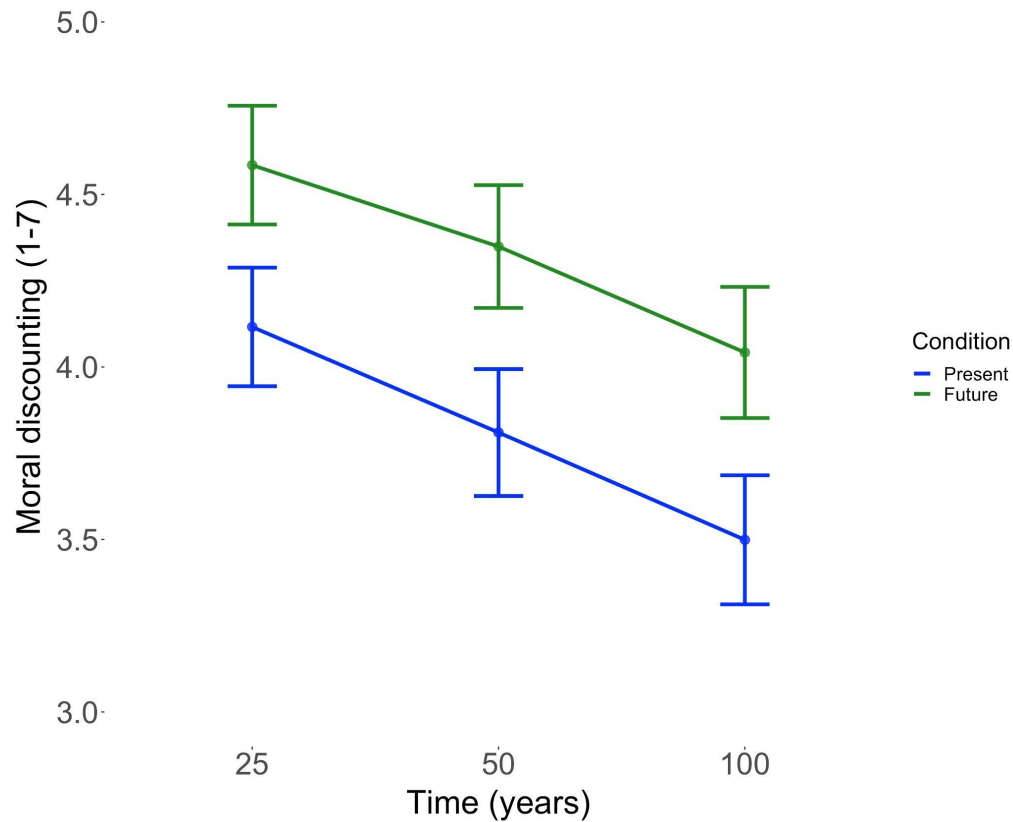


Figure S1. Moral discounting by condition across each time point (Study 2). Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Higher numbers indicate less moral discounting of future others.

Study S2

In this study, we addressed the possibility that the relative difference of future versus present condition on moral discounting in Study 2 was driven by increased moral discounting for future generations in the present condition, rather than decreased moral discounting for future generations in the future condition. To test this, we added a control condition that did not imagine another person's suffering before completing the moral discounting measures.

Methods

Participants

A total of 1018 participants were recruited from Prolific Academic and received \$0.20 for their participation. Six participants were excluded for failing the attention check, leaving a final sample of $N = 1012$ (506 female, 506 male, $M_{\text{age}} = 37.27$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 33.63$; 70.0% White, 9.4% Black, 9.3% Asian, 6.1% Mixed, 4.8% Other).

Procedure

The procedure was identical to that used in Study 2, except the empathic distress and predicted pain measures were removed. Additionally, a control condition was added in which participants did not read a scenario about a person suffering.

Results & Discussion

Using a one-way ANOVA, we found a significant effect of condition on moral discounting ($F(2, 1009) = 10.29$, $p < .001$). Note that higher scores signify *lower* moral discounting. Replicating Study 2, Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons revealed that participants in the future condition morally discounted future generations less ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.55$) than those in the present condition ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 1.60$; $p = .002$). Crucially, participants in the future condition also showed lower moral discounting than those in the control condition ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.81$, $p < .0001$), while the present condition and control condition did not differ from each other ($p > .05$; see Figure S2).

This study replicates the finding that imagining a future person suffering lowers moral discounting of future generations. Meanwhile, imagining a present person's suffering has no effect on moral discounting compared to not imagining another person at all.

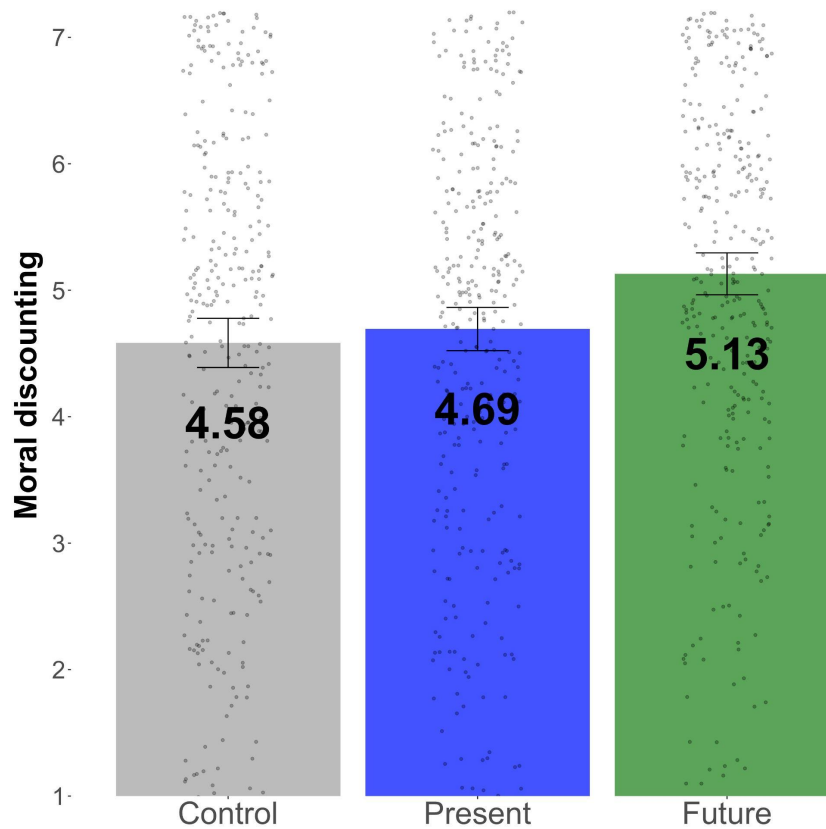


Figure S2. Moral discounting by condition (Study S2). Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Higher numbers indicate less moral discounting of future others.