



Conservative Ideology and Moral Sanctity Predict Prejudice with Low Attributional Complexity

Nicholas Zambrotta
Rutgers University–New Brunswick

Rob Foels
Rutgers University–New Brunswick



Abstract

This study examines the link between moral foundations and prejudice. 177 participants completed surveys including moral foundations, prejudice, and attributional complexity. Binding versus individual morality was predicted by higher conservatism, and lower attributional complexity. Prejudice was predicted by binding morality and higher conservatism. When attributional complexity was entered into the model, it was the only predictor of prejudice. The results suggest that conservative foundations of morality involve low levels of attributional complexity.

Background

- The process of explaining others' behaviors is known as attribution (Jones and Davis, 1965).
- People tend to overattribute behaviors to personality and ignore other dimensions (Devine, 1989).
- Attributional complexity is the extent to which a person uses multidimensional explanations to understand another's behaviors (Fletcher et al., 1986).
- Higher levels of attributional complexity is related to lower levels of prejudice (Tam et al., 2008).
- While prejudice is an unequivocally immoral process, some types of morality make more likely (Barnett et al., 2020; Monroe & Plant, 2018).
- According to moral foundations theory, there are 5 types of moral foundations: harm, fairness, ingroup loyalty, obedience to authority, and purity (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009).
- Conservatives but not liberals consider the "sanctity" foundations of ingroup loyalty, obedience to authority, and purity as relevant foundations.
- Sanctity foundations predict prejudice toward several different outgroups (Barnett et al., 2020; Monroe & Plant, 2018).
- Conservatives are higher in prejudice than liberals (Kite & Whitley, 2016).
- The endorsement of moral foundations is related to the complexity of cognitions (Napier & Lingiur, 2013).

Acknowledgments

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Figure 1. Mediation Analysis of Conservative Ideology, Sanctity, and Attributional Complexity

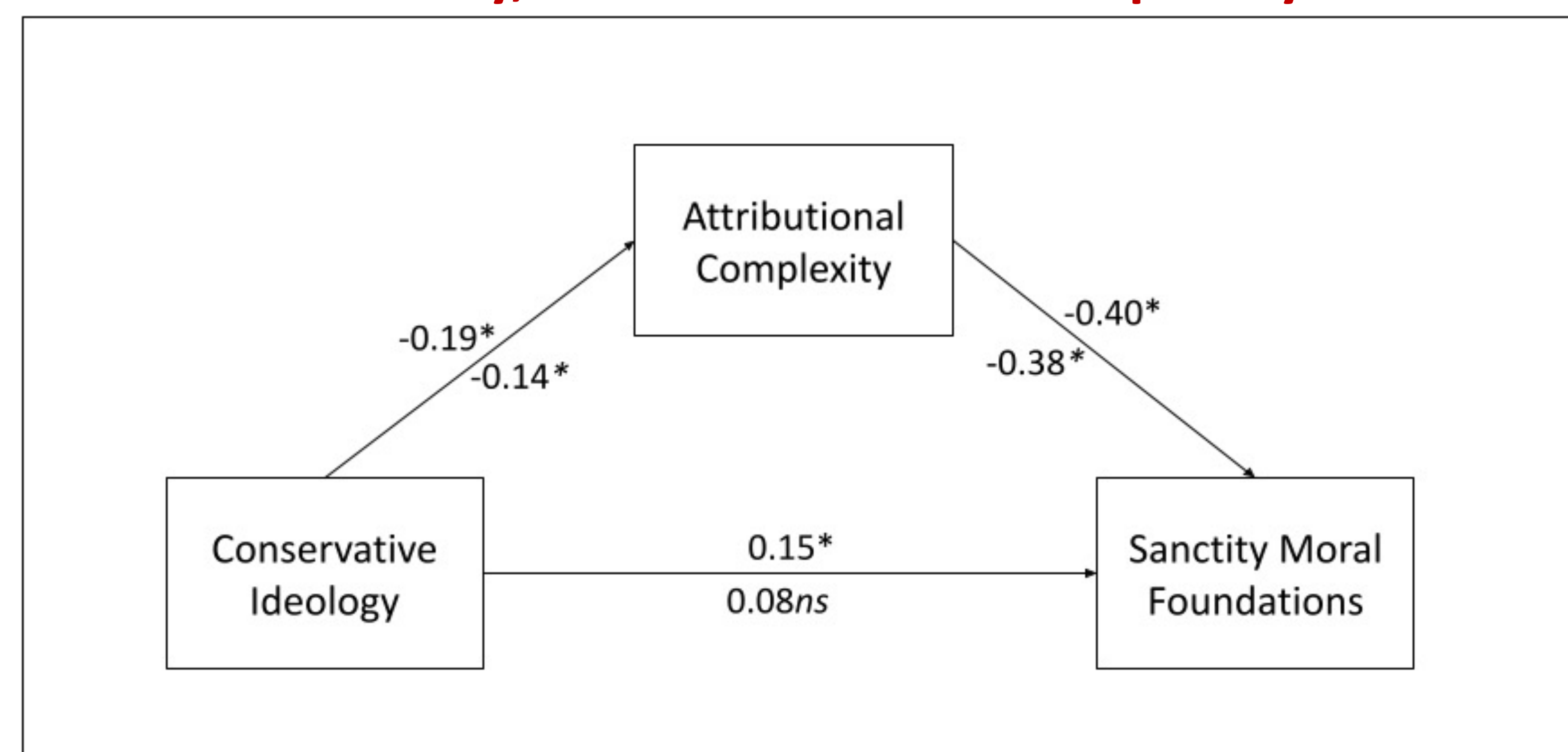
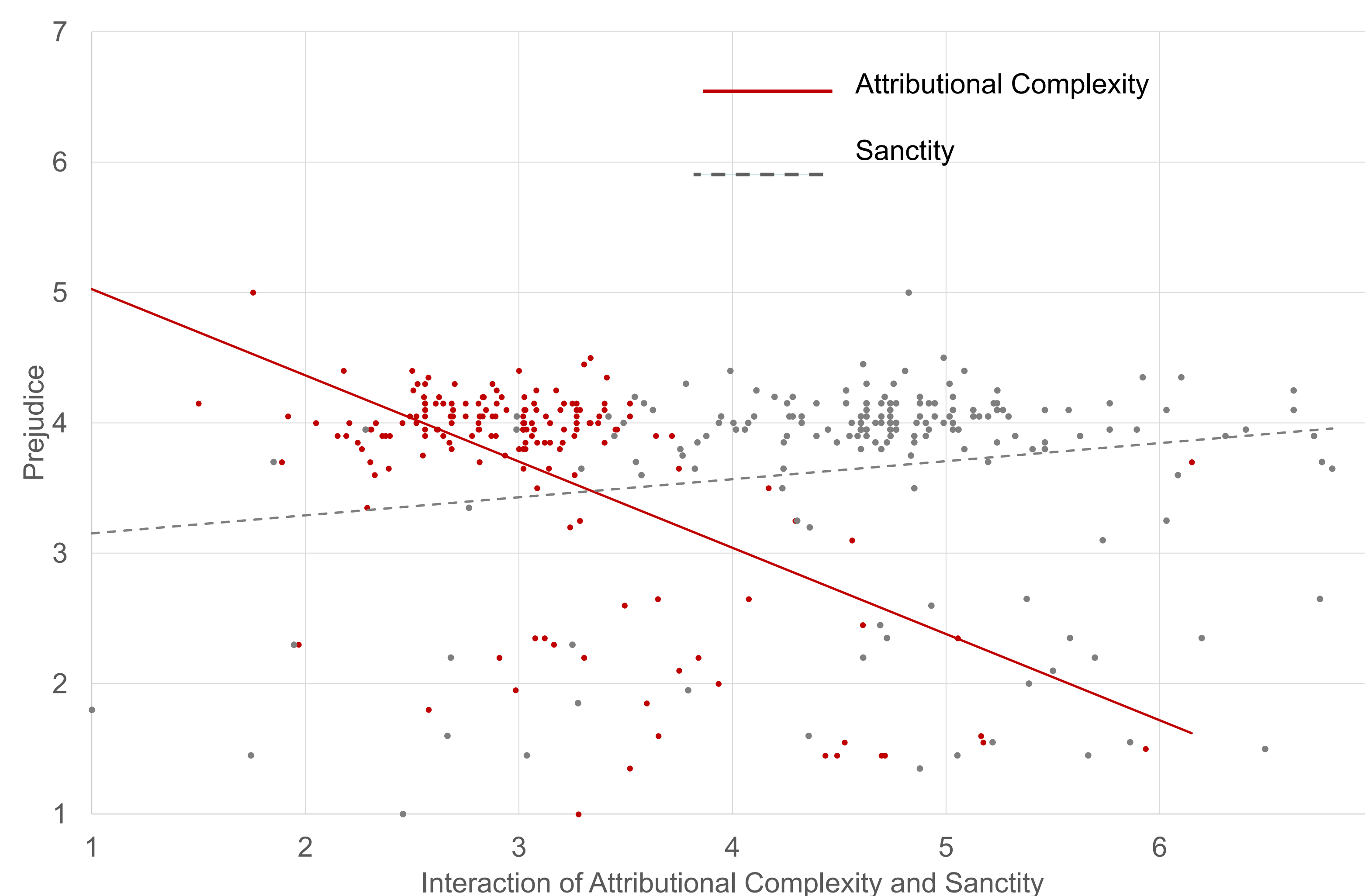


Figure 2. Prejudice is Not Predicted by Sanctity



Method

Participants

online, 72 women; 40 ethnic minorities; *M* age = 34

Measures on a 1 (Disagree) to 7 (Agree) scale.

- Social Dominance Orientation (Pratto et al., 2013)
- Right-Wing Authoritarianism (Smith & Winter, 2002)
- Prejudice measure (Brigham, 1993)
- Need for Cognition (de Halanda Coelho et al., 2020)
- Moral Foundations (Graham et al., 2009)
- Attributional Complexity (Foels, 2021)

Results

Monroe & Plant, 2018 Replication

- conservative ideology and sanctity $r = .15^*$
- prejudice and sanctity $r = .24^*$

New Analyses

- conservative ideology and sanctity partial $r = .08ns$
- conservative ideology and attributional complexity partial $r = -.19^*$
- attributional complexity and sanctity partial $r = -.40$

Discussion

- Attributional complexity may allow individuals to see through stereotypes and to perceive the societal constraints that lead to poorer outcomes.
- Attributional complexity also may lead to a perception of sanctity behaviors as being caused by more than just personality.