

Humboldt Kolleg

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Global Challenges of the 21st Century

- 1) Technological development and human health/ quality of life*
- 2) Climate change and environmental sustainability*
- 3) Democracy and cohesion in Europe*

Contamination Fear during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Moderated Mediation Quasiexperimental Model of the Effect of Disgust on Outgroup Bias towards Diaspora

Disgust is a relevant emotion in the intergroup domain of study, playing a key role in generating and maintaining various intergroup biases. To test our hypotheses, we used a quasiexperimental between-subjects design, in which participants ($N = 194$) were randomly assigned either to a disgust induction condition or a non-induction neutral group, based on whether the scenario featuring diaspora returning home due to COVID-19 concerns contained a moral transgression (i.e., lying) or not. A moderated mediation model was established and the results suggested that the hypothesized effect of disgust sensitivity on dehumanization and aggressive tendencies (totally) passed through contamination fear and the effect was stronger for participants in the disgust-induction than in the neutral group. This effect was found only for biological dehumanization and passive aggression outcomes. Consistent with the role of disgust as a disease-avoidance mechanism, our results suggest that state-disgust triggered by a moral transgression could facilitate stronger outgroup bias in the context of a high health threat, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Andreea Iuliana Luca is a PhD student at the Interdisciplinary School of Doctoral Studies of the University of Bucharest. Andreea's research focuses on the interdisciplinary approach of the role of disgust in moral judgment, by intertwining moral psychology and input from philosophy and social cognition.