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ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

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When Feeling Good Feels “Wrong”: Avoiding Hedonic Consumption When It Reflects Immoral Character

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In contrast to traditional mood repair motivations, we find that people desire to experience negative emotions in response to moral violations. Therefore, people avoid hedonic consumption after negatively valenced moral content, and feel uncomfortable when negatively valenced moral content is followed by hedonic frivolous content in social media contexts.

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When Modern Consumers Face Moral Violations

Chair: Stephanie Lin, Singapore Management University, Singapore

Paper #1: Explaining Moralized Opposition to Genetically Modified Food in the U.S. and Europe

Sydney Scott, Washington University in St. Louis, USA
Yoel Inbar, University of Toronto, Canada
Paul Rozin, University of Pennsylvania, USA

Paper #2: The First-Mover Authentic Advantage: How Order of Entry Signals the Purity of Motives

Brooke Kelly, University of Pennsylvania, USA
Deborah Small, University of Pennsylvania, USA

Paper #3: When Feeling Good Feels “Wrong”: Avoiding Hedonic Consumption When It Reflects Immoral Character

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Paper #4: Witnessing Moral Violations Increases Conformity in Consumption

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SYMPOSIUM OVERVIEW

What constitutes a moral violation in the modern consumer’s mind, and what are the consequences of those moral judgments? Although morality is becoming an increasingly popular topic across fields, our understanding of the determinants and consequences of negative moral judgments in consumer contexts is underdeveloped. This is especially relevant in the modern world, with the increasing use of morally relevant technology (e.g., genetic modification), attempts for firms to be viewed as moral (e.g., corporate social responsibility), and exposure of consumers to moral violations through news and social media outlets. Our four papers draw on and contribute to the moral values and judgment literature (Barasch et al. 2014; Baron and Spranca 1999; Graham et al. 2013; Haidt 2001; Rozin 1999) by exploring how consumers’ moral values lead them to view certain products (Scott, Inbar, and Rozin), firms’ behavior (Kelly and Small), and their own behavior (Lin, Reich, and Kreps) as moral violations, and examining consumption consequences of being exposed to those violations (Lin, Reich, and Kreps; Dong and Zhong).

Scott, Inbar and Rozin find that genetic modification (GM), which is increasingly prevalent across the world, is widely met with moral opposition. They examine different roots of this opposition across cultures (US and Europe), and further find that opposition is only somewhat mitigated when consumers read about potential moral benefits of GM (e.g., saving lives). Thus, technological advancements that can serve moral ends can ironically be viewed as immoral. Kelly and Small also examine when consumers view actions that achieve objectively “good” outcomes as immoral. They investigate this question in the increasingly common context of corporate social responsibility and find that second-mover companies (i.e., following another company’s CSR behavior) are viewed as less authentically motivated, and are thus seen as less virtuous than first-movers.

Moving away from firms and products, Lin, Reich, and Kreps examine when people’s own consumption is judged as immoral, touching on both antecedents and consequences of moral violations. They show that after exposure to moral violations, consumers desire to feel negative emotions, and thus view hedonic consumption as a moral violation and avoid it (e.g., getting ice cream after the Holo-

caust Museum). Consumers also feel uncomfortable when negative moral content is followed by hedonic frivolous content in popular social media contexts (i.e., Twitter). Dong and Zhong further examine consumption consequences of moral violations. They find that, after exposure to moral violations, consumers choose products that conform to majority preferences (e.g., products with higher market share). Furthermore, they provide evidence that they choose such products to restore the social order disrupted by those violations.

Our papers use diverse methodologies and theoretical perspectives to examine the role of moral judgment in consumer behavior. Furthermore, while clearly focused around moral violation, our papers cover a wide range of topics (GM, CSR, hedonic consumption, conformity), and each contributes uniquely to the moral judgment literature while offering practical implications for marketers and consumers. Thus our session should appeal to a broad audience at ACR.

Explaining Moralized Opposition to Genetically Modified Food in the U.S. and Europe

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Genetically modified (GM) food has become prevalent. Eighty-three percent of soybean plants and 29% of corn grown worldwide is GM (ISAA 2015). Yet, consumers are very opposed to GM food. Protesters from the Philippines to Australia to the United States continue to destroy genetically modified crops (Harmon 2013). A wealth of research has focused on the rational and quasi-rational factors underlying opposition to GM, such as beliefs about risks and benefits (Gaskell et al. 2004; Siegrist 2000). In the present research, we expand the scope of explanations about opposition to GM food. We find GM food opposition is moralized and based on sacred values (Baron and Spranca 1997; Rozin 1999). Consumers view the very process of genetic modification as morally repugnant, regardless of its risks and benefits. We use this moralization framework to investigate two puzzles about GM food: 1) consumers’ (in)sensitivity to risk-benefit arguments and 2) why Americans and Europeans have different attitudes to GM food, despite the cultural similarity between the U.S. and Europe.

First, we examine whether attitudes to GM food are moralized in a representative U.S. sample ($N = 540$). We asked participants a number of agree/disagree questions regarding “genetically engineering plants and animals for human consumption”, including 1) “I oppose this”; 2) “This should be prohibited no matter how great the benefits and minor the risks from allowing it”. Following Baron and Spranca (1997) and Scott, Inbar, and Rozin (2016), we defined GM moralization using questions 1 and 2. The majority (64.9%) of consumers in the U.S. were opposed to GM (said “yes” to Q1). Moreover, the majority of this opposition was moralized opposition (said “yes” to Q2; 81.3% of opponents, which is 52.8% of the total sample). These moralized opponents indicated they are *evidence-insensitive*, and they would oppose GM food no matter the cost-benefit analysis.

In order to directly assess evidence-insensitivity of moralized opponents, we randomly assigned moralized opponents to view one of two opposition challenges: a moral benefit challenge and open-ended challenge (adapted from Baron and Spranca, 1997). In the moral benefit challenge, consumers considered and rated the acceptability of golden rice, a crop produced by non-profit companies to reduce death and blindness from Vitamin A deficiency. In the open-ended challenge, consumers wrote about any situation in which

GM would be acceptable, if they could think of such a situation. In both conditions, consumers were given the opportunity to change their moralization position and indicate that they would be willing to change their minds depending on the risks and benefits (i.e., re-answer Q1 & Q2, see above). Only 26.3% of moralized opponents shifted their position after viewing the moral benefit challenge; even fewer (13.7%, $p < .001$) shifted their position after viewing the open-ended challenge. Moralized consumers were evidence insensitive to both challenges.

Next, we examined the difference between attitudes in Europe (Germany & France) and the United States. Prior work suggests that Europeans find GM food more unacceptable than Americans (Gaskell et al., 1999), but it is unclear whether Europeans and Americans oppose GM food for the same or different reasons. We find that Europeans are more moralized towards GM than the United States, and that the bases of moralization differ across countries.

We administered the same survey described above to a representative sample of French ($N = 500$) and German ($N = 519$) participants. Europeans were more moralized than Americans. Moralized opposition was more prevalent in France and in Germany as compared to the U.S. (85.21% in France vs. 52.82% in USA, $t = 10.40$, $p < .001$; 72.69% in Germany vs. 52.82% in U.S., $t = 6.40$, $p < .001$). Even among only opponents (i.e., excluding supporters), moralization was more prevalent in Europe (93.15% in France vs. 81.33% in U.S., $t = 4.80$, $p < .001$; 87.48% in Germany vs. 81.33% in USA, $t = 2.27$, $p = .024$).

Consistent with these self-report measures of moralization, Europeans behaved more insensitive to evidence. Whereas 26.3% of U.S. moralized opponents shifted to non-moralized opposition after viewing the moral benefits challenge, only 15.8% of French and 9.8% of German moralized opponents shifted after this challenge (U.S. v. France, $p = .021$; U.S. v. Germany, $p < .001$). Similarly, whereas 13.7% of U.S. moralized opponents shifted after viewing the open-ended challenge, a mere 3.3% of French and 6.6% of German moralized opponents shifted their opinions (U.S. v. France, $p = .036$; U.S. v. Germany, $p = .002$).

Finally, we examined two potential bases of opposition. We measured connectedness to the natural world (Schultz, 2001) and religiosity. Connectedness to the natural world might capture the intuition that humans shouldn't "tamper with nature." Connectedness to the natural world predicted increased GM opposition in all countries, and France and Germany felt more connected to the natural world than the United States. On the other hand, religiosity might capture the intuition that GM is the equivalent of "playing God." Religiosity was higher in the United States, and religiosity predicted increased GM opposition in the United States better than in France or Germany. These results were robust across many operationalizations of GM opposition, connectedness to nature, and religiosity and were robust to demographic controls.

Taken together, across 1559 participants and representative samples from three different countries we find strong support for a moralization or sacred values framework of GM opposition. Consistent with this framework, most opposition is moralized opposition, and these opponents are unmoved by strong arguments about risks and benefits. Instead they seem to be opposed to the very process of GM itself, which, regardless of risks and benefits is considered intrinsically reprehensible. Furthermore, opposition may be stronger and more moralized in France and Germany (vs. the U.S.) in part due to stronger connectedness to the natural world, but religiosity plays a bigger role in the United States.

The First-Mover Authentic Advantage: How Order of Entry Signals the Purity of Motives

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Companies engage in costly "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) because they can gain increased customer loyalty (Maignan, Ferrell, & Hult, 1999) and purchase intentions (Elfenbein & McManus, 2010; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001), improved product quality perceptions (Blair & Chernev, 2014), and an enhanced reputation (Brammer & Pavelin, 2006). However, they run the risk of losing credit if their good deeds are seemingly motivated by self-interested motives (Newman & Cain, 2014; Vlachos et al., 2009). This aversion to impure motives, or inauthenticity more generally, extends beyond the prosocial behavior of firms. Consumers value authenticity in a number of domains (see Newman & Smith, 2016 for review). For example, Newman & Bloom (2012) find that consumers devalue intentional copies of paintings, which is consistent with plagiarism research demonstrating an aversion to stealing credit, a very self-serving act (see Mandel, Fast, & Olson, 2015 for review).

These results underscore the importance of appearing authentic as well as the skepticism and even distaste towards copying. We build on these insights to predict that companies who copy the original prosocial actions of another company will be judged as less benevolent and that this will be due to an inference about the impurity of their motives.

While the idea of first-movers being inherently authentic has been discussed in the first-mover literature (Kamins & Alpert, 2004), it has yet to be explicitly tested. Rather, the first-mover advantage literature began simply with descriptive evidence that market pioneers have larger market shares than later entrants (Robinson, 1988; Robinson and Fornell, 1985; Urban et al., 1986). First-movers are generally perceived more favorably than followers and have a greater advantage the more similar the follower is to them (Carpenter and Nakamoto, 1989). Explanations for this advantage include: increased exposure frequency, familiarity, recall, and representativeness, as well as pioneer image/self-image consistency and the application of consumer beliefs about first-mover traits such as quality and reliability (see Niedrich and Swain 2003 for review). The present research seeks to enrich this evidence by examining the role of judged motives. In doing so, it sheds light on when the first-mover advantage is likely to be particularly strong.

In the context of CSR and other prosocial activities, we expect that first-movers will be perceived as more benevolent than followers. If a company is first to do some type of CSR action, being first suggests that that act must be consistent with the company's character (i.e. "good"). In contrast, a company that copies the CSR action of another will appear less genuine. We further expect that the motive purity of a first-mover will translate into more positive overall attitudes. Because motive purity is so important for prosocial actions (Barasch et al., 2014; Berman et al., 2015), we further hypothesize that the first-mover advantage will be greater for prosocial innovations than for self-interested innovations.

In Study 1 ($N = 301$), participants evaluated first-mover and follower companies with domain-related CSR programs. Participants rated both the first-mover and the follower on social goodness ($\alpha = .962$) and motive purity ($\alpha = 0.949$). Across three industry scenarios, first-movers were judged as more benevolent ($M = 5.52$, $SD = 1.10$) and purely-motivated ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.34$) than followers ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.08$; $M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.26$, respectively; all $ps < .001$), with motive purity mediating the effect on benevolence judgments here and in subsequent studies.

In Study 2 ($N = 160$), we examined whether the first-mover authentic advantage is larger for CSR activities than for self-interested activities. Participants evaluated first-movers and followers and either judged companies whose innovations (and copied innovations) were self-interested (cost-cutting for the company) or prosocial (better for the environment). Our key dependent variable moving forward is overall attitude judgments ($\alpha = 0.976$), because it allows us to examine a more general evaluation that is reasonable for participants to evaluate across both types of innovations. We find that first-movers are judged more positively overall ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.06$) than followers ($M = 4.32$, $SD = .96$; $F(1, 156) = 186.15$, $p < .001$). We also find that companies with prosocial innovations are viewed more positively overall ($M = 5.18$, $SD = .82$) than companies that innovate in a self-serving way ($M = 4.37$, $SD = .82$; $F(1, 156) = 37.27$, $p < .001$). Importantly, there is a significant interaction between first-mover status and innovation type ($F(1, 156) = 12.73$, $p < .001$) such that the first-mover advantage is larger for CSR innovations than for self-interested innovations. These same patterns emerge for judgments of social goodness and motive purity.

In Study 3 ($N = 200$), we conceptually replicate Study 2 using scenarios that lack any company- or innovation-specific information. This controls for any inherent differences across the CSR and self-interested innovation scenarios of Study 2. Our results parallel those reported in Study 2 (all $ps < .001$).

In Study 4 ($N = 149$), we examine whether it is better to copy the CSR of a competitor or to persist pursuing self-interest. Participants judged a CSR first-mover as well as a company that responds to the CSR innovation by a) copying it, b) innovating in a non-CSR way, or c) doing nothing at all. We replicate the finding that first-movers are judged more positively than each type of following competitor (all $ps < .01$). Nonetheless, CSR copiers are evaluated more positively overall ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.32$) than companies that innovate in a self-interested manner ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.13$) and proceed with business as usual ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.00$; all $ps < .001$). In other words, CSR copiers are penalized for having impure motives, but they still receive more credit than companies that do no good at all.

We demonstrate that being first at doing something benevolent signals something positive above and beyond the action. Put another way, copying a good action raises doubt about the purity of the company's motives, which lowers the amount of credit that the company reaps. This underscores the importance of inferred motives for CSR activities.

When Feeling Good Feels “Wrong”: Avoiding Hedonic Consumption When It Reflects Immoral Character

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

People judge others' moral characters based on their emotional responses to moral situations (Barasch et al. 2014; Szcurek, Monin, and Gross 2012), perhaps because emotions play such a strong role in moral judgments (Graham et al. 2013; Haidt 2001). We propose that people turn the same judgment inward, and that this judgment affects their desire to consume hedonic experiences. In particular, in contrast to traditional accounts of hedonic emotion regulation (Gross and Thompson 2007), we posit that people desire to experience negative emotions in response to moral violations and negatively valenced moralized content, because experiencing positive emotions would reflect poorly on their moral character. As a consequence, we predict that consumers will avoid repairing emotions through hedonic consumption after viewing negative moralized content, and that they will feel uncomfortable when their ability to feel negatively is disrupted.

Study 1 tested whether consumers feel moral self-reproach (i.e., guilt) when they do not feel negatively enough about negative moralized content using a 3 (emotion feedback: lower, higher, no feedback) \times 2 (moralized content: moralized vs. nonmoral) design. An experimenter attached a physiological measurement device to the participant's palm and informed participants that they would view a sad video clip while he (ostensibly) monitored their emotional response in the next room. Participants viewed a sad moral (from a documentary about Bullying) or a sad nonmoral (from ET) film clip. The experimenter then interrupted the clip, claiming that he had to stop the study because the participant was feeling less sad or sadder than previous participants, or because he was having trouble with the equipment. Participants then reported how guilty they felt. Those who viewed the moralized clip felt guiltier when they thought they felt less sad ($M=2.07$, $SD=1.14$) than others than when they thought they felt sadder than others ($M=1.40$, $SD=.66$; $p<.001$), or when they were given no feedback, ($M=1.54$, $SD=.94$; $p=.001$). In contrast, the level of guilt for those who saw the nonmoralized clip was not affected by emotion feedback others ($M_{\text{lower}}=1.41$, $SD=.75$; $M_{\text{higher}}=1.30$, $SD=.65$; $M_{\text{no feedback}}=1.33$, $SD=.51$; $ps>.40$). A moderated mediation analysis revealed that the moral content, and not emotional intensity, of the clip explained this effect [.013, .357]. Thus, participants felt they had violated a moral standard by not feeling adequately negative about a moralized clip, suggesting that people desire to negatively in response to negative moralized content.

Studies 2-4 tested whether consumers are reluctant to repair their moods by engaging in hedonic consumption after viewing negatively valenced moralized stimuli. In study 2, participants created a hypothetical itinerary for a trip to Washington, DC. They read that they would visit a museum with moralized content (the Holocaust Museum) or nonmoralized content (an art museum). Participants scheduled two other activities: going for ice cream (hedonic) or taking a walk on the Potomac River (neutral). They chose which should come before and which after the museum. Participants sequenced the ice cream trip after the Holocaust Museum less frequently (62.63%) than after the art museum (86.02%), $p<.001$. This was mediated by how it would reflect on their moral character to eat ice cream after visiting the museum they visited [.033, .146].

In study 3, participants viewed Beyoncé's “Formation” music video, and focused on the aesthetic or moral aspects (e.g., themes of racial discrimination) of the video, thus holding content constant. Afterwards, they chose between viewing a clip from America's Funniest Home Videos or engaging in a meditative breathing task for the next study. Participants were less likely to choose America's Funniest Home Videos after focusing on the moral aspects (58.06%) the music video than when they focused on aesthetic aspects (68.75%), $p=.05$.

Study 4 ruled experienced affect out as an alternative explanation. Participants viewed the same negative moral and nonmoral film clips from study 1 (Bully documentary clip vs. ET clip). They then chose between viewing a Bud Light ad or sitting in silence for 30 seconds. Participants were less likely to view the Bud Light ad after the moralized clip (37.69% vs. 56.86%; $p<.001$). This was mediated by how poorly it would reflect on their moral character to view the Bud Light ad after the video they viewed [-.12, -.04] and held true when controlling for how sad the video made participants feel.

In study 5, we explored the consequences of being exposed to moral content directly followed by hedonic, nonmoral content by using Twitter “tweets.” Participants viewed six negative tweets—three moral (e.g., about rape culture on college campus) and three nonmoral (e.g., about a bacterial outbreak among olive trees). Each tweet was randomly followed by one of six positive tweets—three

virtuous (e.g., about a paralyzed student being thrown a prom that he missed), and three frivolous (e.g., about eating Chipotle every day). Participants rated how comfortable the tweets made them feel (appropriate, comfortable, good). When the second tweet was frivolous, participants felt more uncomfortable when the first tweet was moral ($M=3.00$, $SD=1.12$) than when it was nonmoral ($M=3.47$, $SD=1.21$; $p=.02$). However, this was not true when the second tweet was virtuous, ($M_{\text{moral}}=3.90$, $SD=1.23$; $M_{\text{nonmoral}}=3.90$, $SD=1.18$; $p=.44$; interaction $p=.004$). Individual ratings of tweets revealed that, when the second tweet as high in frivolous content, moral content of the first tweet predicted discomfort whereas when they were low in frivolous content, $p=.002$, moral content of the second tweet did not predict discomfort, $p=.81$, interaction $p=.006$. Thus, people feel more comfortable repairing their moods through moralized positive content, rather than through a cheap laugh.

Practically, our research suggests that marketers should develop different strategies following negative nonmoralized and moralized content, and that social media outlets should build algorithms to separate negative moral content (e.g., tragic news stories) from frivolous content (e.g., celebrity gossip). Theoretically, we contribute to a broader understanding of the role that emotion plays in moral contexts (Haidt 2001), and when people are motivated to experience negative emotion (Coleman and Williams 2013; Tamir, Mitchell, and Gross 2008). We also qualify judgment and decision making literature on the preferences for sequences of events that improve over time (Loewenstein and Prelec 1993).

Witnessing Moral Violations Increases Conformity in Consumption

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

News reports of unethical behaviors have become a regular feature on TV programs, newspapers, radio stations, and websites. Consumers are constantly exposed to moral violations, from infamous fraud by such companies as Enron, Lehman Brothers, and, more recently, Volkswagen to everyday transgressions such as tax evasion and adultery. Such unethical behaviors violate established moral codes and principles held by the majority of the society (Haidt 2012) and are usually recognized as breaches of social order. Despite the prevalence of moral violations, little is known about how witnessing them may affect consumer choice.

The current research highlights a novel influence of witnessing moral violations on consumers' preference for majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) options. We propose that moral violations pose a threat to social order and that mere exposure to them could heighten individuals' endorsement of conformist attitudes (Murray and Schaller 2012) by inducing a desire to correct wrongs (e.g., punishing the moral transgressors) and prevent future transgressions (e.g., adhering to social norms). In the domain of consumption, the heightened conformist attitudes could manifest symbolically through one's preference for majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) products or brands (cf. Berger and Heath 2007; Dong, Dai, and Wyr 2015; Huang, Dong, and Mukhopadhyay 2014).

We further propose that the effect should be attenuated or eliminated under two conditions. First, if the moral violator has already been punished by third parties, the need to restore social order should be fulfilled and hence the desire to conform to the majority should be lessened. Second, if the proposed moral violation effect is driven by heightened desire to restore social order, then the effect should not hold if conforming to the majority-endorsed option is viewed as being complicit with the moral violation, which might create further

imbalance in social order. We describe four experiments which investigated these possibilities.

Experiment 1 intends to test the proposed causal relationship between exposure to moral violations and conformity tendency. Participants were randomly assigned to 3(moral violation vs. innocent error vs. natural disaster) between-subjects conditions. To manipulate exposure to moral violation, participants were asked to read and comprehend news article describing an immoral behavior (i.e., the London Interbank Offered Rate [LIBOR] financial scandal). In the innocent error condition, participants were asked to read a similar news article but words were changed to describe the LIBOR incident as an innocent error. We also included the natural disaster condition to test whether the effect may generalize to any negative events. Afterwards, participants were asked to choose between a majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) office magnet as a small token of appreciation. The choice results yielded that witnessing moral violation increased consumers' tendency to choose a majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) magnet (55.1%), compared with those in the innocent error (33.3%; $p=.01$) or natural disaster conditions (37.7%; $p=.04$), suggesting that this effect is specific to moral violations and cannot be generalized to any negative events.

Experiment 2 extended the investigation in two ways: first, rather than manipulating moral violations using news article comprehension task, participants were exposed to real moral violation behavior (i.e., cheating). Second, we investigated whether the effect is comparable for observers and direct victims of moral violations. It followed a 2(exposure to cheating vs. not) \times 2(incentive structure: observers vs. direct victims) between subjects design. To manipulate exposure to cheating, we had a confederate cheating in a verbal ability task, and the behavior was observed by other participants in the same session. We varied the structure of the incentives that we offered to participants in the verbal ability task such that the confederate's cheating behavior would either hurt the participants' own payoff (i.e., direct victims condition) or not (observers condition). We find that exposure to cheating (vs. not) increased consumers' subsequent conformity tendency measured using the same magnet choice task as in Experiment 1, regardless of whether they are observers (54.0% vs. 31.7%; $p=.033$) or direct victims (58.5% vs. 35.4%; $p=.029$) of the cheating behavior.

Experiment 3 replicated the effect using a different operationalization of moral violation (i.e., reading a story about a corruptive CEO) and a different measure of conformity tendency (i.e., preference for brands with higher versus lower market share) and provided direct evidence for the underlying mechanism. Participants were randomly assigned to 3(unpunished corruptive CEO vs. punished corruptive CEO vs. control) between subjects conditions. As predicted, participants who read about a story describing an unpunished corrupt CEO ($M=14.21$) were more likely to prefer brands that have larger market share, compared with those who read about a punished corrupt CEO ($M=13.50$; $p=.025$) or those who were in the control condition ($M=13.46$; $p=.017$). In addition, a multi-stage mediation analysis revealed that the effect is shown to be driven by the heightened perceived threat to social order which subsequently enhanced participants' endorsement of conformist attitudes.

Experiment 4 sought to further test our proposed underlying process by using a moderation-by-process design (Spencer, Zanna, and Fong 2005). It followed a 2 (exposure to: moral violation vs. innocent error) \times 2 (majority morality: immoral vs. control) between-subjects design. We followed exactly the same procedures as in Experiment 1 to manipulate exposure to moral violations. Then participants were asked to make a choice between joining a majority-endorsed and a minority-endorsed book club, and we manipulated

the perceived morality of the two clubs by varying the occupation information of the book club members. We find that exposure to moral violation (vs. innocent error) increased preference for the majority book club only if the majority book club is perceived as neutral or moral (44.7% vs. 25.4%; $p=.014$). The effect disappears if the majority club is perceived as immoral (19.2% vs. 23.4%; $p>.53$).

Taken together, this research provides fresh insights to the morality and conformity literature by (a) documenting a novel downstream consequence of exposure to moral violations on consumer choice and (b) advancing our understanding of the psychological functions of conformity in coping with negative consequences of witnessing moral violations. Theoretical contributions and market-implications will be discussed.

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