"The Measure Ye Mete": Does Prosocial Priming Lead to Harsher Moral Judgment?

Jordan W. Moon, Robert R. Wright[*], Cody S. Broadbent, and Emily D. Robinson
Brigham Young University–Idaho

ABSTRACT. The present research investigated the effects of general moral priming and social identity (i.e., institutional) priming on moral judgment. Undergraduate students ($N = 233$) from a private religious university were randomly assigned to 3 priming conditions, differing in the content of a paragraph of scrambled words they read; the prosocial cooperation condition was primed with a moral fable, the social identity condition was exposed to an institutional prime (i.e., the religious university), and the control condition was primed with a neutral paragraph. Participants judged 3 mildly disruptive social situations (jaywalking, speeding, and smoking) and 2 scenarios related to the university's local honor code (facial hair and modesty). The fable group judged most harshly in the jaywalking scenario, $F(2, 230) = 3.22$, $p = .042$, $\eta^2 = .027$, and the university group in the facial hair scenario (i.e., an honor code infraction), $F(2, 230) = 3.27$, $p = .040$, $\eta^2 = .028$. Proselyting mission service, whether completed or planned, was a significant predictor of harsher judgment in the honor code scenarios— facial hair, $F(1, 149) = 3.99$, $p = .048$, $\eta^2 = .026$, and modesty, $F(1, 149) = 10.63$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .067$. This variable also interacted with the experimental condition on the facial hair scenario, $F(2, 145) = 3.05$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .040$. Further, it seems that these primes were most efficacious in scenarios perceived as more morally harmful.

Although early research on moral judgment has viewed the moral thinker as a logical and calculating agent, recent research has made it clear that conceptions of morality are more nuanced (Greene, Morelli, Lowenberg, Nystrom, & Cohen, 2008; Uhlmann, Pizarro, & Diermeier, 2015; Wheatley & Haidt, 2005). For example, if morality was utilitarian (i.e., focused on objective consequences), one would expect judgments of similar situations to be uniform across diverse populations. Instead, it seems that morality is at least partly a socially driven process, heavily influenced by culture (Lamont, Schmalzbauer, Waller, & Weber, 1996), symbolism (Zarkadi & Schnall, 2013), and affect (Schnall, Haidt, Clore, & Jordan, 2008). Because conflict, whether interpersonal or societal, so frequently stems from disagreements about morality (Rai & Fiske, 2011), understanding the factors that influence moral judgment seems critical in explaining and resolving conflicts. To explore additional factors in the moral judgment process, this study sought to explore how priming can impact judgments of others' social behavior.

The Adaptive Nature of Moral and Religious Judgment

Haidt (2001) defined moral judgment as evaluations of others "with respect to a set of virtues held to be obligatory by a culture or subculture" (p. 817). The social intuitionist hypothesis posits that an intuition that something is wrong precedes rational justification for a judgment; this process occasionally leads to inconsistent moral judgments. That is, rather than calculate the objective harm of an action, people tend to make judgments based on affective state (Strohminger, Lewis, & Meyer, 2011) and the virtue that is currently most salient

in the mind (Van Tongeren, Welch, Davis, Green, & Worthington, 2012). Although moral thinkers generally remain unaware of their biases (Pinker, 2008), affective judgment likely arose as a useful heuristic with an evolutionary benefit. That is, patterns observed in others often provide important signals about their moral qualities and value as potential ingroup members (Critcher, Inbar, & Pizarro, 2012; Uhlmann et al., 2015). Thus, the subjectivity that most would view as flawed and inconsistent in modern moral judgment might have been adaptive in past societies because of the rapid inferences it allows one to make about others.

Evolutionary psychologists have proposed that religious rituals are adaptive for similar reasons; shared religious values promote "coalitional psychology" and prosocial behavior, particularly within an ingroup (Kirkpatrick, 2012; see also Shariff, Piazza, & Kramer, 2014). Religious rituals and customs allow people to signal their morality and beliefs to other ingroup members using signals (e.g., religious piercings, self-harm, dress standards, time-intensive activities) that are too costly for nonbelievers to fake (Murray & Moore, 2009; Sosis, 2004). Because religious prosociality depends on these signals and their related beliefs in a morally concerned deity, nonbelievers who fail to display the correct signals are often seen as freeriders or considered untrustworthy (Gervais, Shariff, & Norenzayan, 2011). Religious priming often leads to fairness, especially toward ingroup members, whether by increasing prosocial behavior (Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007) or by facilitating judgment toward unfair behavior (McKay, Efferson, Whitehouse, & Fehr, 2011). In short, it seems that religious thoughts in many ways cause believers to act as though they are being watched (i.e., by a supernatural being; Gervais & Norenzayan, 2012).

The Effects of Priming on Judgment

Moral Foundations Theory claims there are six innate moral foundations, though people differ on their moral "tastes" (Haidt, 2012). Further, a particular stimulus can increase awareness of specific moral dimensions (e.g., participants who are exposed to a prime of cleanliness tend to report more conservative political views, a position that emphasizes the moral foundation of sanctity; Helzer & Pizarro, 2011). Not surprisingly, participants (especially those reporting higher religious commitment) who recalled experiences of forgiveness gave more lenient evaluations of morally ambiguous scenarios than those who recalled experiences

of punitive justice (Van Tongeren et al., 2012). Individuals' responses to moral or religious priming can also depend heavily on their participation in a belief system (e.g., donating money, providing volunteer service, or abiding by a specific code of conduct; cf. McKay et al., 2011) and acculturation (Cohen, 2015; Cohen & Rozin, 2001; Cohen, Malka, Rozin, & Cherfas, 2006). Thus, religious priming does not reliably affect nonreligious individuals, and it seems to depend on "the cognitive activation of culturally transmitted religious beliefs" (Shariff, Willard, Andersen, & Norenzayan, 2015, p. 1). One may expect, then, that moral or religious priming would activate generally the culturally relevant values internalized by an individual.

Even within a single belief system, different aspects of religious experience can produce dramatically different effects. For instance, asking Israeli Jews in the West Bank and Gaza about their religious attendance (i.e., an institutional prime) increased support for a well-known Jewish terrorist, but asking how often they prayed had no such effect (Ginges, Hansen, & Norenzayan, 2009). In this case, making participants' religious attendance salient likely elicited thoughts related to the institution (e.g., loyalty) rather than moral principles specific to Judaism. Another study found that depictions of violence in sacred texts, especially when commanded by God, can increase aggression, particularly among believers (Bushman, Ridge, Das, Key, & Busath, 2007). In short, although the effects of religious or moral primes are not always intuitive, it does seem that specific primes are most effectual toward relevant stimuli. In other words, institutional primes may selectively affect judgments relevant to a specific institution (i.e., relevant costly signals, or local norms) but general moral primes may elicit responses more consistent with general moral principles or reasoning.

In light of these findings, we hypothesized that a moral prime of prosocial cooperation (general moral concept) would elicit consistently stronger judgments toward general disruptive social behavior than an institutional (i.e., university) prime or a control prime. We also hypothesized that an institutional prime would elicit similar or harsher judgments in situations specific to a religious university (i.e., local costly signals). Finally, our second hypothesis was that the effects of the moral prime and the institutional prime (where relevant) would be stronger among those who have completed or plan to complete an extended period of mission service. In other words, we anticipated that those

in the mission group would have a heightened sensitivity to both moral and institutional priming, and would respond to these primes with harsher judgment toward mildly disruptive social behavior.

Method

The present experiment was conducted at a private midsized religious undergraduate university in the Intermountain West region of the United States. Matriculated students agree to abide by a code of conduct including standards for dress, grooming, curfew, and morality. This code is a salient aspect of student life because, for many, these standards represent ideals taught in their youth within this general religious culture. Moreover, as undergraduates at this university, they are expected to hold to these standards, which are rigorously enforced. In particular, women are asked to wear appropriately modest clothing including skirts and dresses that are at least knee length. Men are to keep their hair professional in appearance and to shave daily. Both men and women are to be honest and avoid substances including alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. Students are reminded of these standards in multiple advertisements across campus during the school year as well as by clergy in the local congregations and by teaching faculty. Additionally, an extended period of proselyting service (e.g., missionary service) is encouraged during young adulthood, often before or during students' university studies. Students, therefore, are heavily influenced to abide by the university's code of conduct due to teachings in their youth and missionary service standards, thus giving this code a relatively higher moral status than it might attain otherwise. Therefore, this code of conduct provides a unique opportunity to study social judgment toward disobedience to social norms.

Participants

Two groups of participants completed an online survey on cognitive perceptions. The first group was a random sample of 500 students provided by the university ($n = 173$; response rate of 34.60%). Random sampling was accomplished by assigning random numbers to all current students in a database; students were then randomized again, and the first 500 were chosen. The second group was a convenience sample of 350 undergraduate students in psychology classes at the same university who had expressed interest in participating in research for course credit ($n = 194$; response rate of 55.43%).

All participants were offered the opportunity to enter a random drawing for one of 12 gift cards (eight $10 cards and two $25 cards). Because of technical issues with the online survey data collecting program, we were unable to conclusively prevent duplicate responses within our sample (e.g., one person completing the survey more than once). Due to our concerns regarding sufficient priming and duplicate responses, we excluded those who indicated low comprehension of our priming paragraph (as described below) as well as those who did not spend at least 10 s on the page displaying the priming stimulus, making a final combined sample size of 233 participants ($M_{age} = 21.10$; $SD_{age} = 3.30$; 65% women), or 63.49% of the original 367 participants. Racial demographics were not collected for either group of participants. Data for the entire university was 88.35% White, 6.93% Hispanic/Latino, 1.28% Asian American, and 1.18% Black, however it is important to note that these figures do not necessarily reflect the present experimental sample.

Procedure

After approval was given by the Brigham Young University–Idaho institutional review board (F2014-015), participants in each sample were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: two experimental and one control. They received a link to one of three surveys via e-mail, differing only in the priming stimulus, which consisted of a paragraph of scrambled words (i.e., letters scrambled within each word). The first experimental group read a paragraph regarding the affiliated university's transition from a 2-year college to a 4-year university; the second experimental group read a short children's fable emphasizing prosocial cooperation (i.e., "The Lion and the Mouse"); finally, the control group read a short paragraph commenting on the mind's ability to read scrambled words. Participants then indicated how long it took them to read the paragraph ("Less than 30 s," "Between 30 and 60 s," or "More than 60 s") and how well they understood it on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely well*). To ensure the manipulation primed participants sufficiently, final analyses included only participants who spent more than 10 s on the priming page and whose self-report comprehension was greater than 3 on the 7-point scale.

Participants rated a series of statements describing five morally ambiguous scenarios (i.e., jaywalking, speeding, facial hair, modesty, smoking) on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*)

to 7 (*strongly agree*), as outlined in the Appendix. As such, larger values are indicative of a stronger judgment of the inappropriateness of the particular behavior. As noted above, the facial hair (Scenario 3) and modesty (Scenario 4) scenarios are unique to the university honor code (i.e., although smoking is also prohibited, this prohibition comes from wider reaching religious and cultural standards). We thus differentiated between these two "honor code items" and the other three, which we designated as "nonhonor code items," meaning that they are not specific to the university honor code. Although the facial hair scenario depicts a more clear infraction of university dress standards, a skirt that stops at the knees is more ambiguous and could be interpreted either way. The scenarios were presented in the order outlined in the Appendix for all participants. Although this makes order effects a possibility, our analyses focused on differences between experimental conditions, and order effects would not ostensibly affect one condition over another. Further, no trend between the items (e.g., participants judging progressively less harshly) suggested any significant order effects.

Measures

After judging these moral scenarios, participants provided some demographic information and completed a battery of self-report psychosocial measures. Measures collected included status of religious mission service ("I have served a mission," "I have not served a mission but plan to," or "I have not served a mission and don't plan to") and personal social identification with the university (3-item measure created for this study on a 5-point Likert scale, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*; e.g., "Being a student at this university is a central part of my identity").

Mood. Participants then completed assessments of positive and negative affect over the past month using the eight items of the PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *extremely*; e.g., enthusiastic, bored). The internal consistency coefficient for negative moods was .549 and it was .598 for positive moods. These low coefficients need to be considered when interpreting the results.

Conflict. Interpersonal conflict with others was assessed using an 8-item measure adapted from Wright, Mohr, and Sinclair (2014) on a frequency Likert-scale in the past month (e.g., "In the past month, how often have you been shown a lack of respect or felt underappreciated by people around

you?"). The internal consistency coefficient for the conflict measure was .708.

Personality. Neuroticism was assessed using a 10-item measure on a 5-point agreement scale (Goldberg, 1999; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*; "I often feel blue"). Cronbach's alpha suggested adequate internal consistency α = .888.

Results

Descriptive results including means, standard deviations, and effect sizes are presented in Table 1. Although the scenarios were expected to represent separate constructs (i.e., the two honor code items were expected to elicit higher judgment from the university condition), the reliability estimate of the five scenarios was moderate (α = .73). Mean judgment on the 7-point scale was highest for the fable condition ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.16$), lowest for the control condition ($M = 2.59$, $SD = 1.14$), and more moderate for the religious university condition ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.13$). Across experimental conditions, average judgment was highest for the jaywalking ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.73$) and facial hair scenarios ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.88$). Both of these scenarios received significantly harsher judgment than the smoking ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.47$; $p < .001$), modesty ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.72$; $p < .001$), and speeding ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.48$; $p < .001$) scenarios (see Figure 1). There were statistically significant differences between the experimental conditions on age ($M_{social\ identity} = 20.79$, $SD_{social\ identity} = 3.20$; $M_{control} = 20.68$, $SD_{control} = 2.70$; $M_{fable} = 21.88$, $SD_{fable} = 3.91$), $F(2, 228) = 3.22$, $p = .042$, $\eta2 = .027$, and neuroticism ($M_{social\ identity} = 2.25$, $SD_{social\ identity} = 0.69$; $M_{control} = 2.34$, $SD_{control} = 0.67$; $M_{fable} = 2.54$, $SD_{fable} = 0.75$), $F(2, 229) = 3.13$, $p = .044$, $\eta^2 = .027$. Further, those in the university condition consistently reported a

TABLE 1				
Analysis of Variance Tests ($N = 233$)				
Scenario	Fable ($n = 76$)	Social Identity ($n = 64$)	Control ($n = 93$)	F	η^2
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Jaywalking	3.58 (1.81)	2.88 (1.63)	3.09 (1.68)	3.22*	.027
Speeding	2.53 (1.61)	2.14 (1.26)	2.28 (1.51)	1.24	.011
Facial Hair	3.29 (1.92)	3.59 (1.84)	2.84 (1.83)	3.27*	.028
Short Skirt	2.69 (1.73)	2.64 (1.83)	2.26 (1.62)	1.58	.014
Smoking	2.62 (1.53)	2.42 (1.49)	2.47 (1.42)	0.39	.003

*$p < .05$; Five Analysis of Variance tests were conducted ($df = 2, 230$), and statistically significant differences were found in two of these. Eta-Squared (η^2) was computed to estimate the effect size between priming conditions.

higher GPA ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.36$) than the fable ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.50$) and control ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.42$) conditions, $F(2, 194) = 5.08$, $p = .007$, $\eta2 = .050$. Although men and women gave similar judgments on four of the five scenarios, men judged the modesty scenario much more harshly than women ($M_{men} = 2.91$, $SD_{men} = 1.89$; $M_{women} = 2.28$, $SD_{women} = 1.58$; $p = .007$; Cohen's $d = 0.37$). There were no other statistically significant differences on any demographic or psychosocial variables collected between the experimental conditions.

### Hypothesis 1: Moral Priming and Judgment
To investigate Hypothesis 1, we computed mean difference estimates using one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), as outlined on Table 1. On the three nonhonor code scenarios, the fable group provided the harshest judgment, although a significant main effect was found only in the jaywalking scenario, $F(2, 230) = 3.22$, $p = .042$, $\eta2 = .027$. A significant main effect was found in only one of the honor code-specific scenarios; the facial hair scenario received the harshest

judgments from the social identification condition, $F(2, 230) = 3.27$, $p = .040$, $\eta2 = .028$. Thus, the first hypothesis was partly confirmed because we found a significant main effect between two items in the anticipated direction (i.e., the fable prime led to higher judgments than the control prime across scenarios, and the university prime led to higher judgments in the honor-code specific scenarios).

### Hypothesis 2: Mission Service
Mission service including past or intended service was a significant predictor of harsher judgment in three of the five scenarios: speeding ($M_{mission} = 2.50$, $SD_{mission} = 1.54$; $M_{nonmission} = 2.10$, $SD_{nonmission} = 1.38$), $F(1, 231) = 4.28$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .018$, facial hair ($M_{mission} = 3.46$, $SD_{mission} = 1.93$; $M_{nonmission} = 2.88$, $SD_{nonmission} = 1.78$), $F(1, 231) = 5.59$, $p = .019$, $\eta^2 = .024$, and modesty ($M_{mission} = 2.94$, $SD_{mission} = 1.90$; $M_{nonmission} = 1.98$, $SD_{nonmission} = 1.30$), $F(1, 231) = 19.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .077$. Because only three male participants reported neither having completed nor planning to complete a proselytizing mission, we compared the ratings of men and women within

FIGURE 1
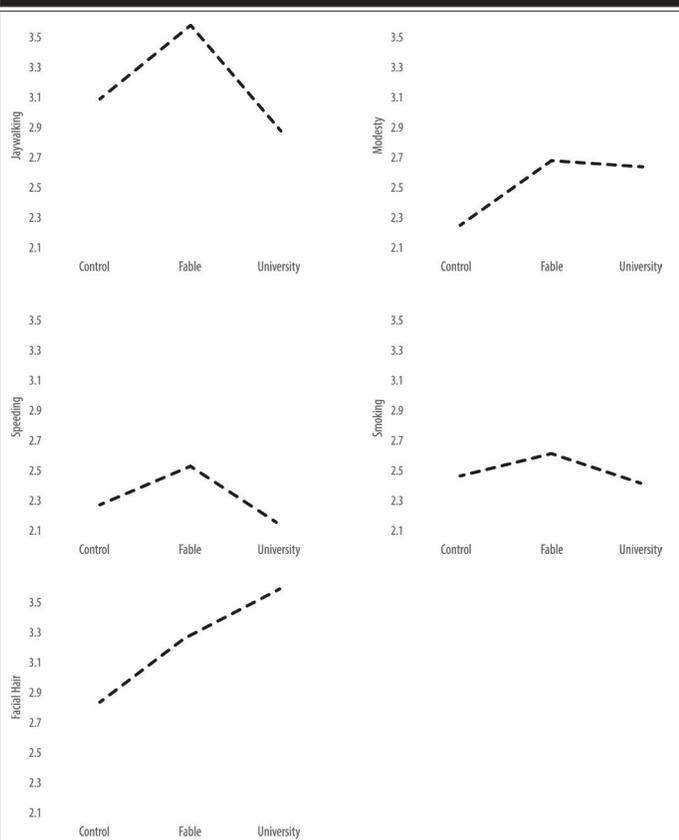
Comparison of means between experimental conditions.

FIGURE 2
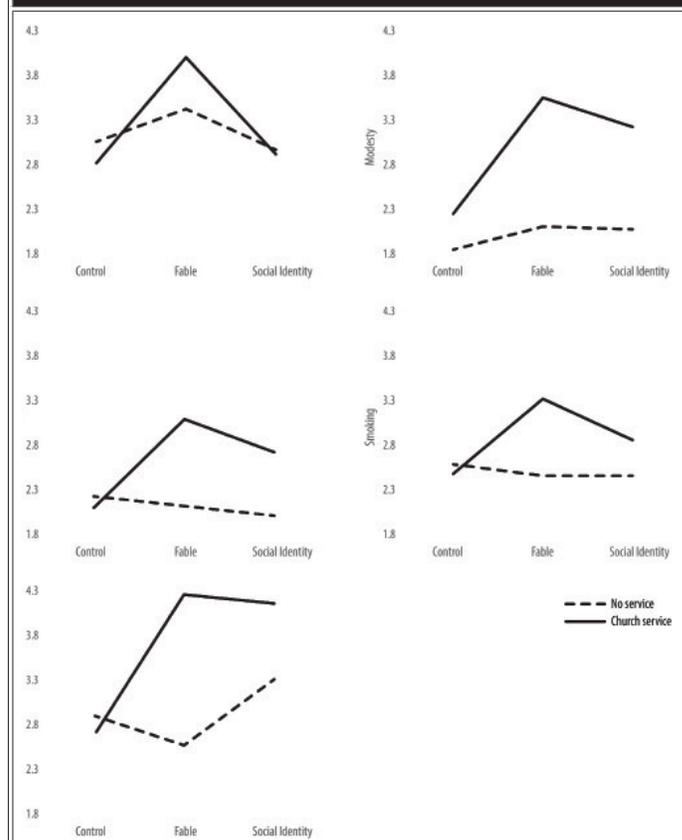
Interaction between treatment variable and mission service.

the mission group on all items. Although there was originally a significant sex difference on the modesty scenario, it should be noted that men and women in the mission group judged this item very similarly (M_{men} = 2.98, SD_{men} = 1.89; M_{women} = 2.88, SD_{women} = 1.93). Thus, it is possible that the sex difference on that item is due primarily to the over-representation of mission service among men. Still, there was a difference between male and female missionaries' ratings on the smoking scenario, $F(1, 125) = 4.01$, $p = .047$, $\eta^2 = .031$, with women ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.48$) giving a more harsh assessment than men ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 1.44$).

Interaction Effects

Using two-way ANOVA analyses, we also explored potential interaction effects between religious service and experimental condition (see Figure 2). Because of the lack of men in the nonmission group, these analyses included only female participants (48 in the service group, 103 in the nonservice group) to avoid comparing an almost completely female nonmission group with a mixed mission group. Thus, these interactions may differ for men, particularly on the smoking scenario.

Mission service was again a significant predictor of harsher judgment on the honor code items: facial hair ($M_{mission}$ = 2.90, $SD_{mission}$ = 1.78, $M_{nonmission}$ = 3.54, $SD_{nonmission}$ = 1.93), $F(1, 149) = 3.99$, $p = .048$, $\eta^2 = .026$, and modesty ($M_{mission}$ = 2.88, $SD_{mission}$ = 1.93, $M_{nonmission}$ = 2.00, $SD_{nonmission}$ = 1.31), $F(1, 149) = 10.63$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .067$. With regard to the facial hair scenario, there was a significant interaction effect between group and religious service, $F(2, 145) = 3.05$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .040$ (see Figure 2). Although interaction effects were not present for any other scenarios, this analysis did show a main effect for experimental condition on the modesty item, $F(2, 145) = 3.22$, $p = .043$, $\eta_p^2 = .043$. Though not conclusive, these analyses suggested that individual differences (e.g., religious devotion) can, in some instances, moderate the effects of priming on moral judgment. As hypothesized, it seems that a prime tends to be more effective in relevant situations (i.e., the honor code scenarios for the university prime) and for those with more invested in the scenario (i.e., the mission group).

Discussion

Moral judgment is an inevitable social phenomenon that carries an important role in conflict. Although processes leading to judgment are imperfect and susceptible to bias, moral disagreements and judgments of others have the potential to damage valuable interpersonal relationships as well as create tension and misunderstandings between groups. In light of research demonstrating that judgmental processes rely on mental states, which can be influenced through priming (Van Tongeren et al., 2012), we conducted the present study to examine the effects of different types of priming (i.e., prosocial cooperation, social identity, control) on judgments of ambiguous or disruptive social scenarios. To our knowledge, the concept of general prosocial priming has not been compared with specific (i.e., institutional) priming in the existing literature regarding moral judgment. The present study provided experimental evidence that, at least within a religious population, prosocial priming can facilitate harsher moral judgment toward general ambiguous or harmful scenarios, while a specific prime can facilitate harsher judgment toward relevant stimuli. These findings have important implications for the understanding of how moral judgment works within relationships and society in general.

Moral Priming and Judgment

First, we found partial support for the first hypothesis because our results demonstrated higher judgment in the fable group across scenarios and similar judgment in the university group in the honor code scenarios. In the case of the facial hair item, the university condition gave harsher judgments than both other groups; this is likely because facial hair is not generally considered a moral issue outside of adherence to the university honor code, while modesty is widely considered a moral issue independent of university standards. Although the differences in means were in the expected direction, only the jaywalking and facial hair scenarios showed a main effect. One possible explanation for this is that these were the least ambiguous of the scenarios (i.e., participants judged these scenarios much more harshly than the other scenarios).

Although it was expected that ambiguous scenarios would elicit the strongest differences, one possibility is that priming can amplify judgment where harm is already perceived, but does not increase perception of harm in ambiguous scenarios. That is, priming that leads to stricter judgment toward unfair behaviors may have its strongest effect in a case universally recognized as unfair. For example, if participants perceive little harm in slightly exceeding the speed limit, a prime that moderates judgments of harmful actions will

likely be less potent than in a scenario describing unambiguous harm. In summary, it seems that general moral priming, like religious priming, led to judgments favoring fairness in a religious university setting. It further seems that a specific (i.e., institutional) prime also led to harsher judgments toward those who break locally accepted standards or norms.

In addition to priming condition, it appears that moral judgment was mitigated by other factors including missionary service status. The pattern of ratings in the mission group suggested that those who chose to serve proselyting missions differed in meaningful ways from those who did not. That is, it seems the mission group's moral sense (or their advocacy for punitive measures) and sensitivity to moral priming was heightened in many scenarios, both religious and nonreligious. Because the mission group included those who planned on missionary service in the future, these differences were likely due to personality and acculturation rather than the actual mission experience. It further seems that judgment on different scenarios can be affected by different factors. For instance, those in the mission group consistently judged the modesty scenario more harshly than those in the nonmission group, suggesting that modesty was a core value for those in the mission group. Further, the interaction between mission status and experimental condition on the facial hair item suggested that finding factors that consistently affect judgment may be difficult.

These findings were consistent with existing research. For instance, McKay et al. (2011) also found a priming stimulus to selectively affect moral judgments in specific subpopulations (those who had donated money to a church). In line with Cohen et al. (2006), cultural factors may impact what *morality* means (e.g., Protestants and Jews differ on views of forgiveness, leading to very different moral assessments). The present study demonstrated that a relatively homogenous group primed with a general prosocial or specific institutional stimulus showed increased judgments toward perceived violation of social norms. Even within the population, there are likely other, even more specific, factors that influence what an individual views as moral. Besides religious devotion, these factors may include personality, ethnicity, political affiliation, and geographic location (Haidt, 2012; see also Pinker, 2008). Thus, these factors may also interact with priming stimuli.

Limitations and Future Research

It is important to note this study's potential limitations. First, as with all studies utilizing volunteer participants, there is potential for nonresponse bias, though we did have a rather strong response rate for an online survey study sent to students across an entire campus. Although we expected our efforts of random assignment to help maintain internal validity, as an online survey, we relied on participants' honesty in taking the time to read the priming paragraph and provide responses that accurately represent their experiences. Moreover, our hidden timer to measure the amount of time participants spent reading the paragraph produced a wide time range, suggesting that there may be considerable differences in how seriously each participant took the survey. Finally, we were unable to verify that each of our student participants only completed the survey one time across our sample, although our exclusion criteria likely mitigated this issue. As such, it is difficult to have complete confidence in the full veracity of the data, though this is a common limitation of self-report methodology.

The present study examined the effects of priming at a specific religious university, and caution should be taken in generalizing results to other populations. Future research is needed to examine how prosocial priming and social identity priming compare in other secular and religious populations. The relationship observed in this study between priming stimuli and judgment should be replicated among larger samples and with additional primes to investigate whether a similar pattern of results emerges. Moreover, many of the observed effects are tentative and require further inspection such as the interaction effects between religious service and the treatment variable. Finally, modalities other than an online survey should be explored for potential replication.

Implications and Conclusion

The current study demonstrated that prosocial priming led to harsher moral judgment toward ambiguous or disruptive social situations, and that specific institutional priming may lead to harsher judgment in relevant scenarios, at least within the context of a religious university. It also gave evidence that a prosocial prime can facilitate general moral thinking in a broader range of moral situations than specific primes. One potential application of these findings is in understanding conflict—parties in conflict often find it difficult to understand why the other cannot understand their

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point of view. If acculturation has such an impact on perceptions of morality (or even what is relevant to morality), this helps explain such frustration as being a product of existing factors (e.g., beliefs or attitudes) as well as cognitive and affective states during social interaction and judgment. The results presented here indicated that these and other variables interact in complex ways, which will likely vary between populations and perhaps even within persons.

In sum, this study shed further light on the relationship between morality and the judgment of others' behavior. Although we remain unsure about many specific effects, especially in relation to causality, we can conclude that morality seems far more complex than a simple utilitarian calculation. Indeed, morality and associated moral judgments seem to stem from an amalgamation of cultural factors, belief systems, symbolism, as well as transient factors such as affective state and salient moral constructs induced by priming methods.

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APPENDIX

List of Scenario Items

01. As you are on your way to class, you notice someone jaywalking across the street. This person deserves to get a ticket.

02. You observe someone driving 29 miles per hour where the posted speed limit is 25 miles per hour. This person deserves a ticket.

03. You observe a male student enter the fitness center on campus at 10:00 a.m. who has not shaved that morning. He should not be allowed to enter the fitness center.

04. You observe a female student walk into a weekly conference with a skirt that stops at her knees. She should be prevented from sitting in the conference by an usher.

05. You observe someone smoking near the swing sets at a local park. This person should not be trusted.

Note. Participants rated their agreement with these items on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*)

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