

A PLURALISTIC APPROACH TO CONSUMER MORALITY

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While several scholars have examined the influence of morality in consumption contexts, the extant research has largely assumed a monistic definition of morality. That is, the research has assumed that morality consists of harm/fairness concerns. Contrastingly, this dissertation introduces a pluralistic approach to morality. That is, I demonstrate how different moral beliefs (harm, fairness, respect, loyalty, and sanctity) motivate divergent behaviors across four consumer contexts. Consequently, I show how investigating the diversity in moral beliefs can shed light on heterogeneous consumer preferences across political and cultural groups. First, Chapter 1 demonstrates how heterogenous moral beliefs can increase or decrease preferences for conspicuous consumption. Chapter 2 demonstrates how certain moral beliefs can suppress the desire for sensory pleasure. Chapter 3 demonstrates how different moral beliefs influence reactions to the SNAP welfare program. Finally, Chapter 4 demonstrates how heterogenous moral beliefs shape attitudes towards bodily markets. Importantly, these chapters show how the moral insights can explain paradoxical consumption patterns and subsequently be used to generate targeted marketing and policy campaigns. Hence, this dissertation underscores the importance of using a pluralistic lens to investigate the heterogeneity in consumers' moral beliefs.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Shreyans Goenka completed high school from Modern School Vasant Vihar in New Delhi, India. He completed his B.A. (Economics and Psychology) from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, U.S.A. He completed his Ph.D. in Management (Marketing) from Cornell University, Ithaca, U.S.A.

Dedicated to all my teachers, tutors, and professors from kindergarten to university who have
collectively made this dissertation possible.

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CHAPTER 1

The Malleable Morality of Conspicuous Consumption

Abstract

Conspicuous consumption has often been decried as immoral by many philosophers and scholars, yet it is ubiquitous and widely embraced. This research sheds light on the apparent paradox by proposing that the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption is malleable, contingent upon how different moral lenses highlight the different characteristics embedded in the behavior. Utilizing the Moral Foundations Theory, we demonstrate that the *individualizing* values (i.e., equality and welfare) make people focus on the self-enhancing characteristics of conspicuous consumption, making it seem morally objectionable. However, the *binding* values (i.e., deference to authority, in-group loyalty, and purity) make people focus on the social identity signaling characteristic of conspicuous consumption, making it seem morally permissible. First, an archival dataset shows that the prevalence of the different moral values predicts per-capita spending on luxury goods across different countries. Then, six studies ($N = 2903$) show that the trait endorsement and the momentary salience of the different moral foundations can influence the moral judgment of conspicuous consumption as well as the propensity to engage in conspicuous consumption. Further, analyses show that the effect of the binding values (individualizing values) is mediated by heightened sensitivity to the social identity signaling (self-enhancing) aspects of conspicuous consumption. Finally, the studies demonstrate that the effect is moderated by the extent of social visibility during consumption. Thus, this research suggests that some moral values can, somewhat paradoxically, increase conspicuous consumption.

Conspicuous consumption, the purchase and exhibition of costly items for social impression, has been decried as immoral by the scholars of society. Veblen (1899) argued that the very essence of conspicuous consumption lies in the element of wasting time and resources. Rousseau (1750) proclaimed that “a taste for ostentation is rarely associated in the same souls with a taste for honesty.” Benjamin Franklin (1758) also warned that “without frugality, nothing will do.” Similarly, religious and spiritual texts have typically discouraged the purchase and exhibition of luxury products (Dalai Lama, 2009). Furthermore, opinion pieces in mainstream media frequently express moral outrage on the “explosion of elite ostentation” (Krugman, 2017). This notion has also trickled into contemporary pop-culture where characters engaging in conspicuous consumption are often portrayed with questionable morals. Moreover, research has shown that people typically ascribe negative personality traits to others engaging in conspicuous consumption (Belk, 1978; Van Boven et al., 2010). Hence, at least in some sections of society, conspicuous consumption is considered morally suspect. That is, a moral person would not purchase products like Prada handbags and Rolex watches.

However, conspicuous consumption is quite rampant and has always been an integral aspect of human society (Mason, 1998; Page, 1992). Luxury goods consumption, most of which qualifies as conspicuous consumption, has been steadily growing. It is estimated that the worldwide value of luxury goods market has reached \$289 billion (Paton, 2017) and almost all individuals have purchased, or will purchase, at least one luxury product in their lifetime (D. J. Taylor et al., 2008). Importantly, conspicuous consumption has existed in tandem with the moral fabric society. In some cases, reputed society leaders and even religious leaders have spearheaded the ostentatious consumption of luxury cars and designer outfits. For instance, televangelists in the United States are known to flaunt private jets and mansions (Chasmar,

2016). Even across the world, spiritual leaders and gurus in India unabashedly partake in ostentatious consumption like buying Rolls Royce cars and private islands (Urban, 2016; Worth, 2018). This begs the question – do all sections of society perceive conspicuous consumption to be morally objectionable? What psychological factors influence the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption?

We posit that the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption is malleable. Conspicuous consumption may not always be perceived to be immoral; rather, its morality is contingent upon how different moral lenses highlight the different characteristics embedded in the behavior. Some moral values can highlight the self-enhancing characteristics of conspicuous consumption such as wastefulness, vanity, and superiority (Belk, 1988). Unsurprisingly, when one attends to these aspects of conspicuous consumption, it is perceived to be morally objectionable. However, some moral values can highlight the group-focused characteristics of conspicuous consumption such as signaling of social identity, group values, and group membership (Dubois & Ordabayeva, 2015). If one attends to these aspects, then conspicuous consumption can appear morally permissible. Consequentially, we argue that different moral lenses, which highlight these different characteristics of conspicuous consumption can alter its moral judgment. This proposition goes counter to the view that conspicuous consumption is always considered morally suspect. Instead, our argument is that certain moral values can make conspicuous consumption less morally objectionable, sometimes even making it desirable.

We utilize the Moral Foundations Theory (Graham et al., 2009, 2013; Haidt, 2007; Haidt & Joseph, 2007) to demonstrate how the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption can be molded by the different systems of moral values. We predict that the *individualizing* moral foundations (i.e., care and fairness) increase moral objections to conspicuous consumption as

they emphasize the importance of welfare and equality. However, the *binding* moral foundations (i.e., deference to authority, in-group loyalty, and purity) can reduce the moral objections to conspicuous consumption, as they emphasize the importance of social hierarchy, loyalty, and tradition. First, we analyze an archival dataset spanning 32 countries to examine how the prevalence of the two moral foundations impacts consumption of luxury goods across the different countries. Then, we report results from six studies ($N = 2903$) designed to compare and contrast the effects of the two moral foundations on the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption as well as the preferences for conspicuous consumption.

Examining the malleable morality of conspicuous consumption produces important implications for understanding the antecedents of this widespread social behavior. First, it offers an explanation for why some sections of society engage in conspicuous consumption even when other groups consider it morally objectionable. Second, it augments the extant literature on moral foundations by identifying a hitherto unexamined effect of the individualizing and binding moral values. While researchers in the past have examined how different moral foundations can produce downstream consequences for domains such as politics (Graham et al., 2009), social groups (Smith et al., 2014), self-control (Mooijman et al., 2018), and prosocial behaviors (Kidwell et al., 2013), the extant research has not examined how they can influence consumption behaviors. Hence, this research demonstrates a novel consequence of the distinct moral foundations, extending our understanding of when, why, and how morality can impact consumption and economic activities in society.

Moral Foundations Theory

The Moral Foundations Theory posits that moral values are composed of five different factors or foundations, including care/harm, fairness/cheating, authority/subversion,

loyalty/betrayal, and purity/degradation (Haidt, 2007; Haidt & Graham, 2007). The theory argues that in the first two moral foundations (care and fairness), the individual's welfare and well-being is the locus of the moral concern; therefore, these are called the *individualizing* foundations. These moral values emphasize equality and welfare to protect individuals and provide for individual rights in social settings. These values have functional relevance in some contexts; they protect people from being harmed, oppressed, or treated unfairly by other members of the group or by the institutional systems. On the other hand, in the latter three moral foundations (authority, loyalty, purity), the group's welfare is the locus of moral concern; therefore, these are called the *binding* foundations. These foundations focus on "limiting individual autonomy and self-expression to bind people into emergent social entities such as families, clans, and nations" (Graham & Haidt, 2010, p. 144). These values "preserve social institutions by promoting and celebrating those who support and sacrifice for the group (in-group loyalty), respect and obey traditions (authority), and rise above their base urges and exercise self-control (purity)" (Napier & Luguri, 2013, p. 754).

Extant research has examined how these two different types of foundations can motivate different preferences, attitudes, and behaviors in several domains. Most famously, differences in the adherence to these moral foundations can explain the different political views between liberals and conservatives (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007). Understanding how these different moral values guide political beliefs has allowed researchers to demonstrate how to frame more effective messages for climate change (Wolsko et al., 2016), recycling (Kidwell et al., 2013), prosocial behaviors (Winterich et al., 2012), and social causes (Helzer & Pizarro, 2011; Inbar et al., 2012; Wright & Baril, 2011). Aside from the political domain, the binding foundations has also been associated with religious beliefs (Graham & Haidt, 2010),

moralization of self-control (Mooijman et al., 2018), and increased discrimination of out-groups (Smith et al., 2014; van Leeuwen et al., 2012; van Leeuwen & Park, 2009).

In this research, we suggest that the individualizing and binding foundations can also be used to predict when conspicuous consumption will be perceived to be morally objectionable or permissible. Specifically, because the two foundations prioritize different moral concerns (Graham et al., 2009), they can alter the moral lens through which a person evaluates conspicuous consumption. The individualizing values make one evaluate behaviors in the context of equality and welfare, but the binding values make one judge behaviors in the context of social hierarchy, loyalty, and tradition. We propose that these different moral lenses will highlight the different characteristics embedded in conspicuous consumption, making it appear morally acceptable or objectionable. The next section outlines these different characteristics of conspicuous consumption.

Conspicuous Consumption

Conspicuous consumption is a signaling behavior intended to impress others through possessions and behaviors (Lee & Shrum, 2012; Veblen, 1899). The spectrum of conspicuous consumption includes all forms of signaling which serve the purposes of social impression, such as signaling of status, power, exclusive access, busyness, sexual fitness and even prosociality via products and behavior (Bellezza et al., 2014, 2016; Dubois & Ordabayeva, 2015; Griskevicius et al., 2007; Sundie et al., 2011). The defining aspect of conspicuous consumption is a showy action, sending some signal to others present through products and behaviors. Thus, Louis Vuitton purses, country-club pins, blatant charity donations, and even Whole Foods grocery bags can all be forms of conspicuous consumption.

In this research, we focus on the consumption of luxury products, that is, expensive

visible products that are used to signal wealth and status, as this the most common form of conspicuous consumption (Han et al., 2010; Rucker & Galinsky, 2009; Veblen, 1899). Notably, luxury products are usually, though not always, used for such conspicuous consumption. While most luxury products are costly and showy (e.g., designer bags, high-end watches), some luxury products are not socially visible and may be consumed privately (e.g., luxury bed sheets, luxury undergarments). Therefore, all conspicuous products are luxury products, but some luxury products may not be conspicuous. Despite these subtle distinctions, luxury products are apt stimuli for investigating how moral values influence conspicuous consumption.

Is Conspicuous Consumption Immoral?

As discussed previously, conspicuous consumption has typically been considered an undesirable immoral behavior by philosophers and scholars (Dalai Lama, 2009; Franklin, 1758; D. Miller, 2001; Patty & Johnson, 1953). Importantly, researchers have also documented empirical evidence for the dysfunctional effects of conspicuous consumption. Crucially, conspicuous consumption violates social norms of modesty and fairness (Godfrey et al., 1986). Consequentially, people who engage in conspicuous consumption and flaunt material pursuits are stigmatized as having undesirable personality traits and are considered less likable (Ferraro et al., 2013; Scott et al., 2013; Van Boven et al., 2010). Further, when people engage in conspicuous consumption, they become less prosocial (Burroughs & Rindflesch, 2002; Piff et al., 2010; Shrum et al., 2014). Concurrently, a materialistic disposition can reduce personal well-being and life-satisfaction (Dittmar et al., 2014; Kasser, 2003; Kasser et al., 2004). And unsurprisingly, the wasteful expenditure on status-seeking luxury products increases debt for the economically vulnerable and entraps them in a cycle of poverty (Christen & Morgan, 2005; Frank, 1993). Because of all these reasons, it is widely perceived that conspicuous consumption

is harmful and morally questionable. That is, moral individuals would eschew conspicuous consumption to avoid its negative consequences for the self and society.

However, such a view only acknowledges the self-enhancing characteristics of conspicuous consumption and ignores another important facet of the behavior: it can also be associated with group-focussed characteristics (Dubois & Ordabayeva, 2015). Crucially, conspicuous consumption can be associated with the group-focussed characteristic of signaling social identity (Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). We contend that considering this aspect of conspicuous consumption can make the behavior seem morally acceptable.

Conspicuous Consumption as a Social Identity Signal

Social identity signals indicate to others how a person sees himself with respect to cultures, communities, and groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Turner et al., 1987). Importantly, several researchers have outlined how brands and products can be utilized to signal social identity (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Berger & Heath, 2007, 2008; Kirmani, 2009; Muniz Jr. & Schau, 2005). When a person adopts and displays a particular brand, he signals his endorsement of the shared social values and beliefs of the community (Aaker et al., 2001; Kates, 2004; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004). Concurrently, when individuals feel socially excluded they strategically consume and display brands that signal affiliation with the group (Mead et al., 2011). In short, people infer social traits and social identities of others through the clothes and products that they consume publicly (Belk et al., 1982).

For example, popular brands like Nike have come to reflect specific social identities (Archer et al., 2007). Wearing a Nike logo not only reflects that one has the resources to buy a high-quality product but also signals a health/fitness oriented social identity (Green, 2017). More broadly, wearing a Nike logo endorses the social identities of multi-culturalism, equal

opportunity, self-determination, and social mobility, ideals that Nike has come to represent through their advertisement campaigns (Boren, 2017; McNaney, 2013). Contrastingly, a person who conspicuously displays a Harley Davidson logo is signaling a social identity of counter-culture rebellion (Schembri, 2009; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). Therefore, when a person publicly displays a brand or product, it reinforces and strengthens his social identity, and signals this identity to others present.

In sum, we argue that conspicuous consumption is associated with two different sets of characteristics – self-enhancing versus group-focused. We propose that when the self-enhancing characteristics are highlighted, the behavior is perceived to be morally objectionable, but when the group-focused characteristics are highlighted the behavior is perceived to be morally acceptable. The next section outlines how the Moral Foundations Theory can be utilized to demonstrate this malleable morality of conspicuous consumption.

Hypothesis Development

We bring together two streams of literature, the literature on the Moral Foundations Theory and conspicuous consumption, to propose that individualizing and binding foundations can alter the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption. Because the two foundations lend different moral outlooks, they can highlight the different characteristics embedded in conspicuous consumption, making it seem morally acceptable or objectionable and subsequently altering the propensity to engage in conspicuous consumption. Figure 1 depicts our proposed conceptual framework.

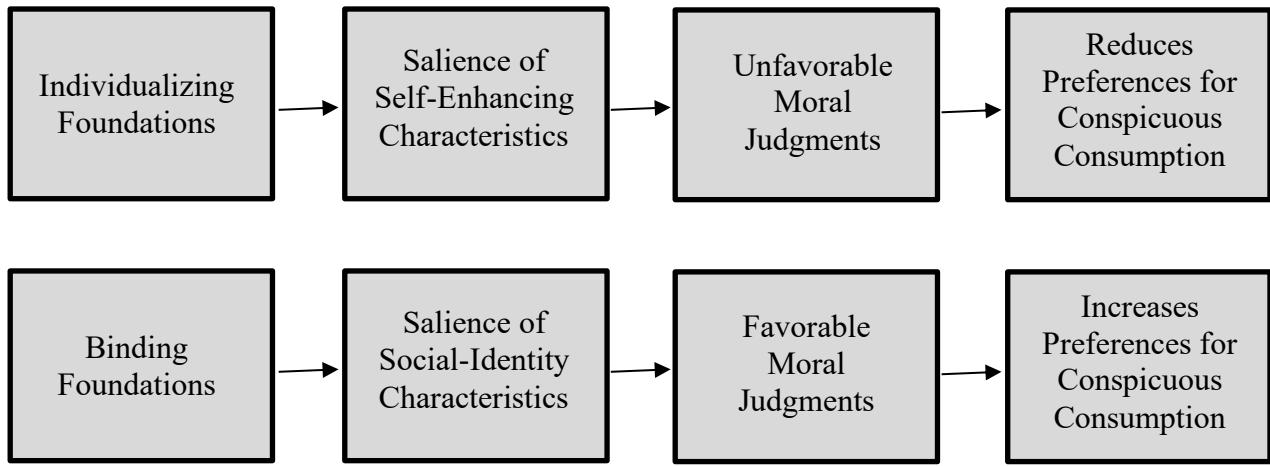


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

Individualizing Values and Conspicuous Consumption

As depicted in Figure 1, we posit that the individualizing foundations make conspicuous consumption appear to be morally objectionable and reduce the propensity to engage in the behavior. This is because the individualizing moral values stress the reduction of self-aggrandization. They focus the person's attention on fairness and care in evaluating social behaviors (Haidt, 2007). These values highlight the self-enhancing aspects of conspicuous consumption – the signaling of power, extravagance, vanity, and superiority. Consequently, the individualizing values conflict with these self-enhancing characteristics, making the behavior seem morally objectionable. It is not surprising that when a person predominantly values equality and welfare, she would see conspicuous behaviors, like carrying a Louis Vuitton bag, as a manifestation of power, waste, and social inequality. Thus, a person with an individualizing moral lens would find conspicuous consumption contradictory to her values and judge it to be morally questionable.

Based on this theorization, we predict that the individualizing values will increase the sensitivity to the self-enhancing characteristics of conspicuous consumption. Second, we predict

that the individualizing values will increase unfavorable moral judgments of conspicuous behaviors. Finally, and most importantly, we predict that the individualizing values will reduce the preferences for conspicuous consumption.

Binding Values and Conspicuous Consumption

In contrast, the binding foundations should make conspicuous consumption appear to be morally acceptable and increase the propensity to engage in the behavior. This is because the binding foundations direct a person's attention on deference to authority, in-group loyalty, and purity (Haidt, 2007). These values motivate people to view behaviors in the context of group dynamics and social communication. As a result, these values highlight the group-focused characteristics of conspicuous consumption – the signaling of social identity. Consequently, the binding values reinforce these group-focused characteristics of conspicuous consumption, making the behavior seem morally permissible.

Importantly, we propose that when binding values are salient, the act of partaking in conspicuous consumption would seem morally acceptable because it is perceived to be a means to strengthen group fitness. This is because social identity signals serve an important function in strengthening group bonds, loyalty, and cohesion (Sherman et al., 1999; Van Vugt & Hart, 2004). When group members are vocal about their social identity, it strengthens and facilitates the shared values of the community, aiding group harmony (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Turner et al., 1987). In addition, conspicuous consumption also promotes vertical differentiation and heterogeneity within a group (Dommer et al., 2013), which can play an important role in facilitating long-term group fitness and success (Halevy et al., 2011; Ronay et al., 2012). Therefore, when a person predominantly values social hierarchy, loyalty, and tradition, she would see conspicuous behaviors, like carrying a Louis Vuitton bag, as a manifestation of social

communication and social differentiation that is necessary for group functioning and success. Thus, a person with a binding moral lens would find conspicuous consumption congruent with her values and judge it to be morally acceptable.

Based on this theorization, we predict that the binding values increase the sensitivity to the social-identity signaling characteristics of conspicuous consumption. Second, we predict that the binding values will increase favorable moral judgments of conspicuous behaviors. Finally, and most importantly, we predict that the binding values will increase the preferences for conspicuous consumption.

Boundary Condition

Our conceptualization also suggests one important boundary condition for the effect of binding values on conspicuous consumption – the extent of social visibility. This boundary condition not only has substantive importance but also validates the psychological mechanisms underpinning our theorization. Our theory predicts that people who endorse binding values utilize conspicuous consumption as a public signal to others who are observing them. If the products are indeed used for such signaling purposes, then the propensity to engage in conspicuous consumption should be contingent upon social visibility. Therefore, we predict that the effect of binding values on conspicuous consumption will reduce when social visibility is reduced.

Social visibility can be altered through social contexts as well as by the type of product. Some consumption contexts are more private than public. For example, social visibility would be lower when a person is exercising in the privacy of her home rather than in a public gymnasium. Therefore, the effect of binding values on conspicuous consumption should be weaker for such private consumption scenarios. In a similar vein, social visibility can also depend on the type of

product; some products are less socially visible than others (e.g., toothbrushes and toaster ovens are less socially visible than shirts and shoes). We predict that the effect of binding values will be moderated by the degree of the product's social visibility, such that the effect of binding values should reduce as the product's social visibility decreases.

Overview of Studies

We conducted seven studies to compare the effects of the individualizing and binding moral values on conspicuous consumption. First, in studies 1 and 2, we assessed how the endorsement of the two moral foundations can have a consequential impact on the propensity to engage in conspicuous consumption, producing economic and social implications. Study 1 analyzed country-level archival data to examine how the prevalence of individualizing and binding values can predict the per-capita consumption of luxury goods across countries. Study 2 examined how the trait endorsement of the two moral foundations can predict individuals' preferences for conspicuous consumption, producing implications for political and religious groups. Then, Study 3 assessed how the trait endorsement of the two moral foundations influences the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption, demonstrating that the moral foundations can alter the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption.

In the next two studies, we causally tested for the theorized conceptual pathway (see Figure 1). Study 4 examined the first stage of the pathway. We manipulated the momentary salience of the individualizing and binding foundations and examined how the moral primes heighten sensitivity to the different characteristics of conspicuous consumption, which subsequently alter the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption. Then, Study 5 examined the second stage of the pathway. We examined how priming the two moral foundations alters the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption, which subsequently influences the preferences for

conspicuous consumption.

Finally, we examined the social visibility boundary condition for the effect of moral values on preferences for conspicuous consumption. Study 6A examined how private vs. public consumption context moderates the effect of the moral values on preferences for conspicuous consumption. Study 6B investigated how the effect of moral values on preferences for conspicuous consumption is moderated by the degree of the product's social visibility.

All data was collected after receiving an exemption status from the Institutional Review Board of Cornell University (Protocol ID#: 1709007433). We collected a standard sample of 500 participants in each study to ensure sufficient power and established a predetermined criterion for excluding participants. The analysis was performed only after data collection was completed. We report all experimental conditions and all measures collected. Raw data are available on the open science framework website (<https://osf.io/z4qmk>). Note, data use agreements do not permit us to share the secondary data used in Study 1.

Study 1: Country-Level Consumption Data

This study was designed to examine the effect of moral values on conspicuous consumption in a consequential real-world context. We sought to examine whether the moral values could meaningfully impact conspicuous economic behaviors in a country. We acquired an economic dataset detailing luxury consumption¹ patterns across several countries and another survey dataset outlining the adherence to the moral foundations in these countries. We combined the two independent datasets to examine whether the prevalence of the moral foundations could

¹ Although luxury consumption is not always conspicuous consumption, national expenditure on these two types of consumption tend to be highly correlated. Importantly, in practice the industry does not record the data on conspicuous consumption separately, hence to examine conspicuous consumption in market data we use luxury consumption as a proxy.

predict the pattern of luxury consumption across the countries. Specifically, we hypothesized that a greater relative endorsement of binding values over individualizing values would predict higher per-capita luxury consumption.

Data

Luxury Consumption. The country-level consumption data was acquired from the Passport Database (© Euromonitor International). This privately maintained database provides category-level consumption data for countries across various industries. The data are compiled through a convergence of different methods including reviewing national government reports, trade association reports, corporate consulting papers, and market analysis. This database has been utilized extensively by industry experts to analyze and forecast market trends.

The database provided us with the annual per-capita consumption of luxury goods in 32 countries. All data were reported in US dollars recorded at fixed 2016 exchange rates (e.g., \$1 = £ 0.781). The database categorized luxury goods to include all forms of high-end purchases such as designer clothes, luxury pens, premium watches, and luxury hotel stays. As expected, there was significant variation in the per-capita luxury consumption across the countries. For instance, in the year 2012, Hong Kong (\$1333.81) and Switzerland (\$677.23) recorded the highest per-capita luxury consumption, while India (\$1.45) and Indonesia (\$2.67) recorded the lowest per-capita luxury consumption.

Because the consumption in a country can be influenced by absolute levels of income, we used annual per-capita GDP values of these countries as a control for income levels. Second, because luxury consumption can be influenced by overall spending on related categories, we also used the per-capita consumption of apparel as a control measure in the model.

Moral Values. The country-level moral values data was acquired from the website

YourMorals.org. Individuals from around the globe voluntarily complete various studies on this website and receive feedback about their morality, personality, and ideology. Data from this platform has been utilized in several academic papers examining moral values (e.g., Ditto & Mastronarde, 2009; Graham et al., 2009; Inbar et al., 2012; Mooijman et al., 2017). However, no previous work has combined this dataset with the Passport Database (© Euromonitor International) to analyze the relationship between moral values and luxury consumption. Hence, the combined dataset that we employ for this manuscript is unique and has not been utilized in extant research.

We only utilized the data from those participants who self-reported that their country of residence was one of the 32 countries in our consumption dataset. From those countries of interest, we had responses from 160,361 participants who had visited the website between the years 2008-2012. As expected the sample size varied across the countries. The largest sample of participants was from the United States ($N = 134,331$) followed by Canada ($N = 7,838$) and the smallest samples were from Ukraine ($N = 28$) and Russia ($N = 69$).

For each participant, we received the responses to the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham et al., 2011). This 30-item scale measures an individual's endorsement of the five moral foundations through various morality related statements (e.g., "One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenseless animal," "Chastity is an important and valuable virtue") on a 5-point scale (1: *Strongly Disagree*; 5: *Strongly Agree*). Therefore, for each participant, we were able to observe an individualizing values score and a binding values score. We then averaged the moral values scores of all the participants in a particular country by the year of survey completion. Therefore, for each country, we had one individualizing score and one binding score for each year. Given that our prediction focused on the differences between the

two broad foundations, in that the extent to which people endorse binding foundations over the individualizing foundations, we then subtracted the scores of the individualizing scale from the binding scale to generate a moral differences score (Binding – Individualizing) (see van Leeuwen & Park, 2009; Wright & Baril, 2011). Note, analysis with individual moral domain scales found a similar pattern of results.

Results

After combining the two databases, we had consumption data and moral value scores for 32 countries across five years ($N = 160$). We performed a linear mixed model regression analysis in SPSS. The natural logarithmic transformed values of the per-capita luxury consumption was the dependent variable. The standardized scores of the moral foundations difference measure (Binding – Individualizing) was the predictor variable. Standardized scores of per-capita GDP and per-capita apparel consumption values were also included in the model as predicting variables to control for differences in income and spending patterns in the countries. Year was included as a predicting variable to control for temporal variations in consumption patterns. Finally, country was treated as a random variable to control for unobserved heterogeneity across the countries. Table 1 provides the results of the regression analysis. As hypothesized, we find that the moral differences measure was a significant positive predictor of luxury consumption ($B = .02$, $SE = .01$, $t = 2.21$, $p = .029$). To corroborate these results, we also performed a regression analysis using the individualizing and binding values as separate predictor variables. We find that the individualizing values is a negative predictor of luxury consumption, but the effect was just shy of significance ($B = -.01$, $SE = .006$, $t = -1.62$, $p = .108$). However, the binding values is a marginally significant positive predictor of luxury consumption ($B = .01$, $SE = .007$, $t = 1.68$, $p = .096$). Note, to establish that these results are specific to luxury consumption we also

performed a similar analysis using per-capita food consumption as the dependent variable. This analysis did not find a significant relationship between the prevalence of moral values and food consumption across the countries.

Table 1
Regression using Moral Values to Predict Country-Level Luxury Consumption (Study 1)

	Model 1				Model 2			
	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p
Intercept	-49.64	8.29	-5.99	<.001	-50.35	8.59	-5.86	<.001
Moral Differences	.02	.01	2.21	.029	-	-	-	-
Individualizing Values	-	-	-	-	-.01	.006	-1.62	.108
Binding Values	-	-	-	-	.01	.007	1.68	.096
GDP per-capita	.09	.05	1.84	.069	.09	.05	1.80	.074
Apparel per-capita	.49	.05	9.24	<.001	.49	.05	9.19	<.001
Year (2008-2012)	.03	.004	6.49	<.001	.03	.004	6.34	<.001
Covariance Parameters	B	SE	Z	p	B	SE	Z	p
Residuals	.003	.0004	7.83	<.001	.003	.000	7.79	<.001
Country Variance	1.67	.43	3.84	<.001	1.66	.43	3.83	<.001

Discussion

These results suggest that the relationship between the moral foundations and conspicuous consumption can be observed in archival consumption data. Countries that show a greater relative endorsement of binding values over individualizing values are more likely to engage in luxury consumption. However, we acknowledge that our data and analyses are limited in their scope. As noted previously, we utilized luxury consumption as a proxy for conspicuous consumption in this analysis. Further, more representative participant samples for the moral values and richer economic controls are needed to quantify the hypothesized relationship conclusively. Even so, we contend that the present analysis provides some indication that the relationship between moral values and conspicuous consumption exists in a meaningful context. That is, the prevalence of the different moral values in a country can influence the incidence of

conspicuous consumption in the country, producing important economic implications. Subsequent studies will measure conspicuous consumption more directly and utilize additional control variables to address the limitations of this study.

Study 2: Preferences for Conspicuous Logos

This study was designed to extend the results of the archival dataset by examining the effect of moral values on a more direct measure of conspicuous consumption. Specifically, we examined how people's trait endorsement of the moral foundations can predict their preferences for larger conspicuous logos relative to smaller inconspicuous logos. Preference for brand logo size has been shown to be a good measure to capture preferences for conspicuous consumption (see Rucker & Galinsky, 2009). We hypothesized that a greater relative endorsement of binding values over individualizing values would predict higher preferences for conspicuous consumption.

Further, to characterize the manifestation of this phenomenon for social groups, we also sought to examine how political and religious identities influence preferences for conspicuous consumption. Based on prior research examining correlates of moral foundations (Graham et al., 2009; Graham & Haidt, 2010), we predicted that political conservatives and religious individuals would show greater preferences for conspicuous consumption because of their adherence to the binding foundations.

Method

Participants. Five-hundred U.S. residents were recruited online through Amazon Mechanical-Turk in exchange for a small compensation ($M_{age} = 38$ years; 58% female).

Procedure. Participants were first administered the Moral Foundations Sacredness Scale (Graham & Haidt, 2012). This scale measures the five moral foundations based on the amount of

money it would require the participants to perform behaviors that violate the different moral values (e.g. “kick a dog in the head”, “Make a disrespectful hand gesture to your boss, teacher, or professor”). Participants indicated the required amount of money it would take to perform the behavior on an 8-point scale: 1 = \$0 (*I'd do it for free*); 2 = \$10; 3 = \$100; 4 = \$1000; 5 = \$10,000; 6 = \$100,000; 7 = *a million dollars*; 8 = *never for any amount of money*. The scale includes four behavior scenarios for each of the five moral foundations, resulting in a total of 20 items. The scale also includes four decoy items.

Next, participants were introduced to an ostensibly unrelated survey about product preferences. We adopted the measure for preferences for conspicuous consumption from Lee & Shrum (2012). Participants were shown three pairs of Nike products (t-shirt, cap, shoes) in a randomized order. The two products shown in each pair were identical, except for the size of the Nike Swoosh logo (small vs. large). Thus, participants saw two versions of the same Nike t-shirt with a small logo (Product A) and a large logo (Product B) side-by-side. Participants were asked to indicate their preference between the two products on a four-item scale (“Which one is most appealing to you, attractive to you, would you spend more on, would you choose right now”) using a 9-point scale (1 = *Product A*, 9 = *Product B*). Hence, higher scores indicated a greater relative preference for the product with the larger logo, which formed our measure of preference. In addition, we also asked participants to indicate a willingness-to-pay (WTP) for each of the large logo products in an open-ended text box. This served as a more consequential measure of preference. Finally, basic demographics were collected along with participants’ political ideology (1: *Liberal*; 7: *Conservative*) and religiosity (“I see myself as someone who is very religious” 1: *Disagree*; 7: *Agree*).

Results

Preference Measure. We averaged the scores of the Care and Fairness values to form the individualizing scale ($\alpha = .82$) and averaged the scores of the Loyalty, Authority, and Purity values to form the binding scale ($\alpha = .87$). Then, as in the previous study, we subtracted the scores of the individualizing scale from the binding scale to generate a moral differences score (Binding – Individualizing). Note, again analysis performed with the five scales individually revealed a similar pattern of results.

Next, the preference measures of all the three product pairs were averaged to form one composite score of preference ($\alpha = .91, N = 12$). We performed a linear regression analysis with this preference measure as the dependent variable and the moral foundations difference measure as the predictor variable. The model also included some demographic control variables – age, gender (male = 0, female = 1), income, education level, and race (not white = 0, white = 1). The results of the regression analysis are depicted in Table 2. The analysis found that the moral differences measure positively predicts preferences for conspicuous logos ($B = .33, SE = .10, t = 3.21, p = .001, r_{sp} = .14$).

Table 2
Regression using Moral Values to Predict Preferences for Conspicuous Logos (Study 2)

	Model 1					Model 2				
	B	SE	t	p	r _{sp}	B	SE	t	p	r _{sp}
Intercept	5.42	.39	13.7	<.001		5.17	.64	8.13	<.001	
Moral Differences	.33	.10	3.21	.001	.14	-	-	-	-	-
Individualizing Values	-	-	-	-	-	-.29	.12	-2.46	.014	-.11
Binding Values	-	-	-	-	-	.34	.11	3.23	.001	.14
Income	.03	.03	1.04	.300	.05	.03	.03	1.04	.301	.05
Gender (Female)	-.32	.18	-1.78	.076	-.08	-.35	.19	-1.84	.066	-.08
Age	-.03	.01	-3.75	<.001	-.17	-.03	.01	-3.76	<.001	-.17
Education	-.01	.07	-.14	.886	-.01	-.01	.07	-.15	.878	-.01
Race (White)	-.29	.23	-1.32	.189	-.06	-.29	.23	-1.28	.203	-.06
R ² adj			.06					.05		
F Value				F (6, 493) = 5.84					F (7, 492) = 5.03	
Model Sig.				p < .001					p < .001	

Then, as in the previous study, to corroborate these results we performed another regression using the two moral foundation scales as the individual predictor variables. The analysis found that the individualizing values negatively predicted preference for conspicuous products ($B = -.29$, $SE = .12$, $t = -2.46$, $p = .014$, $r_{sp} = -.11$) but the binding values positively predicted preference ($B = .34$, $SE = .11$, $t = 3.23$, $p = .001$, $r_{sp} = .14$). Note, including political orientation and religiosity in the regression as control variables did not change the results. Similarly, performing the analysis with the WTP measure as the dependent variable revealed a convergent pattern of results.

Political Ideology. To examine the relationship between political ideology, moral values, and logo preferences, we performed a mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 4 with 5000 bootstraps (Hayes, 2013). First, we find that conservative political ideology significantly increased endorsement of binding foundations over individualizing foundations ($B = .16$, $SE = .02$, $t = 7.80$, $p < .001$), as demonstrated by previous research (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt &

Graham, 2007). Importantly, conservative political ideology also significantly predicted greater preferences for conspicuous logos ($B = .15$, $SE = .05$, $t = 3.08$, $p = .002$). This effect of political ideology on preferences was mediated by the moral differences measure (standardized indirect effect = .04 [.01, .07]).

Religiosity. We performed another mediation analysis to examine the relationship between religiosity, moral values, and logo preferences. First, we see that religiosity significantly increased endorsement of binding foundations over individualizing foundations ($B = .13$, $SE = .02$, $t = 7.26$, $p < .001$), as demonstrated by previous research (Graham & Haidt, 2010). Importantly, religiosity also significantly predicted greater preferences for conspicuous logos ($B = .12$, $SE = .04$, $t = 2.89$, $p = .004$). This effect of religiosity on preferences was mediated by the moral differences measure (standardized indirect effect = .04 [.01, .07]).

Discussion

The results of this study support the results of the archival dataset to demonstrate that the adherence to the moral foundations can predict preferences for conspicuous consumption. We find that the endorsement of the binding values over the individualizing values predicts higher preferences for large, conspicuous logos. Further, this study also demonstrates that people with conservative political ideology and high religiosity tend to endorse binding values, and this, in turn, increases their preferences for conspicuous consumption.

Study 3: Moral Judgments of Conspicuous Consumption

The previous two studies demonstrated that the endorsement of the moral foundations can alter preferences for conspicuous consumption and produce important economic and social implications. However, these studies examined behavioral measures of conspicuous consumption (i.e., purchase and preference), as opposed to the moral evaluations of conspicuous consumption.

Therefore, these studies cannot speak to the notion whether moral concerns are central to the observed effect. In other words, do the moral values alter the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption?

Hence, in this study, we examine how the moral foundations influence the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption. We assess this through two different measures – the moral judgment of conspicuous consumption and the moral judgment of people engaging in conspicuous consumption. We hypothesized that individuals who show a greater relative endorsement of binding values over individualizing values should make favorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption.

Additionally, this study also sought to distinguish the effects of moral values from other social constructs. Because of the possible overlap between binding values, collectivism, and group-identification, the observed effects may be attributed to social norms as opposed to moral concerns. Therefore, we control for these variables in the analysis to establish the independent effects of moral values on conspicuous consumption.

Method

Participants. Five-hundred U.S. residents were recruited online through Amazon Mechanical-Turk in exchange for a small compensation ($M_{age} = 35.4$ years; 46% female).

Procedure. Participants were first administered the Moral Foundations Sacredness Scale (Graham & Haidt, 2012), similar to the previous study. Next, participants were introduced to an ostensibly unrelated survey about product preferences. They were told that researchers are interested in understanding how people choose to wear logos on their clothes. Below the prompt, participants were shown images of people wearing clothes with various conspicuous brand logos (i.e., a person wearing a shirt with prominent logos of Nike, Polo, Louis Vuitton, Calvin Klein,

Gucci, and Harvard). Note, in this study we did not measure preferences. These images were simply presented to strengthen the salience of conspicuous consumption.

On the next page, we administered two measures adapted from previous research examining moral judgments of behaviors (Gino & Desai, 2012; Horberg et al., 2009). First, we administered a question designed to capture moral judgments of conspicuous consumption behavior – “I think wearing large prominently displayed logos on your clothes is wrong” (1: *Strongly Disagree*, 7: *Strongly Agree*). Then, we administered another question designed to capture moral judgments of people engaging in the behavior - “I think people who wear large prominently displayed logos on their clothes are immoral” (1: *Strongly Disagree*, 7: *Strongly Agree*). For both the measures, higher scores indicated unfavorable moral judgments.

Next, we administered a 3-item group-identification scale (Ellemers et al., 1999), a 6-item vertical collectivism scale, and a 6-item horizontal collectivism scale (Singelis et al., 1995). Finally, basic demographics were collected.

Results

Moral Judgments of Behavior. We averaged the scores of the Care and Fairness values to form the individualizing scale ($\alpha = .83$) and averaged the scores of the Loyalty, Authority, and Purity values to form the binding scale ($\alpha = .85$). Then, as in the previous studies, we subtracted the scores of the individualizing scale from the binding scale to generate a moral differences score (Binding – Individualizing). Note, the analysis performed with the five scales individually revealed a similar pattern of results.

We performed a linear regression analysis with the moral judgments of conspicuous behavior measure as the dependent variable and the moral foundations difference measure (Binding – Individualizing) as the predictor variable. The model also included demographic

control variables – age, gender (male = 0, female = 1), income, education level, and race (not white = 0, white = 1). Importantly, the group-identification scale and the two sub-scales of collectivism were also included as controls. The results of the regression analysis are depicted in Table 3. The analysis found that the moral differences measure predicts favorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption ($B = -.21$, $SE = .07$, $t = -2.81$, $p = .005$, $r_{sp} = -.12$). Then, to corroborate these results, we performed an additional regression analysis using the two moral foundation scales as the predictor variables. The analysis found that the individualizing values predicts unfavorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption ($B = .27$, $SE = .08$, $t = 3.19$, $p = .001$, $r_{sp} = .13$) but the binding values predicts favorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption ($B = -.14$, $SE = .09$, $t = -1.62$, $p = .105$, $r_{sp} = -.07$).

Table 3

Regression using Moral Values to Predict Moral Judgments of Conspicuous Behaviors (Study 3)

	Model 1					Model 2				
	B	SE	t	p	r_{sp}	B	SE	t	p	r_{sp}
Intercept	3.18	.62	5.14	<.001		2.61	.72	3.61	<.001	
Moral Differences	-.21	.07	-2.81	.005	-.12	-	-	-	-	-
Individualizing Values	-	-	-	-	-	.27	.08	3.19	.001	.13
Binding Values	-	-	-	-	-	-.14	.09	-1.62	.105	-.07
Income	-.02	.03	-.98	.327	-.04	-.03	.03	-1.07	.287	-.05
Gender (Female)	-.17	.17	-.96	.340	-.04	-.22	.18	-1.23	.220	-.05
Age	.01	.01	1.17	.243	.05	.01	.01	.86	.393	.04
Education	.12	.06	1.92	.055	.08	.13	.06	2.09	.037	.09
Race (White)	-.87	.20	-4.34	<.001	-.18	-.85	.20	-4.27	<.001	-.18
Group Identification	.07	.08	.93	.353	.04	.06	.08	.79	.430	.03
Vert. Collectivism	-.29	.12	-2.48	.014	-.10	-.32	.12	-2.69	.007	-.11
Horiz. Collectivism	.38	.09	4.39	<.001	.19	.39	.09	4.49	<.001	.19
R^2_{adj}			.12					.12		
F Value				$F(9, 490) = 8.24$					$F(10, 489) = 7.67$	
Model Sig.					$p < .001$					$p < .001$

Moral Judgments of People. We performed another linear regression with the moral judgments of people who engage in conspicuous behaviors as the dependent variable. The model included the same control variables as above (see Table 4). The analysis found that the moral differences measure predicts favorable moral judgments of the people ($B = -.31$, $SE = .08$, $t = -3.76$, $p < .001$, $r_{sp} = -.16$). Additional regression analysis using the two moral foundation scales as the predictor variables corroborated these results. The analysis found that the individualizing values predicts unfavorable moral judgments of the people ($B = .38$, $SE = .09$, $t = 4.10$, $p < .001$, $r_{sp} = .17$) but the binding values predicted favorable moral judgments of the people ($B = -.23$, $SE = .09$, $t = -2.37$, $p = .018$, $r_{sp} = -.09$).

Table 4
Regression using Moral Values to Predict Moral Judgments of People (Study 3)

	Model 1					Model 2				
	B	SE	t	p	r_{sp}	B	SE	t	p	r_{sp}
Intercept	2.50	.68	3.67	<.001		1.82	.79	2.29	.022	
Moral Differences	-.31	.08	-3.76	<.001	-.16	-	-	-	-	-
Individualizing Values	-	-	-	-	-	.38	.09	4.10	<.001	.17
Binding Values	-	-	-	-	-	-.23	.09	-2.37	.018	-.09
Income	-.05	.03	-1.89	.058	-.08	-.05	.03	-1.98	.047	-.08
Gender (Female)	-.53	.19	-2.78	.006	-.12	-.59	.19	-3.05	.002	-.13
Age	.00	.01	.35	.728	.02	.00	.01	.02	.981	.00
Education	.09	.07	1.34	.183	.06	.11	.07	1.52	.130	.06
Race (White)	-.67	.22	-3.05	.002	-.13	-.66	.22	-2.98	.003	-.13
Group Identification	.09	.09	.96	.338	.04	.07	.09	.81	.419	.03
Vert. Collectivism	-.18	.13	-1.36	.176	-.06	-.21	.13	-1.60	.109	-.07
Horiz. Collectivism	.39	.09	4.07	<.001	.17	.40	.09	4.18	<.001	.18
R^2_{adj}			.13					.13		
F Value				$F(9, 490) = 8.97$					$F(10, 489) = 8.37$	
Model Sig.					$p < .001$					$p < .001$

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that the moral values alter the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption. The endorsement of the individualizing values led to unfavorable moral judgments of conspicuous behaviors and unfavorable moral judgments of people engaging in conspicuous consumption. In contrast, the endorsement of the binding values led to more favorable moral judgments of conspicuous behaviors and more favorable moral judgments of people engaging in conspicuous consumption. Importantly, in this study, we also controlled for related social constructs (group-identification, collectivism²) and found that the moral values can produce an independent effect on conspicuous consumption.

Study 4: Testing Conceptual Framework - I

The previous three studies demonstrated that endorsement of the moral foundations can predict the propensity to engage in conspicuous consumption and alter the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption. However, these studies were correlational in design; hence, they cannot conclusively establish that the effects were causally driven by the moral values. Therefore, in the next two studies, we sought to examine the effects of the moral values on conspicuous consumption using experimental methods and test for the proposed conceptual framework.

In this study, we examine the first stage of the framework depicted in Figure 1. That is, this study was designed to examine how the different moral values highlight the different

² Results show that vertical collectivism predicts favorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption, but horizontal collectivism predicts unfavorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption. These divergent effects of the two collectivism sub-scales are consistent with the conceptual distinctions between the two forms of collectivism (see Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995). Further, these results are also consistent with extant research demonstrating that collectivism only motivates conspicuous consumption when social hierarchy is desired in the society (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998).

characteristics (self-enhancing vs. social-identity) embedded in conspicuous consumption, subsequently altering its perceived morality. This study had a 2(Moral Prime: Individualizing vs. Binding) cell between-subjects design. We manipulated the momentary salience of the two moral foundations and assessed the impact of the primes on the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption. Further, we examined how the primes change the sensitivity to the different characteristics of conspicuous consumption. Importantly, we assessed how the sensitivity to these characteristics drives the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption. We hypothesized that the individualizing values would increase the sensitivity to the self-enhancement characteristics of conspicuous consumption, leading to unfavorable moral judgments. However, the binding values would increase the sensitivity to the social-identity signaling characteristics of conspicuous consumption, leading to more favorable moral judgments.

Method

Participants. A predetermined sample size of 500 U.S. residents was recruited online through M-Turk in exchange for a small compensation ($M_{age} = 34.7$ years; 51% female).

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two moral prime conditions. They were introduced to a supposed memory exercise through which the momentary salience of the moral values was manipulated in a procedure adapted from Mooijman et al. (2017). Participants read a paragraph about an ancient Sumerian warrior, Sostoras, who was heralded for his moral standing and good deeds. In the individualizing condition, participants read about how Sostoras was known for his “compassion, fairness, and equality.” However, in the binding condition, participants read about how Sostoras was known for “purity, respect for tradition, and loyalty.”

Because our manipulation utilized a subtle reading prime, we deployed an attention check

to screen out the participants who failed to read the assigned paragraph. These attention check questions were disguised to be part of the memory exercise. Two questions asked factual information about the paragraph in a multiple-choice format (“Where did Sostoras live?” and “What was Sostoras’s occupation?). One question utilized an open-ended prompt (What was Sostoras known for?). We apriori decided to remove participants if they got anyone one of the multiple-choice questions incorrect or if they wrote less than one sentence in the open-ended text box (see Hauser & Schwarz, 2016).

Next, we administered a filler task, which consisted of a series of unrelated word completion questions. This filler task was included to reduce demand effects. Then, participants were introduced to an ostensibly unrelated survey about product preferences. They were told that researchers are interested in understanding how people choose to wear logos on their clothes. Below the prompt, we showed the same picture collage of logos as Study 3. On the next page, we measured participants’ moral judgments of conspicuous consumption using the same measure as the previous study – “I think wearing large prominently displayed logos on your clothes is wrong.” (1: *Strongly Disagree*; 7: *Strongly Agree*).

Following this, we measured participants’ attentional sensitivity to the different aspects of conspicuous consumption. Participants were asked to respond to four items that measured sensitivity to self-enhancing characteristics (“I think logos show vanity/extravagance/ inequality/wastefulness;” 1: *Strongly Disagree*; 7: *Strongly Agree*) and four items that measured sensitivity to social-identity signaling characteristics (“I think logos show sociability/belonging to some community/membership in a particular group/social affiliation;” 1: *Strongly Disagree*; 7: *Strongly Agree*). All eight items were presented in a randomized order. Finally, basic demographics were collected.

Results

Attention Check. From the pool of recruited participants, 22 were excluded using the criteria outlined above, resulting in 478 participants in the final data analysis.

Moral Judgments. We performed a univariate ANOVA with the moral judgment measure as the dependent variable and the moral prime condition as the independent factor. We found a significant main effect of moral condition on moral judgments ($F(1, 476) = 6.58, p = .011, \eta_p^2 = .01$). Contrasts revealed that participants in the individualizing condition ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.83$) reported more unfavorable moral judgments than participants in the binding condition ($M = 3.22, SD = 1.87; M_{diff} = .44, SE = .17, p = .011, 95\% CI [.10, .77]$). Hence, these results extend the results of the previous study to demonstrate that the moral values can causally alter the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption.

Self-enhancing vs. Social-identity Signaling. We performed a factor analysis on the eight items using principal axis factoring with unrestricted factors and Promax rotation (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Two factors emerged that explained 65.97% of the cumulative variance. The four social-identity signaling items all loaded on to Factor 1 (Eigenvalue = 2.82, all loading values $> .60$). Hence, these four items were averaged to form one composite scale ($\alpha = .85; M = 4.36, SD = 1.33$). Similarly, the four self-enhancing items all loaded on to Factor 2 (Eigenvalue = 2.46, all loading values $> .60$). Hence, these four items were averaged to form one composite scale ($\alpha = .79; M = 4.05, SD = 1.39$). The correlation between the two scales was not significant ($r = -.02, p = .595$). Therefore, this factor-analysis confirms that the eight items captured the attentional sensitivity to two distinct aspects of conspicuous consumption.

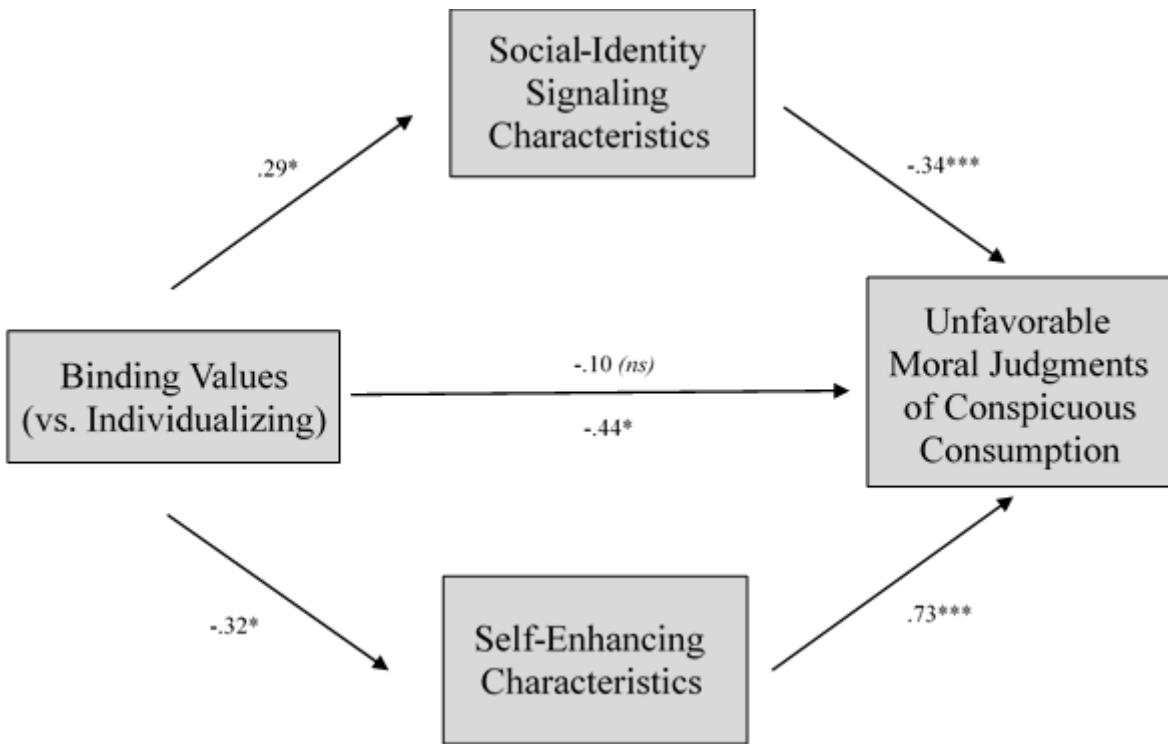


Figure 2. Mediation pathway (Study 4). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Mediation Analysis. We examined how the moral primes altered the sensitivity to the different aspects of conspicuous consumption which mediate the effect on the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption (See Figure 2). A parallel mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 4 with 5000 bootstraps (Hayes, 2013). The moral judgments measure was inputted as the dependent variable (higher values represents unfavorable moral judgments) and the moral prime condition as the independent variable (Binding = 1, Individualizing = 0). The social-identity signaling and self-enhancing composite scales were inputted as parallel mediators. First, we see that the binding values, compared to the individualizing values, led to more favorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption ($B = -.44$, $SE = .17$, $t = -2.57$, $p = .011$), replicating the results of the ANOVA. Next, we see that the binding values, compared to the individualizing values, significantly increased sensitivity to the social-identity signaling characteristics (4.50 vs. 4.22; $B = .29$, $SE = .12$, $t = 2.38$, $p = .018$). Contrastingly, the binding

values, compared to the individualizing values, significantly reduced the sensitivity to the self-enhancing characteristics (4.21 vs. 3.89 ; $B = -.32$, $SE = .13$, $t = -2.55$, $p = .011$). Further, the social-identity signaling characteristics predicted favorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption ($B = -.34$, $SE = .05$, $t = -6.66$, $p < .001$). However, the self-enhancing characteristics predicted unfavorable moral judgment of conspicuous consumption ($B = .73$, $SE = .05$, $t = 14.86$, $p < .001$). When both the mediators were included in the model, the effect of the moral primes on the moral judgments was no longer significant ($B = -.10$, $SE = .14$, $t = -.73$, $p = .467$). The mediation pathway through the social-identity signaling characteristics was significant (standardized indirect effect = $-.05$ [$-.10$, $-.01$]). Similarly, the mediation pathway through the self-enhancing characteristics was also significant (standardized indirect effect = $-.13$ [$-.22$, $-.03$]).

Discussion

This study provides causal evidence for our central assertion that the moral values can alter the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption. Priming binding values, compared to individualizing values, led to more favorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption. Further, this study also provides support for our proposed theorization that the different moral values highlight the different characteristics of conspicuous consumption, altering its perceived morality. Priming binding values, compared to individualizing values, increased the sensitivity to social-identity signaling characteristics of conspicuous consumption. However, priming binding values, compared to individualizing values, reduced the sensitivity to the self-enhancing characteristics of conspicuous consumption. Further, the social-identity signaling characteristics led to more favorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption, but the self-enhancing characteristics led to more unfavorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption. Hence,

this study provides causal evidence that the different moral values can alter the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption by highlighting its different characteristics³.

Study 5: Testing Conceptual Framework - II

In this study, we examine the second stage of the conceptual framework depicted in Figure 1. That is, while the previous study demonstrated that the moral values can causally alter the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption by highlighting its different characteristics, in this study, we examine how the moral judgments subsequently influence the preferences for conspicuous consumption. This study had a 3(Moral Prime: Control vs. Individualizing vs. Binding) cell between-subjects design. We manipulated the momentary salience of the two moral foundations as in the previous study and included a control condition as well for comparison purposes.

We assessed the impact of the moral primes on the preferences for conspicuous consumption as well as the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption. Importantly, we assessed how the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption drive the preferences for conspicuous consumption. We hypothesized that the individualizing values would lead to unfavorable moral judgments, reducing the preferences for conspicuous consumption. However, the binding values would lead to more favorable moral judgments, increasing the preferences for conspicuous consumption.

Method

Participants. A predetermined sample size of 500 U.S. residents was recruited online through M-Turk in exchange for a small compensation ($M_{age} = 35.2$ years; 44% female).

³ One possible limitation of this study is how the different characteristics were measured. The self-enhancing items are negatively framed but the social-identity signaling items are positively framed.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three moral prime conditions. They were introduced to a supposed memory exercise through which the momentary salience of the individualizing and binding moral values was manipulated using the same Sostoras reading task as Study 4. In the newly added control condition, participants read that Sostoras was a pottery producer in Sumer, with no mention of moral values. Then, we deployed the same attention check as before.

Next, participants were introduced to an ostensibly unrelated survey about product evaluation. First, we measured participants' preferences for conspicuous logos using the same Nike product pair stimuli as Study 2. Again, participants indicated their preferences between the small and large logos to indicate their preference for conspicuous consumption. Subsequently, we measured participants' moral judgments of conspicuous consumption using the same measure as previous studies – “I think wearing large prominently displayed logos on your clothes is wrong.” (1: *Strongly Disagree*; 7: *Strongly Agree*).

Then, basic demographics were collected. Finally, we administered an open-ended suspicion check to probe for demand effects (“what did you think this study was about?”). Analysis of the responses demonstrates that participants did not make a connection between the “reading memory task” and the “product preference task.”

Results

Attention Check. From the pool of recruited participants, 35 were excluded using the criteria described above, resulting in 465 participants in the final data analysis.

Preference Measure. As before, the preference measures for the three product pairs were averaged to form one composite score of preference ($\alpha = .95$, $N = 12$). We performed a univariate ANOVA with this preference measure as the dependent variable and the moral prime

condition as the independent factor. We found a significant main effect of moral condition on preferences for conspicuous logos ($F(2, 462) = 11.40, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$). Planned contrasts revealed that participants in the individualizing condition ($M = 4.37, SD = 2.12$) reported significantly lower preference than participants in the control condition ($M = 4.86, SD = 2.04; M_{\text{diff}} = -.48, SE = .25, p = .049, 95\% \text{ CI} [-.98, -.001]$). Contrastingly, participants in the binding condition ($M = 5.55, SD = 2.39$) reported a higher preference than participants in the control condition ($M_{\text{diff}} = .69, SE = .25, p = .006, 95\% \text{ CI} [.20, 1.19]$). Additionally, participants in the binding condition reported a significantly higher preference for conspicuous logos than participants in the individualizing condition ($M_{\text{diff}} = 1.18, SE = .25, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} [.69, 1.67]$). Hence, these results extend the results of Study 2 to show that the moral values can causally alter the preferences for conspicuous consumption.

Moral Judgments. We performed another univariate ANOVA with the moral judgment measure as the dependent variable and the moral prime condition as the independent factor. We found a significant main effect of moral condition on moral judgments ($F(2, 462) = 11.68, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$). Planned contrasts revealed that participants in the individualizing condition ($M = 4.34, SD = 1.96$) reported more unfavorable moral judgments than participants in the control condition ($M = 3.89, SD = 1.79; M_{\text{diff}} = .45, SE = .21, p = .037, 95\% \text{ CI} [.03, .86]$). Contrastingly, participants in the binding condition ($M = 3.30, SD = 1.89$) reported more favorable moral judgments than participants in the control condition ($M_{\text{diff}} = -.59, SE = .22, p = .007, 95\% \text{ CI} [-1.01, -.17]$). Participants in the individualizing condition reported significantly more unfavorable moral judgments than participants in the binding condition ($M_{\text{diff}} = 1.03, SE = .21, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} [.61, 1.45]$). Hence, these results replicate the results of Study 4, again showing that the moral values causally alter the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption.

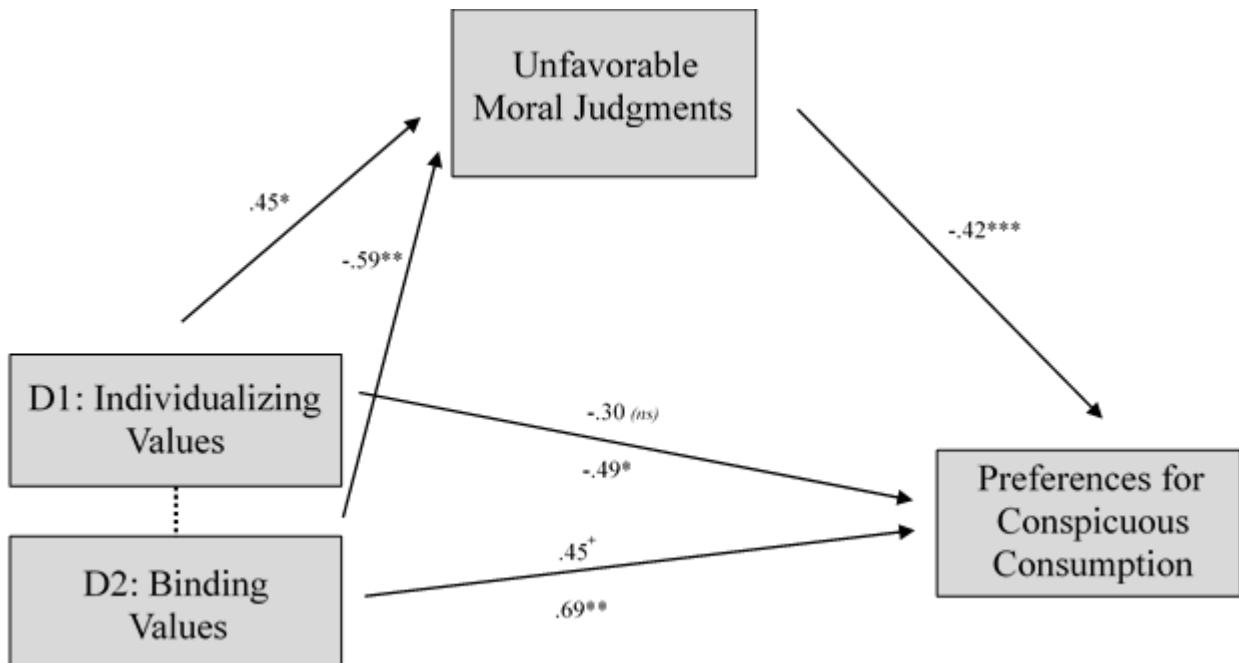


Figure 3. Mediation pathway (Study 5). ⁺p < .01, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Mediation Analysis. Next, we examined how the moral judgments drive the preferences for conspicuous logos (see Figure 3). We performed a mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 4 with 5000 bootstraps (Hayes, 2013). The preference measure was inputted as the dependent variable and the moral judgments measure (higher scores indicate unfavorable moral judgments) was inputted as the mediator. Two dummy variables for the moral conditions were created to identify the individualizing (D1: Individualizing = 1, 0 otherwise) and binding (D2: Binding = 1, 0 otherwise) conditions. First, we see that priming individualizing values significantly increased unfavorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption ($B = .45$, $SE = .21$, $t = 2.09$, $p = .037$). On the other hand, the priming binding values reduced unfavorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption ($B = -.59$, $SE = .22$, $t = -2.73$, $p = .007$). Further, unfavorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption reduced preferences for conspicuous logos ($B = -.42$, $SE = .05$, $t = -8.20$, $p < .001$). The negative effect of individualizing values on

preferences was mediated by the moral judgments (standardized relative indirect effect = -.08 [-.17, -.002]). Similarly, the positive effect of binding values on preferences was mediated by the moral judgments (standardized relative indirect effect = .11 [.03, .19]).

Discussion

This study provides causal evidence for our proposition that the moral values can alter the preferences for conspicuous consumption. Priming binding values, compared to individualizing values, led to greater preferences for conspicuous consumption. Further, this study also provides support for the proposed theorization that the different moral values alter the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption, resulting in different preferences for conspicuous consumption. Priming individualizing values led to unfavorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption, which subsequently reduced preferences for conspicuous consumption. However, priming binding values led to more favorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption, subsequently increasing preferences for conspicuous consumption. Hence, taken together, Study 4 and 5 provide causal evidence that the different moral lenses increase sensitivity to the different characteristics of conspicuous consumption, altering its perceived morality, and subsequently changing the preferences for conspicuous consumption.

Note, to ensure that our effects are not peculiar to the method of moral value priming utilized, we also ran the study using a different method of priming the moral values. The analysis shows a convergent pattern of results.

Study 6A: Boundary Condition - Social Visibility

Having demonstrated the effects of the moral values on conspicuous consumption along with the underlying theorization, we now examine the boundary condition of the effects. This study was designed to examine how social visibility moderates the effect of the binding values

on conspicuous consumption. Our theorization predicts that the binding values heighten sensitivity to social-identity signaling characteristics of conspicuous consumption. However, this characteristic should be less relevant for situations that have low social visibility. This study had 2(Moral Prime: Individualizing vs. Binding) x 2(Social Visibility: Low vs. High) fully between-subjects design. We manipulated the salience of the moral foundations and the salience of social visibility and then examined the impact of the manipulations on preferences for conspicuous consumption. We predicted that the effect of binding values on preferences for conspicuous consumption would attenuate when social visibility is reduced.

Further, this study also examined one important alternate explanation that could be driving the observed effects, namely self-image threat. Research has shown that social contexts can also be a source of threat to the self-image (Ellemers et al., 2002). Therefore, one could theorize that when participants read the manipulation primes, the social contexts described in them induce self-image threat. This threat, in turn, might make people want to acquire goods and possessions that express their self-image. Specifically, when people's self-image is threatened, they turn to conspicuous consumption as a means of expressing their personalities (Hogg, 2007). This theorization would posit that our observed effects are not driven by the salience of binding moral values, but rather by the sense of self-image threat induced by our manipulation. We tested this alternative account in this study.

Method

Participants. Five-hundred U.S. residents were recruited online through MTurk in exchange for a small compensation ($M_{age} = 36.73$ years; 56.9% female).

Procedure. We randomly assigned participants to one of the two moral prime conditions and manipulated the salience of each foundation using the same reading task as before.

Subsequently, the same attention check procedure was deployed. Next, participants were introduced to an ostensibly unrelated product evaluation study and told they would be evaluating products to wear to the gym. We asked participants to imagine a scenario about going to the gym, which was framed to be either Low or High in social visibility. In the Low visibility condition, participants were asked to imagine that they were going to the gym at 6 am before work and that they will not meet anyone they know. In the High visibility condition, participants were asked to imagine that they were going to the gym at 6 pm after work and that they would meet many friends and colleagues. After imagining one these scenarios, participants were asked to evaluate products that they would wear to the gym in that particular scenario. We presented the same set of Nike product pairs with the small and large logos used in previous studies. Therefore, the relative preference for the larger logo served as our measure of preferences for conspicuous consumption again.

Next, participants were presented with three items designed to capture the extent to which their clothes preferences were an expression of their self-image (“It is important to me that my clothes reflect who I am,” “My clothes should reflect my preferences,” “People should not hide their preferences”) on a 9-point scale (1: *Strongly Disagree*; 9: *Strongly Agree*). Finally, basic demographics were collected.

Results

Attention Check. From the pool of recruited participants, 20 were excluded using the same criteria as before, resulting in 480 participants in the final data analysis.

Preference. The preference measures for all the three product pairs were averaged to form one composite score of preference ($\alpha = .91$, $N = 12$). We performed a univariate ANOVA with this preference measure as the dependent variable and the moral condition and the social

visibility condition as two independent factors. We found a significant main effect of social visibility condition on preference ($F(1, 476) = 8.28, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .02$) but no main effect of moral condition ($F(1, 476) = 1.73, p = .189, \eta_p^2 = .00$). Importantly we found a significant interaction between the two factors ($F(1, 476) = 4.19, p = .041, \eta_p^2 = .01$). We explored this interaction through planned contrasts (see Figure 4).

In the Low social visibility condition, there was no difference in preferences between the two moral prime conditions ($F(1, 476) = .267, p = .605, \eta_p^2 = .00$). Preference for the larger conspicuous logos were similar in the individualizing condition ($M = 4.13, SD = 2.11$) and binding condition ($M = 3.99, SD = 1.81; M_{diff} = .13, SE = .26, p = .605, 95\% CI [-.38, .64]$). However, in the High social visibility condition, there was a significant difference in preferences for larger conspicuous logos between the two moral prime conditions ($F(1, 476) = 5.66, p = .018, \eta_p^2 = .01$). Participants in the individualizing condition ($M = 4.29, SD = 1.93$) reported a lower level of preference compared to participants in the binding condition ($M = 4.90, SD = 2.15; M_{diff} = -.62, SE = .26, p = .018, 95\% CI [-1.13, -.11]$). Concurrently, in the individualizing condition, there was no difference in preference scores between the two social visibility conditions ($M_{diff} = .15, SE = .26, p = .562, 95\% CI [-.36, .67]$). However, in the binding condition, preference scores were higher in the High visibility condition compared to the Low visibility condition ($M_{diff} = .90, SE = .26, p < .001, 95\% CI [.39, 1.41]$). Hence, the effects of the binding values on the preferences for conspicuous consumption were attenuated when social visibility was reduced.

Self-Image Expression. The three items were averaged to form one composite scale ($\alpha = .72$). We performed a univariate ANOVA with this self-image expression measure as the dependent variable and the moral condition and the social visibility conditions as the independent factors. We found no effect of moral condition on self-image expression ($F(1, 476) = .42, p = .518, \eta_p^2 = .00$) and no main effect of social visibility condition ($F(1, 476) = 1.43, p = .233, \eta_p^2 = .00$). The interaction between the two factors was also not significant ($F(1, 476) = .00, p = .990, \eta_p^2 = .00$). Hence, these results do not support the account that the effects of the moral values are driven by self-image threat.

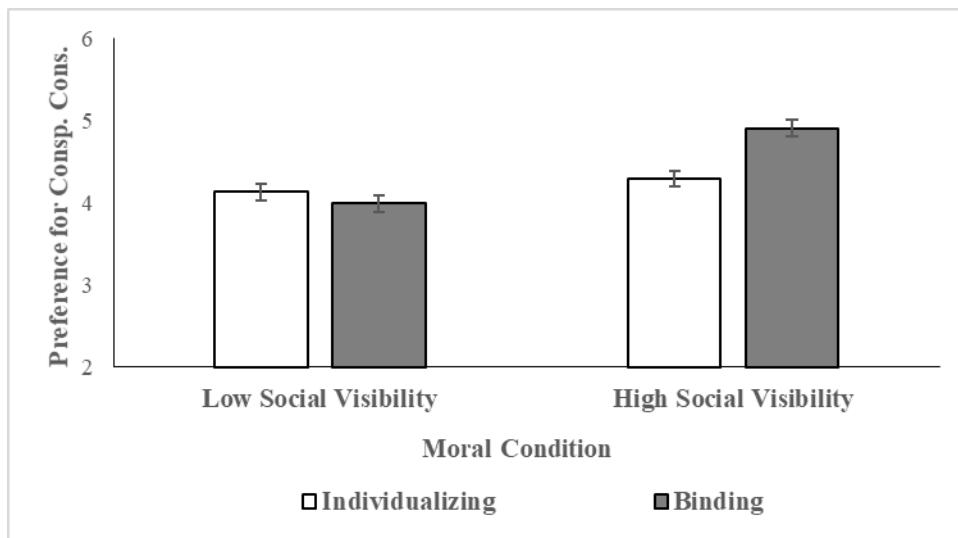


Figure 4. Preferences for conspicuous products as a function of moral condition and social visibility (Study 6A). Errors bars represent ± 1 SE.

Study 6B: Boundary Condition – Social Visibility

In this study, we operationalize social visibility in another way – the degree of social visibility of products. Our theory predicts that the binding values heighten sensitivity to the social-identity signaling characteristics of conspicuous products. This characteristic should be less relevant for products that are less socially visible in nature; therefore, the effects of the

binding values should weaken for products with lower social visibility.

We manipulated the momentary salience of the two moral foundations and assessed the impact of the primes on the propensity to purchase a variety of products. The study had a 3(Moral Prime: Control vs. Individualizing vs. Binding) cell between-subjects design with 36 consumption items (i.e., products) that varied in level of social visibility as a within-subjects factor. We predicted that the individualizing values would reduce the preference for conspicuous products, but the binding values would increase the preference for conspicuous products. Further, we predicted that the effect of the moral primes would be moderated by the level of product's social visibility, such that products with a higher degree of visibility would be influenced to a greater extent by the moral primes.

Method

Participants. Five-hundred U.S. residents were recruited online through MTurk in exchange for a small compensation ($M_{age} = 37.89$ years; 60.4% female).

Procedure. We randomly assigned participants to one of the three moral prime conditions (control, binding, individualizing) and manipulated the salience of each foundation using the same reading task as previous studies. Following this, the same attention check was deployed. Next participants were introduced to an ostensibly unrelated product evaluation task. They were presented with 36 products and services with their respective prices, adapted from Sundie et al. (2011). Participants saw all products in randomized order and below each product indicated their likelihood of purchasing of the product (1: *Not at All*; 9: *Extremely*). Finally, basic demographics were collected.

Pretest of Social Visibility. A separate pool of participants from MTurk ($N=100$) was recruited to rate the social visibility of these products. We presented participants with all 36

products randomly and asked them to rate each product on the extent of social visibility (1: *Not at all Visible*; 9: *Definitely Visible*). Thus, we were able to obtain a social visibility rating for each product. Products that scored the lowest were private consumption items like Grocery Voucher ($M = 5.21$) and Maytag Washer ($M = 5.44$). Products that received the highest scores were showy public products like Ralph Lauren shirt ($M = 6.89$) and Nike Shoes ($M = 6.94$).

Results

Attention Check. From the pool of recruited participants, 20 were excluded using the same criteria as before, resulting in 480 participants in the final data analysis.

Moderation Analysis. We performed a moderation analysis using linear mixed models in SPSS to test how the purchase intention of the products was influenced by the moral condition and the social visibility of the product (Aiken et al., 1991). Purchase intention was the dependent variable. Two dummy variables for the moral conditions were created to identify the individualizing (D1: Individualizing = 1, 0 otherwise) and binding (D2: Binding = 1, 0 otherwise) conditions. Standardized scores of the social visibility ratings of the items obtained from the pretest was a continuous moderator in this analysis.

First, we see that the effect of social visibility rating on purchase intention is not significant ($B = -.03$, $SE = .04$, $t = -.90$, $p = .366$). This indicates that in the control condition the purchase intention did not vary as the social visibility rating of the product increased. Next, we see that the effect of D1, the individualizing condition, was negative ($B = -.46$, $SE = .05$, $t = -9.08$, $p < .001$). Importantly, the interaction term between this dummy variable and social visibility ratings was negative ($B = -.19$, $SE = .05$, $t = -3.91$, $p < .001$). This indicates that in the individualizing condition the purchase intention decreased as the social visibility rating of the product increased. Next, we see that the effect of D2, the binding condition, was also significant

($B = 1.02$, $SE = .05$, $t = 20.02$, $p < .001$). Importantly, the interaction term between this dummy variable and social visibility ratings was positive ($B = .32$, $SE = .05$, $t = 6.24$, $p < .001$). This indicates that in the binding condition the purchase intention increased as the social visibility rating of the product increased.

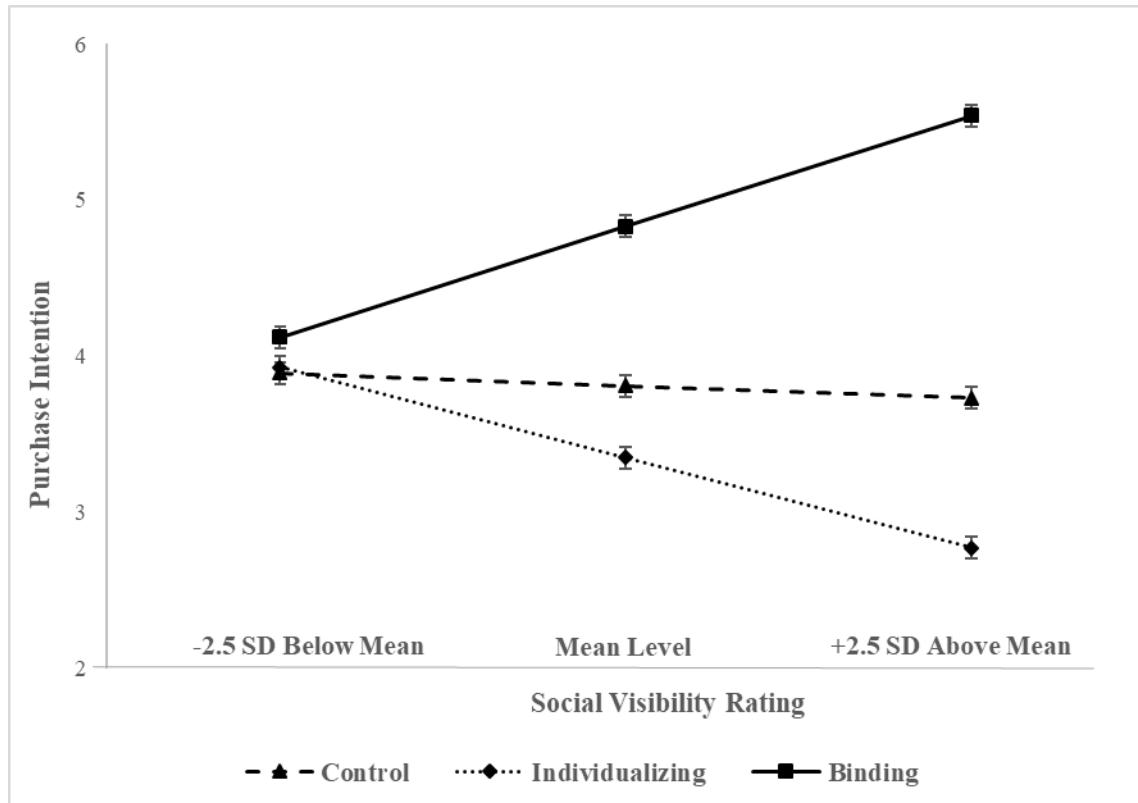


Figure 5. Purchase intention of products as a function of moral condition and social visibility rating of product (Study 6B). Errors bars represent ± 1 SE.

We assessed the model estimated means of purchase intention at varying levels of the social visibility rating (see Figure 5). At 2.5 SD below the mean level of social visibility rating values, we see no significant differences between the purchase intentions in the control condition ($M = 3.89$), individualizing condition ($M = 3.93$) and the binding condition ($M = 4.12$). At the mean level of the social visibility rating, we see that the moral conditions had different effects on purchase intention. The purchase intention in the individualizing condition ($M = 3.35$) was

significantly lower than the control condition ($M = 3.81$), but the purchase intention in the binding condition was significantly higher ($M = 4.83$). Moreover, we see that at 2.5 SD above the mean level of social visibility rating values, the effect of the moral values on purchase intention increased. The purchase intention in the individualizing condition ($M = 2.77$) was again significantly lower than the control condition ($M = 3.73$), but the purchase intention in the binding condition was significantly higher ($M = 5.54$).

Discussion for Study 6A and 6B

The results of Study 6A and Study 6B converge with the previous results to show that priming the two moral foundations can have systematically different effects on the preferences for conspicuous consumption. Making individualizing values salient can reduce the preferences for conspicuous consumption. However, making binding values salient can increase the preferences for conspicuous consumption. Moreover, we find that the effect is contingent upon social visibility. In Study 6A, we manipulated social visibility by changing the consumption context and found that the binding values did not increase preferences when the products were to be utilized in private consumption scenarios. In Study 6B, we manipulated social visibility by using different types of products that innately vary on this dimension and found that the effect of the moral values weakens as the social visibility of the product decreases. That is, the binding values increase preferences for products that are typically socially visible and showy (e.g., designer clothing, luxury watches). However, the binding values should not increase preferences for products that are privately consumed (e.g., toothbrush, toaster). Hence, altogether these results demonstrate that social visibility is an important boundary condition for the effects of the binding values on preferences for conspicuous consumption.

General Discussion

Summary

Across seven studies we find convergent evidence that the different moral foundations alter the perceived morality of conspicuous consumption and influence the propensity to engage in the behavior. First, Study 1 found that the prevalence of the moral foundations can predict the consumption of luxury goods across countries. Specifically, we find that countries which report a higher prevalence of binding values relative to individualizing values are more likely to consume luxury goods. Study 2 found that individual differences in endorsement of the moral foundations can predict preferences for conspicuous consumption. This study also demonstrated that political conservatives and religious individuals are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption due to their adherence to the binding foundations. Next, Study 3 found that the moral values can predict the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption. The individualizing values predict unfavorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption, but the binding values predict favorable moral judgments of conspicuous consumption.

The next two studies causally demonstrated the proposed conceptual pathway. Study 4 demonstrated that priming the moral values can increase sensitivity to the different characteristics (self-enhancing vs. social-identity signaling) of conspicuous consumption. The sensitivity to the different characteristics subsequently alters the moral judgments of conspicuous consumption. Next, Study 5 demonstrated that priming the two moral foundations can alter the moral judgment of conspicuous consumption, which subsequently changes the preferences for conspicuous consumption.

Finally, the last two studies demonstrated the role of social visibility as an important boundary condition for the effect of the moral values on conspicuous consumption. Study 6A

demonstrated that the effects of binding values on preferences for conspicuous consumption attenuated in private consumption contexts. Study 6B demonstrated that the effects of moral values are weaker for products that are less socially visible in nature.

Theoretical Contributions

The present research, to the best of our knowledge, is the first to examine the relationship between moral values and conspicuous consumption. We demonstrate that the morality of conspicuous consumption is malleable. In that different moral values can increase or decrease the moral objections to the behavior and alter the propensity to engage in conspicuous consumption. This finding contradicts the notion that conspicuous consumption is always morally questionable. Rather, we assert that under certain contexts, moral values can be compatible with conspicuous consumption and even motivate the behavior. Therefore, our findings produce several implications for understanding the prevalence of this widespread social behavior.

First, our results offer an explanation for why many people, especially political, social, and religious leaders, engage in conspicuous consumption even when other sections of society consider it morally questionable. In that, this research suggests that the individuals and social groups who espouse the individualizing values of caring and fairness would be likely to shun conspicuous consumption and find it morally suspect. We can see examples of this notion in leaders like Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama who preach equality and compassion while practicing austerity (Dalai Lama, 2012). Similarly, Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, who devote their time and money to fighting diseases, hunger, and income inequality, are known to maintain non-conspicuous spending habits (Elkins, 2017; Matthews, 2014).

On the other hand, our results suggest that individuals and social groups who adhere to the binding values of tradition, respect, and loyalty may embrace conspicuous consumption and

find it morally permissible. Again, we can see several such instances of this in society. Most noticeably, members of royal dynasties fundamentally represent tradition and hierarchy and also epitome conspicuous consumption. Furthermore, this phenomenon can also be seen amongst religious leaders who preach the values of sanctity, loyalty, and respect. As outlined before, televangelists in the United States and spiritual gurus in India unabashedly partake in conspicuous consumption (Chasmar, 2016; Urban, 2016). Hence, the present research proposes a framework for understanding how these conspicuous behaviors could be compatible with the moral outlook of such individuals.

Relatedly, our research contributes to the literature examining the antecedents of conspicuous consumption (see Dubois & Ordabayeva, 2015 for a review). Extant research has explored how conspicuous consumption can be influenced many factors such as power (Rucker & Galinsky, 2009), self-threats (Lee & Shrum, 2012), mating goals (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Sundie et al., 2011; Y. Wang & Griskevicius, 2014), mortality salience (Arndt et al., 2004), social influences (Berger & Heath, 2008; Griskevicius et al., 2010, 2012; Mandel et al., 2006) and economic variables (Ivanic et al., 2011; Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011). However, no work has directly explored the moral antecedents of conspicuous consumption.

Even so, our findings do converge with the previous literature on self-construal and political ideologies. In that, past research has shown that an interdependent (vs. independent) construal can increase luxury consumption when hierarchy is acceptable in the society (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Moreover, recent work shows that conservative political ideology can increase endorsement in the belief of dominance-based hierarchical social structures, motivating preferences for products that afford vertical differentiation (J. C. Kim et al., 2018; Ordabayeva & Fernandes, 2018). Our findings are

consistent with these papers as the binding values are associated with conservative political attitudes and with cultures predisposed to an interdependent construal (Haidt, 2012). Therefore, we increase the theoretical understanding of conspicuous consumption by demonstrating a novel, distinct, and meaningful motivator of this behavior.

Furthermore, this research extends our understanding of morality by demonstrating a novel consequence of the distinct moral foundations. As discussed previously, there is a burgeoning stream of work examining how the moral foundations influence political attitudes (e.g., Davis et al., 2016; Graham et al., 2011, 2009; Helzer & Pizarro, 2011) and social attitudes (e.g., Frimer, Biesanz, Walker, & MacKinlay, 2013; Inbar et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2014). However, the extant research has not examined how the moral foundations can influence consumption behaviors. Hence, this research, extending our understanding of when, why, and how morality can impact consumption patterns and economic activities in society.

Limitations and Future Research

The present research is an initial step towards understanding the relationship between morality and consumption behaviors; therefore, these findings bring to light several unanswered questions ripe for future investigation. Firstly, this research has explored only one boundary condition – social visibility - for the relationship between the moral values and conspicuous consumption. It is conceivable that the relationship will be contingent upon several other factors not considered in the present research. For instance, if people who adhere to the binding values utilize conspicuous consumption as a means to signal social identity, then the effect must depend on the group one is a part of and whether that particular social group endorses the product. Similarly, the effect of the binding values on conspicuous consumption might also be contingent upon various socio-economic factors. For instance, extant research has shown that there is

variability in how individuals across different income groups engage in conspicuous consumption (Christen & Morgan, 2005; Moav & Neeman, 2012; Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011). Therefore, future work can explore how various economic, social, and psychological factors play a role in influencing the relationship between the moral values and conspicuous consumption.

Second, we have only examined the morality of conspicuous consumption through the Moral Foundations framework. As such, the moral judgment of this behavior would undoubtedly be influenced by other related constructs such as the moral identity of the individual (Aquino & Reed, 2002) and the strength of the moral conviction (Skitka et al., 2005). Relatedly, we have not demonstrated *how* the moral values alter the preferences for conspicuous consumption. Therefore, future work can explore how implicit attitudes (Cushman et al., 2006; Pizarro et al., 2003), reasoning (Paxton et al., 2012; Wright & Baril, 2011), emotions (Horberg et al., 2011; Pizarro, 2000), construal level (Napier & Luguri, 2013), and memory (Gino & Desai, 2012; Moore et al., 2008) play a role in driving the effects of morality on consumption preferences.

Moreover, we have explored the influence of moral values on only one specific kind of consumption - status oriented showy products. The different moral values would surely influence prosocial consumption (see Campbell & Winterich, 2018; Mazar & Zhong, 2010), but could also influence food consumption (Rozin et al., 1997; Rozin, 1999b), preferences for horizontally differentiated products (Berger & Heath, 2008; Chan et al., 2012; Dommer et al., 2013), and preferences for experiential goods (Gilovich et al., 2015; Kumar et al., 2014). Importantly, by exploring other forms of consumption, we could establish what kind of consumption behaviors may be motivated by the individualizing values as opposed to the binding values. This would allow us to obtain a richer understanding of how moral values shape consumption behaviors and

economic activities.

Conclusion

In summary, while several scholars have decried conspicuous consumption as immoral, we demonstrate that its perceived morality is malleable. Specifically, we utilize archival, correlational, and experimental procedures to demonstrate that the individualizing values can increase the moral objections to conspicuous consumption and reduce the propensity to engage in the behavior. However, the binding values can make the behavior appear morally acceptable and increase the propensity to engage in the behavior. These findings counter the view that conspicuous consumption is always considered morally suspect. Instead, we demonstrate that certain moral values can make conspicuous consumption less morally objectionable, even making it desirable. Altogether, these results can help understand why some groups embrace conspicuous consumption even when other groups consider it morally objectionable.

CHAPTER 2

The Moral Suppression of Sensory Pleasure

Abstract

Social and religious leaders have decried sensory pleasures to be immoral and sought to suppress people's pursuit of sensory pleasures. This research investigates how this moral suppression of sensory pleasures influences the consumption patterns in society. Utilizing the moral foundations theory, we propose that while the binding moral values reduce the desirability of sensory pleasures, they also increase the desirability of social pleasures. Thus, the moral suppression of sensory pleasures alters the type of goods consumed in a society. Analysis of a country-level archival dataset shows that countries that have a higher prevalence of binding moral values tend to have lower per-capita spending on products that provide sensory pleasures (e.g., alcohol, soda, cigarettes). However, these countries also tend to have higher per-capita spending on products that provide social pleasures (e.g., cosmetics, watches, jewelry). Three controlled laboratory studies replicate these findings and delineate the causal effect.

The motivation to pursue sensory pleasures is innate to all humans (Cabanac, 1979). This pursuit of sensory pleasures drives the consumption of major product categories – fast foods, alcohol, tobacco – fueling the economic engine (Alba & Williams, 2013; Berridge & Kringelbach, 2015; Rozin, 1999a). Despite its ubiquity, sensory pleasures have been decried as immoral by many socio-moral schools. Mill (1863) classified them as ‘lower pleasures’ and urged humanity to rise above them. Gandhi (1948) believed that sensory pleasures were an obstacle to social progress, and required followers to be celibate and eschew intoxicants. Importantly, most religions denounce sensory pleasures, encouraging devotees to regulate these temptations (Dalai Lama, 2009). Crucially, these philosophies inform political policies, which then suppress sensory activities through laws. Hence, in a large section of society, sensory pleasures are considered morally objectionable and actively suppressed.

This research investigates how this moral suppression of sensory pleasures influences the consumption activities in a society. Taken at face value, one may expect to see a reduction in overall consumption levels as people forgo sensory products. However, we argue that the moral suppression of sensory pleasures might not reduce overall consumption, but instead, it changes the type of goods consumed in a society. Specifically, drawing from the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT; Graham et al., 2013; Haidt, 2007), we posit that while the *binding* moral values – loyalty, purity, and respect for authority – suppress sensory pleasures, these values also encourage the pursuit of social pleasures. Hence, the moral suppression of sensory pleasures alters the pursuit of pleasure, shifting consumption preferences from sensory products to social products.

Sensory versus Social Pleasures

While sensory pleasures emanate from the physical senses such as taste, smell, and touch,

social pleasures emanate from social interactions and relationships (Frijda, 2009; Jordan, 2000; Rozin, 1999a). Social pleasures typically accrue through the creation and strengthening of social identities. The pursuit of social pleasures also drives consumption, but of distinct product categories (Alba & Williams, 2013). Some products provide social pleasures through communal consumption, that is, by facilitating horizontal relationships and group bonding (e.g., games, cellphones) (Jordan, 2000). Other products provide social pleasures through status consumption, that is, by signaling social identity (e.g., clothing, jewelry) (Belk, 1988). These products serve as a means of social differentiation and vertical hierarchy, serving a useful role in communicating social identities (Kirmani, 2009).

Arguably, the delineation between sensory and social pleasures is not straightforward. Sometimes, the same product can provide sensory and social pleasures. For instance, wine can provide sensory pleasure when consumed for its taste, but it can also provide social pleasure when consumed as a social activity. Even so, the crucial distinction is that sensory pleasures do not necessarily require any social presence. That is, if a person is drinking wine for its taste, then she can derive that sensory pleasure even when stranded on a deserted island. However, using a Rolex wristwatch for identity and status signaling only provides social pleasure in the presence of observers; she cannot derive the same pleasure on a deserted island. In other words, people purchase social products, not because of any inherent physio-sensory properties but because others will admire them. Therefore, at an aggregate level, it is easy to see that some ingestible items—alcohol, tobacco, and hedonic food—are more likely to be consumed for sensory pleasures, whereas some visible social goods—cosmetics, jewelry, and designer clothing—are more likely to be purchased for social pleasures.

Binding Values & Pleasure Pursuit

The MFT (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt, 2007) proposes that moral values are comprised of five factors. The care and fairness factors together are called the *individualizing* foundations. They emphasize equality and welfare to protect individuals and provide for individual rights in society. The authority, loyalty, and purity factors are called the *binding* foundations as they emphasize the group's welfare (see also community and divinity values; Shweder & Haidt, 1993). These foundations "limit individual autonomy and self-expression to bind people into emergent social entities such as families, clans, and nations" (Graham & Haidt, 2010, p. 144). They strengthen societies by encouraging individuals to sacrifice for their group, uphold traditions, and overcome their base urges by exercising self-control (Haidt, 2001).

Importantly, the binding values help humans form strong, organized, and cooperative groups. That is, they help humans coalesce into large coordinated groups like a beehive (Haidt, 2012, p. 256). Such groups emphasize strong community bonds and rigid hierarchical social structures, which are essential for long-term group success. Consequently, many social institutions (e.g., military, church) actively use loyalty, authority, and purity values to form efficient, structured, and cooperative hive-like groups.

However, to form these cooperative groups, people must forgo individual desires and suppress their self-centered pleasure pursuits (Haidt, 2012; Mooijman et al., 2018). Sensory pleasures, by nature, are self-centered. The pursuit of sensory pleasure can supersede all other goals (Berridge & Kringelbach, 2015), leading individuals to disregard group concerns. It is not hard to imagine that a man driven by the craving for alcohol or nicotine disregards social rules. Hence, the binding values in the service of strengthening hive-like group cooperation should suppress sensory pleasures. Thus, we predict that people adhering to the binding values will have lower preferences for products that provide sensory pleasures (i.e., alcohol, tobacco).

Importantly, as the binding values promote hive-like group cooperation, they should also sanction the pursuit of social pleasures. That is, the binding values should encourage social behaviors that foster relationships and uphold social identities. As a result, the binding values will promote the pursuit of pleasure through social activities and products that build communal bonds. These values should also encourage partaking in behaviors that serve as signals for social identities and reinforce group structures. Hence, we predict that people adhering to the binding values will have higher preferences for products that provide social pleasures (i.e., jewelry, designer clothing).

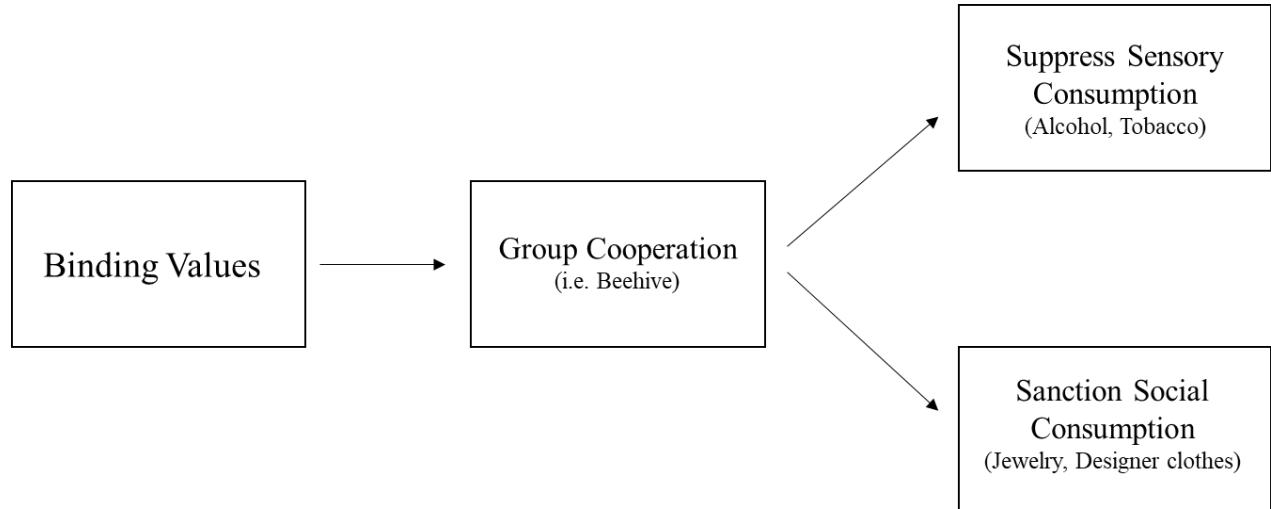


Figure 1. Research Propositions

In sum, we make a novel prediction that the binding values invoked in the service of creating hive-like cooperative groups, will suppress sensory pleasures but sanction social pleasures (see Figure 1). Though our propositions have not been empirically tested, they are consistent with some observed social behaviors. That is, the military and church tend to suppress sensory behaviors, but they also encourage displays of social hierarchies (i.e., rank medals, bishops' robes). Concurrently, research has shown that political conservatives, collectivist

cultures, and religious societies tend to endorse binding values (Graham et al., 2009; Graham & Haidt, 2010; Haidt & Graham, 2007), and they also tend to disfavor many sensory behaviors (Haidt, 2012; Koleva et al., 2012). Separately, Ordabayeva & Fernandes (2018) showed that conservatives tend to embrace status consumption. More closely, Goenka & Thomas (2019) demonstrated that the binding values increase conspicuous consumption by making its social-identity signaling characteristics salient. Moreover, a separate stream of research has suggested that different pleasures are fungible (Cohen et al., 2014; E. Kim et al., 2013). These researchers have demonstrated that the religious suppression of forbidden thoughts can sublimate into other productive pursuits. However, none of these extant works have directly examined how moral values alter the pursuit of sensory and social pleasures.

Hence, building on these disparate streams of literature, the present research is the first to posit and empirically demonstrate that the binding values can alter the pursuit of pleasure. We test our proposition through an analysis of a country-level consumption dataset and three controlled laboratory studies.

Study 1: Country-Level Analysis

We acquired a dataset documenting moral values across several countries and another dataset detailing the purchase of products that provide sensory and social pleasures. We combined the two datasets to examine whether the binding values can predict the pattern of sensory and social pleasure consumption across the countries.

Method

Datasets. We acquired the country-level consumption data from the Passport Database (© Euromonitor International). This private database provides category-level consumption data for countries across various industries. The data is compiled through a convergence of different

sources including national government reports, trade association reports, corporate consulting papers, and market data. This database has been utilized extensively by experts to analyze and forecast market trends.

We combined the Passport database with the country-level moral values data acquired through the website YourMorals.org. Individuals from across the world voluntarily complete surveys on this website to assess their morality and other personality traits. Several academic papers examining moral values have used the data from this platform (e.g., Graham et al., 2009; Inbar et al., 2012; Mooijman et al., 2018). However, these works have not utilized this data in conjunction with the Passport Database.

An exception is one study in Goenka & Thomas (2019), which utilized both these databases to examine how moral values predict patterns of luxury consumption across the countries. However, the present study is conceptually and empirically distinct from the previous research. Goenka & Thomas (2019) focused only on luxury consumption. In contrast, the present research examines the divergent effects of binding moral values on consumption of sensory and social products. That is, how the binding moral values reduce sensory consumption while increasing social consumption. Importantly, the previous research did not examine how moral values influence preferences for any of the sensory and social product categories examined in the present research. Thus, the dataset that we employ for the present research is unique and novel. Further, the pleasure alteration hypotheses tested here, while not inconsistent, are broader and more fundamental than the luxury consumption hypothesis tested in previous research.

Consumption Variables. To select the product categories that represent sensory and social pleasures, we conducted a pretest on Amazon Mechanical Turk. Participants were recruited from both the United States ($N = 100$) and India ($N = 100$) to ensure that the pleasure

categorization was not country specific. Participants were first presented with brief descriptions of sensory and social pleasure taken from Jordan (2000). Then, they were shown a list of 15 product categories available in the Passport Database – carbonated drinks, caffeinated drinks, tobacco, alcohol, vegetables, bottled water, toiletries, shoes, electronics, stationery, furniture, cosmetics, leather accessories, high-end watches, and jewelry. Participants were asked to categorize these product categories based on the pleasure that they typically provide (1: *Mostly Sensory Pleasure*; 7: *Mostly Social Pleasure*). We computed the mean of this rating for each product category across the U.S. and India samples. The four product categories that received the lowest mean scores were selected as the sensory pleasure products – carbonated drinks ($M = 2.59$), caffeinated drinks ($M = 2.61$), tobacco ($M = 2.96$), and alcohol ($M = 3.24$). And, the four product categories that received the highest scores in both the countries were selected as the social pleasure products – cosmetics ($M = 4.76$), leather accessories ($M = 4.85$), high-end watches ($M = 4.96$), and jewelry ($M = 5.20$).

Based on this pretest, we extracted the annual per-capita spending on the eight product categories from the Passport Database, which was available for 32 countries. Further, because category spending can be influenced by overall income levels, we also acquired the countries' annual per-capita GDP from this database. All data were reported in U.S. dollars recorded at fixed 2017 exchange rates.

Binding Values. We extracted the moral values data for those participants who reported that their country of residence was one of the 32 countries in the consumption dataset. From these countries, we had responses from 160,331 participants who had visited the website between the years 2008-2012. For each participant, we received the responses to the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham et al., 2011). This scale assesses a person's

adherence to the five moral foundations through 30 morality statements (e.g., “Respect for authority is something all children need to learn,” “I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural.”) measured on a 6-point scale (0: *Strongly Disagree*; 5: *Strongly Agree*). Therefore, for each participant, we were able to observe an individualizing values score and a binding values score. Because we are interested in examining country-level differences, we averaged the moral values scores of all the participants in a country by the year of survey completion. Hence, for each country, we were able to observe one individualizing values, and one binding values score for each of the five years. Then, we standardized the scores and removed one outlier that was greater than 3SD from the mean binding values score. Thus, we observed $N = 159$ moral values variables labeled by country by year.

Results

We combined the two independent datasets, using country-year as the common merging variable, to examine the relationship between the binding values and the spending on the four sensory and four social products. The combined database consisted of 1,272 data points (159 country-year data points x 8 product categories).

Correlations. We first looked at model-free correlations. As predicted, the binding moral values scale was negatively correlated with the per-capita spending on the four sensory product categories ($r = -.21, p < .001$). However, the binding values scale was positively correlated with the per-capita spending on the four social product categories ($r = .12, p = .003$). Table 1 depicts the correlation matrix for all the variables. Figure 2 depicts the relationship between the prevalence of the binding values across the countries and the aggregate spending on sensory and social products in those countries (aggregated across the five years).

Importantly, we also see that the correlation pattern holds for the eight products

individually. That is, the prevalence of the binding values is negatively correlated with the spending on carbonated drinks ($r = -.39, p < .001$), caffeinated drinks ($r = -.33, p < .001$), alcohol ($r = -.37, p < .001$), and tobacco ($r = -.32, p < .001$). But the prevalence of the binding values is positively correlated with the spending on cosmetics ($r = .28, p < .001$), jewelry ($r = .16, p = .047$), watches ($r = .16, p = .052$), and leather accessories ($r = .16, p = .041$). Note, correlations using the authority, loyalty, and purity scales individually reveal a similar pattern of results.

Table 1
Correlation Matrix

	Bind.	Indiv.	Sens. Prod	Soc. Prod	GDP
Binding Values	-				
Indiv. Values	-.07*	-			
Sensory Products (<i>per capita USD</i>)	-.21***	.05	-		
Social Products (<i>per capita USD</i>)	.12**	-.08*	.41***	-	
GDP (<i>per capita USD</i>)	-.18***	.004	.39***	.59***	-

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

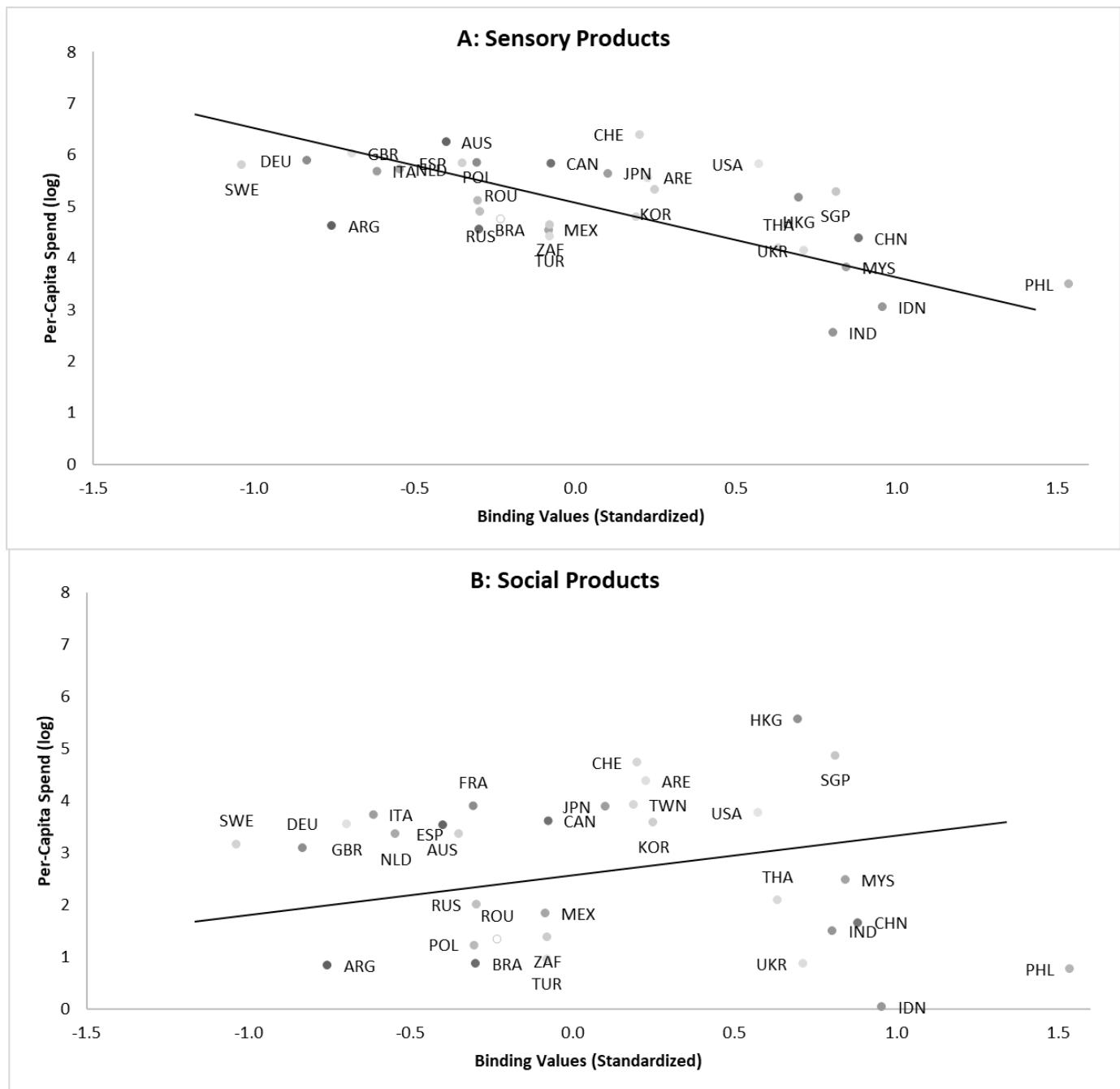


Figure 2. The relationship between the binding values and product spending across countries (aggregated across the years). Each data point represents one country. Panel A represents the aggregate of the four sensory products, and Panel B represents the aggregate of the four social products. Vertical axis represents the USD per-capita spending values (after natural logarithmic transformation). Horizontal axis represents standardized scores of the binding values.

Regression Analysis. To test whether the patterns observed in model-free analysis holds up after controlling for potential confounding factors, we performed a linear mixed-model regression analysis in SPSS. The natural logarithmic transformed values of the per-capita spending on the eight product categories was the dependent variable. This variable was regressed on standardized binding values, a dummy variable identifying the product as a sensory product or as a social product (0 = Sensory Products, 1 = Social Products), and their interaction term. We also included some covariates in the model. First, year was included as a covariate to control for temporal variations in consumption patterns. Second, the standardized scores of the per-capita GDP values was included as a control to account for heterogeneity in income levels across the countries. We also included the interaction between the GDP values and the pleasure dummy variable. Further, dummies for each product category were included, nested within each pleasure type, to control for any plausible idiosyncratic effects of the product category. Finally, country was treated as a random effect to control for unobserved heterogeneity across the countries.

Table 2 provides the results of the regression analysis. As hypothesized, we find that the interaction between the binding values scale and the pleasure dummy variable is significant ($B = .38$ $SE = .04$, $t = 10.08$, $p < .001$). Analysis of simple slopes reveal that, after controlling for differences in per capita GDP, people in countries with higher binding values spend less money on sensory products (Simple Slope: $B = -.14$, $SE = .04$, $t = -3.84$, $p < .001$), but they spend more money on social products (Simple Slope: $B = .24$, $SE = .04$, $t = 6.74$, $p < .001$).

Table 2

Regression using Binding Values (Model 1) or Binding – Individual Values (Model 2) to Predict Country-Level Consumption

	Model 1				Model 2			
	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p
Intercept	3.46	.19	17.44	<.001	3.45	.19	17.71	<.001
Pleasure Dummy (Social)	-1.28	.07	-18.69	<.001	1.29	.07	-18.66	<.001
Binding Values	-.14	.04	-3.84	<.001	-	-	-	-
Binding * Social Pleasure	.38	.04	10.08	<.001	-	-	-	-
Moral Diff (Binding – Indiv.)	-	-	-	-	-.12	.04	-3.27	.001
Moral Diff * Social Pleasure	-	-	-	-	.33	.04	9.28	<.001
Year (2008-2012)	-.01	.01	-.66	.511	-.01	.01	-.54	.591
GDP (per capita)	.26	.10	2.48	.016	.27	.10	2.67	.010
GDP * Social Pleasure	.93	.04	26.54	<.001	.91	.04	26.07	<.001
Product Category Dummies	Yes				Yes			
Covariance Parameters	B	SE	Z	p	B	SE	Z	P
Residuals	.37	.02	24.57	<.001	.38	.02	24.58	<.001
Country Variance	.53	.18	2.94	.003	.52	.18	2.96	.003

Robustness Checks. While some of the previous research on moral foundations have used the absolute scores of binding values in the MFQ as a measure of the prevalence of binding values in a society, others have used the difference between binding values and individualizing values to operationalize this construct (see Goenka & Thomas, 2019; van Leeuwen & Park, 2009; Wright & Baril, 2011). Therefore, to test the robustness of our results, we examined whether the strength of the binding values relative to the individualizing values yields the same results. We subtracted the scores of the individualizing scale from the binding scale to compute a moral differences score (Binding – Individualizing). Then, we performed a regression analysis utilizing the standardized scores of this moral differences measure as the predictor variable along with the same controls as outlined above (see Model 2, Table 2). Again, we see that the interaction between the moral differences scores and the pleasure dummy variable is significant ($B = .33$, $SE = .04$, $t = 9.28$, $p < .001$). The relative strength of the binding values negatively

predicts desirability for sensory products (Simple Slope: $B = -.12$, $SE = .04$, $t = -3.27$, $p = .001$), but the relative strength of the binding values positively predicts desirability for social products (Simple Slope: $B = .22$, $SE = .04$, $t = 6.07$, $p < .001$). Based on both the regression results we can conclude that the absolute strength of binding values, as well as the relative strength of binding values, have the same effect on sensory and social pleasure consumption. Note, as a matter of abundant caution, we also analyzed the data with the binding and individualizing values separately, which reveals convergent results.

Finally, we also examined the relationship between the binding values and spending on neutral product categories. That is, we used four product categories from the pretest – toiletries, shoes, electronics, and stationery – which were not rated to represent either sensory or social pleasure. The binding values did not predict the consumption pattern of these products ($p = .634$), indicating that the effect is particular to the products that provide sensory or social pleasures.

Discussion

Results reveal that countries with a greater prevalence of binding values are less likely to consume products that provide sensory pleasures, but they are more likely to consume products that provide social pleasures. Thus, these results indicate that moral values can alter pleasure pursuit and meaningfully shift consumption patterns in an economy. Nevertheless, since this analysis is correlational, we now utilize more controlled studies to corroborate the results and establish causality.

Study 2

This study aimed to replicate the findings of the archival analysis in a more controlled setting. We examined how an individual's endorsement of binding values can predict their

preferences for sensory and social products. We also sought to demonstrate the central role of morality in driving the effects.

Method

Hypothesis and Design. Binding values was measured using a continuous trait scale, and Pleasure Type (Sensory vs. Social) was manipulated within-subjects with 10 replicates for each pleasure type. We hypothesized that people who have stronger binding values would have less desire for products that provide sensory pleasures, but a higher desire for products that provide social pleasures. Further, we predicted that people who have stronger binding values would be more likely to morally prescribe social pleasure over sensory pleasure. Finally, we predicted that the moral prescription of social pleasure would mediate the effect of the binding values on product desirability. The hypothesis and study design were preregistered on the open science framework website.

Sample. We recruited 600 U.S. residents ($M_{age} = 36.92$ yrs.; 57% female) online through Amazon Mechanical-Turk in exchange for a small compensation. Note, extant research examining the effects of the binding values has typically acquired a sample size of 300-600 participants (Goenka & Thomas, 2020; Mooijman et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2014). Therefore, consistent with past research, we a priori decided to recruit a sample size of 600 participants in each study.

Procedure. Participants were first administered the 30-item MFQ (Graham et al., 2011), the same scale utilized in the archival dataset. Next participants were asked to complete a short unrelated word completion task. This filler task was included to reduce any potential demand effects in the study. Then, participants were introduced to an ostensibly unrelated product evaluation task. They were shown a series of 10 popular sensory products and 10 popular social

products representing the same product categories used in the archival analysis. For the sensory products, we presented three carbonated beverages (Coke, Pepsi, Mountain Dew), three caffeinated beverages (Snapple Iced-Tea, Starbucks coffee, Red Bull), three alcoholic drinks (Bud Light beer, red wine, Grey Goose vodka), and one tobacco product (Marlboro cigarettes). For the social products, we presented three cosmetic products (Too Faced concealer, Crest teeth-whitening strips, Olay anti-aging cream), two jewelry items (Tiffany silver ring, Tiffany charm necklace), two high-end watches (Rolex watch, Apple watch), and three designer leather products (Gucci belt, Burberry boots, leather jacket). Participants saw all 20 products individually, in a randomized order. For each product, they responded to the question “How desirable do you find this product?” (1 = *Not at All*, 9 = *Extremely*) on a continuous slider scale.

Next, we sought to examine whether people morally sanction the pursuit of social pleasure over sensory pleasure. We administered a measure of moral prescription adapted from Tworek & Cimpian (2016). First, participants were shown descriptions of sensory and social pleasure, similar to the pretest in Study 1. Then participants were asked to complete the statement – “I think people should engage in activities and consume products that give them _____.” They responded using a seven-point bipolar scale (1: *Sensory Pleasure*; 7: *Social Pleasure*). Hence, this allowed us to measure to what extent participants think people ought to pursue social pleasure over sensory pleasure.

Subsequently, we administered a manipulation check for the products used as sensory and social stimuli. Participants were shown the 20 products again and asked to categorize whether each product primarily gives A: *Sensory Pleasures* or B: *Social Pleasures*. This manipulation check confirmed that the products utilized in the study indeed represented their respective pleasure categories.

Next, basic demographics were collected along with participants' political orientation (1: *Liberal*; 7: *Conservative*) and religiosity ("I see myself as someone who is very religious" 1: *Disagree*; 7: *Agree*). Finally, we administered an open-ended suspicion check to probe for demand effects ("What did you think this study was about?"). This was to confirm that participants were not able to guess the main study hypothesis.

Results

Product Desire. We performed a regression analysis using linear mixed models in SPSS. Participants' desirability ratings of the products were regressed on their standardized responses on the binding values scale, a dummy variable identifying the two product categories (0 = Sensory Products, 1 = Social Product), and their interaction term. To control for potential idiosyncratic effects of the replicates, we included dummy variables for each replicate nested within their respective pleasure category. Additionally, we also controlled for demographic variables—age, gender (female = 0, male = 1), income, education level, and race (not white = 0, white = 1), political orientation, and religiosity. Individual participants were treated as random effects to control for unobserved heterogeneity across the individual responses. The results of the regression analysis are depicted in Table 3. As hypothesized, we find that the interaction between the binding values scale and the pleasure dummy variable is significant ($B = 1.16$, $SE = .04$, $t = 26.61$, $p < .001$). Analysis of simple slopes revealed that participants with higher binding values had lower desirability for sensory products (Simple Slope: $B = -.51$, $SE = .07$, $t = -6.93$, $p < .001$), but they had greater desirability for social products (Simple Slope: $B = .65$, $SE = .07$, $t = 8.92$, $p < .001$). As a robustness check, we performed another regression analysis with the standardized moral differences measure (Binding – Individualizing) as the predictor variable. Again, we see that the relative strength of binding values reveals the same pattern of results (See

Model 2, Table 3). Note, controlling for the individualizing values separately does not change the results.

Table 3

Regression using Binding Values (Model 1) or Binding – Individual Values (Model 2) to Predict Product Desirability (Study 2)

	Model 1				Model 2			
	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p
Intercept	2.65	.26	9.96	<.001	2.23	.27	8.29	<.001
Pleasure Dummy (Social)	2.72	.14	19.77	<.001	2.72	.14	19.66	<.001
Binding Values	-.51	.07	-6.93	<.001	-	-	-	-
Binding * Social Pleasure	1.16	.04	26.61	<.001	-	-	-	-
Moral Diff (Bind - Indiv)	-	-	-	-	-.74	.08	-9.76	<.001
Moral Diff * Social Pleasure	-	-	-	-	1.05	.04	23.99	<.001
Gender (Male)	-.18	.11	-1.62	.106	-.13	.11	-1.21	.227
Age	-.01	.00	-2.81	.005	-.01	.00	-2.96	.003
Race (White)	-.09	.12	-.80	.424	-.13	.12	-1.08	.279
Education	.04	.04	.92	.357	.04	.04	.89	.374
Income	-.004	.02	-.30	.763	-.001	.02	-.04	.972
Political (Conservative)	-.05	.04	-1.44	.150	.02	.04	.45	.651
Religiosity	.04	.03	1.23	.221	.08	.03	2.85	.005
Product Replicate Dummies			Yes				Yes	
Covariance Parameters	B	SE	Z	P	B	SE	Z	p
Residuals	5.69	.08	75.43	<.001	5.76	.08	75.43	<.001
Person Variance	1.38	.09	14.23	<.001	1.35	.09	14.16	<.001

Moral Prescription. Another regression analysis revealed that participants with higher binding values were more likely to morally prescribed the pursuit of social pleasure over sensory pleasure ($B = .25$, $SE = .01$, $t = 17.44$, $p < .001$). And, the moral prescription of social pleasure increases the desirability of social products ($B = .06$, $SE = .02$, $t = 2.82$, $p = .005$), but reduces the desirability of sensory products ($B = -.18$, $SE = .02$, $t = -8.02$, $p < .001$). An analysis using PROCESS Model 15 (Hayes, 2013) shows that the index of moderated mediation is significant [.05, .08]. The effect of the binding values on the desire for sensory products is mediated by

moral prescription (standardized indirect effect [-.06, -.03]). Similarly, the effect of the binding values on the desire for social products is mediated by moral prescription (standardized indirect effect [.01, .03]).

Discussion

Results replicate the findings of the archival analysis. People with stronger binding values have less desire for sensory products, but they have a greater desire for social products, even when controlling for demographics, political orientation, and religiosity. Importantly, the effects are driven by the moral sanctioning of social pleasure over sensory pleasure.

Study 3

This study was designed to test for the causal effects of binding values. We manipulated the momentary salience of binding values and assessed the impact of the prime on the desire for products that provide sensory and social pleasures.

Method

Hypothesis and Design. The study utilized a 3(Moral Prime: Control vs. Individualizing vs. Binding) x 2(Pleasure Type: Sensory vs. Social) x 10 (Replicates) mixed factorial design. Moral prime was manipulated between-subjects and pleasure type was manipulated within-subjects. We hypothesized that priming binding values would reduce the desire for products that provide sensory pleasures but increase the desire for products that provide social pleasures. Further, we predicted that priming binding values would increase the moral prescription of social pleasure (vs. sensory pleasure). Finally, we predicted that the moral prescription measure would mediate the effect of the binding values on product desirability. The hypothesis and study design were preregistered on the open science framework website.

Sample. Similar to the previous study, we recruited 600 U.S. residents ($M_{age} = 36.87$

years; 54% female) through Amazon Mechanical Turk in exchange for a small compensation.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three moral prime conditions. They were introduced to an ostensible memory exercise through which the momentary salience of the moral values was manipulated in a procedure adapted from Mooijman et al. (2018). Participants read a short paragraph about an ancient Sumerian warrior, Sostoras, who was heralded for his moral standing and good deeds. In the individualizing condition, participants read a paragraph about how Sostoras was known for his “compassion, fairness, and equality...” However, in the binding condition, participants read a paragraph about how Sostoras was known for “purity, respect for tradition, and loyalty...” In the control condition, participants read that Sostoras was a “pottery maker...,” with no mention of moral values.

Because the manipulation utilized a subtle reading prime, we subsequently deployed an attention check to screen out the participants who failed to read the assigned paragraph. Twenty-nine participants failed this attention check, resulting in 571 participants in the final data analysis. Next, a filler task was administered. Subsequently, participants were introduced to the product evaluation task, and they were presented with the same 20 products used in the previous study. Then, the same measure of moral prescription was deployed, and the product manipulation check was administered as in the previous study. The manipulation check again confirmed that the products utilized in the studies represented their respective pleasure. Finally, basic demographics were collected, and a suspicion check was deployed. None of the participants were able to guess the study hypotheses.

Results

Product Desire. We performed a $2 \times 10 \times 3$ mixed ANOVA with the product desire measures as the repeated dependent measures. Pleasure-type was the within-subjects factor, and

the replicates were nested within their respective pleasure type. Moral prime condition was the between-subjects factor. As predicted, we found a significant interaction between the moral prime condition and the pleasure-type ($F(2, 568) = 12.93, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$). Note, the three-way interaction between moral prime, pleasure-type, and replicates was not significant ($F(18, 5112) = .98, p = .479, \eta_p^2 = .00$); therefore, we report results by aggregating across the replicates in each pleasure category (see Figure 3).

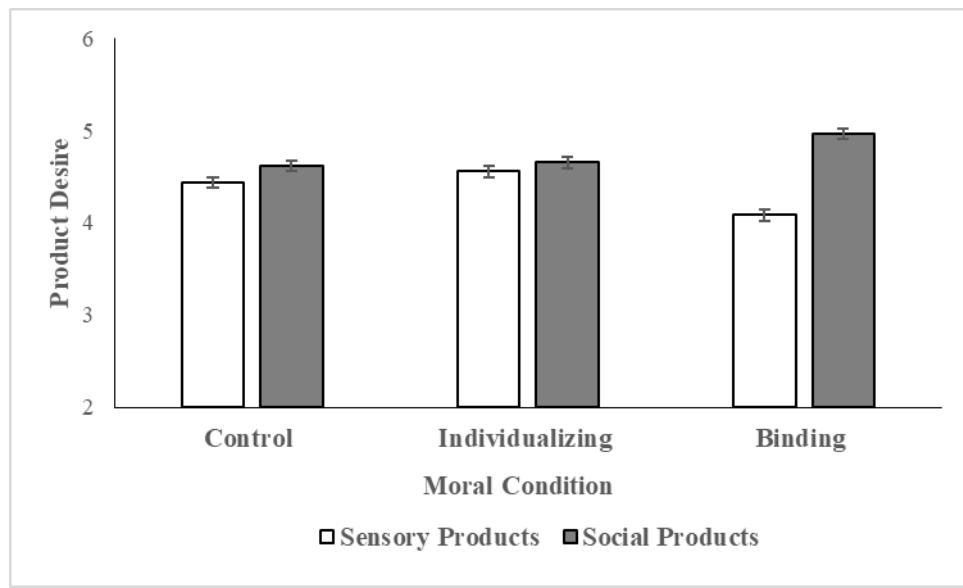


Figure 3. Desire for sensory and social products as a function of moral condition (Study 3). Errors bars represent ± 1 SE.

We explored the focal interaction through a series of planned contrasts. In the control condition, there is no difference in desire between the sensory products ($M = 4.43, SD = 1.45$) and social products ($M = 4.62, SD = 1.51; M_{diff} = -.18, SE = .12, p = .116, 95\% CI [-.41, .05]$). Similarly, in the individualizing condition there is no difference in desire between the sensory products ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.61$) and the social products ($M = 4.66, SD = 1.68; M_{diff} = -.09, SE = .12, p = .418, 95\% CI [-.34, .14]$). Crucially, in the binding condition we see that desire for sensory products ($M = 4.08, SD = 1.40$) is significantly less than desire for the social products (M

$= 4.97$, $SD = 1.69$; $M_{\text{diff}} = -.88$, $SE = .12$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-1.12, -.65]). Concurrently, the binding condition reduces the desire for sensory products compared to the control condition ($M_{\text{diff}} = -.35$, $SE = .15$, $p = .020$, 95% CI [-.65, -.06]) and the individualizing condition ($M_{\text{diff}} = -.48$, $SE = .16$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [-.78, -.17]). Moreover, the binding condition increases the desire for social products compared to the control condition ($M_{\text{diff}} = .35$, $SE = .17$, $p = .036$, 95% CI [.02, .67]) and the individualizing condition ($M_{\text{diff}} = .31$, $SE = .17$, $p = .067$, 95% CI [-.02, .64]).

Moral Prescription. We performed a univariate ANOVA with the moral prescription scores as the dependent variable and the moral prime condition as the independent factor. We found a significant main effect of the moral condition on the moral prescription measure ($F(2, 568) = 6.13$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$). Participants in the binding condition ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.57$) showed stronger moral prescription of social pleasure, compared to participants in the control condition ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.59$; $M_{\text{diff}} = .46$, $SE = .16$, $p = .005$, 95% CI [.14, .77]) and the individualizing condition ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.59$; $M_{\text{diff}} = .53$, $SE = .17$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [.21, .86]). Participants in the control and individualizing condition showed no difference in the moral prescription scores ($M_{\text{diff}} = .08$, $SE = .16$, $p = .646$, 95% CI [-.24, .39]). An analysis using PROCESS Model 15 (Hayes, 2013) shows that the index of moderated mediation is significant [.02, .11]. The effect of the binding values on desire for sensory products is mediated by moral prescription (standardized indirect effect [-.02, -.11]). Similarly, the effect of the binding values on desire for social products is mediated by moral prescription (standardized indirect effect [.05, .17]).

Discussion

This study demonstrates that the binding values can causally alter pleasure pursuit.

Priming binding values reduced the desire for sensory products but increased the desire for social products.

Study 4

This study was designed to test whether the observed effects are indeed driven by the different pleasures. Previous studies used different products to represent the two pleasures. Although this approach has ecological validity, it introduces some potential confounds. Therefore, we now kept the products constant across the conditions but manipulated the pleasure through textual framing. We then examined how the binding values can predict the preferences for the products contingent on this pleasure framing.

Moreover, the previous studies examined sensory pleasure only through orally consumed products and social pleasure only through status products. Therefore, we now also examine products that provide olfactory and haptic sensory pleasures, as well as products that provide horizontal social pleasures.

Method

Hypothesis and Design. The study utilized a 2(Pleasure Framing: Sensory vs. Social) x 5(Replicates) mixed design with pleasure framing as a between-subjects factor and replicates as a within-subjects factor. Binding values was measured using the same MFQ scale that we used in Study 2. In this study, all participants saw the same products, but we manipulated the framing of the product to present it as either providing sensory or social pleasure. We hypothesized that people with stronger binding values would have less desire for products when they are framed to provide sensory pleasures, but a greater desire for the same products when they are framed to provide social pleasures. Further, we predicted that people who have stronger binding values would be more likely to morally prescribe social pleasure over sensory pleasure. Finally, we

predicted that the moral prescription of social pleasure would mediate the effect of the binding values on product desirability.

Sample. Again, 600 U.S. residents ($M_{age} = 37.35$ years; 52% female) were recruited online through Amazon Mechanical Turk in exchange for a small compensation.

Procedure. Participants were first administered the MFQ (Graham et al., 2011). Then, a filler task was deployed. Next, participants were introduced to the product evaluation task. They were randomly assigned to one of the two pleasure framing conditions. In both conditions, participants saw the same five products - Lays Chips, Coke, Polo Sweater, Shampoo, and Candle. However, below the products, we presented advertising slogans that highlighted either sensory or social pleasures. That is, participants in the sensory condition saw the Lays Chips with the slogan “Deliciously salted with a perfect crunch,” but participants in the social condition saw the same product with the slogan “Makes Parties Fun.” Similarly, in the sensory condition, the Coke was presented with the slogan “The cold, crisp taste of Coke,” but in the social condition the product was presented with the slogan “Share a Coke with a friend.” In the sensory condition, the Polo Sweater was presented with the slogan “Made with the softest cashmere for cozy warmth,” but in the social condition the same product was presented with the slogan “Show off your style with Polo.” And, in the sensory condition, the Shampoo was shown with the slogan “Soft silky hair with a citrus scent,” but in the social condition the slogan was changed to “Create an impact with shiny, lustrous hair.” Finally, in the sensory condition, the Candle was shown with the slogan “Relax with the soothing scents of lemongrass & ginger,” but in the social condition the slogan was changed to “Makes for the perfect gift.” Hence, keeping the product constant, we highlighted whether the product provides sensory or social pleasure. For each product, participants responded to the question “How desirable do you find this product?” (1 =

Not at All, 9 = Extremely) on a continuous slider scale.

Next, the same measure of moral prescription was administered. Then we administered a 12-item collectivism scale (Singelis et al., 1995) to test for the plausible role of cultural norms in these effects. Finally, basic demographics were collected, and the suspicion check was deployed. Again, participants were not able to guess the study hypotheses.

Results

Product Desire. We performed a regression analysis using a linear mixed model in SPSS. The desirability ratings of the products were regressed on the standardized binding scale, a dummy variable identifying the two framing conditions (0 = Sensory Framing, 1 = Social Framing), and their interaction term. Dummy variables for the replicates were included. Further, demographic control variables were also included as covariates – age, gender (female = 0, male = 1), income, education level, race (not white = 0, white = 1), political orientation, and religiosity. Further, the collectivism scale was also included as a covariate to control for cultural norms. Individual participants were treated as random effects to control for unobserved heterogeneity across the individual responses. The results of the regression analysis are depicted in Table 4. As hypothesized, we find that the interaction between the binding values scale and the pleasure framing dummy is significant ($B = 1.10$, $SE = .13$, $t = 8.23$, $p < .001$). Analyses of simple slopes revealed that people who have stronger binding values show less desirability for the products when they are framed with sensory slogans (Simple Slope: $B = -.58$, $SE = .12$, $t = -5.02$, $p < .001$), but they show greater desirability for the same products when they are framed with social slogans (Simple Slope: $B = .52$, $SE = .12$, $t = 4.26$, $p < .001$). To test for the robustness of these results, we performed another regression analysis with the standardized moral differences measure (Binding – Individualizing) as the predictor variable. Again, we see that the relative

strength of the binding values reveals the same pattern of results (See Model 2, Table 4). Note, controlling for the individualizing values separately does not change the results.

Table 4
Regression using Binding Values (Model 1) or Binding – Individual Values (Model 2) to Predict Product Desirability (Study 3)

	Model 1				Model 2			
	B	SE	t	P	B	SE	t	p
Intercept	3.96	.52	7.66	<.001	3.64	.48	7.61	<.001
Pleasure Dummy (Social)	-.33	.13	-2.51	.012	-.32	.13	-2.43	.015
Binding Values	-.58	.12	-5.02	<.001	-	-	-	-
Binding * Social Pleasure	1.10	.13	8.23	<.001	-	-	-	-
Moral Diff (Bind - Indiv)	-	-	-	-	-.79	.11	-7.26	<.001
Moral Diff * Social Pleasure	-	-	-	-	1.09	.13	8.25	<.001
Gender (Male)	-.22	.14	-1.58	.115	-.20	.14	-1.48	.139
Age	-.002	.01	-.35	.729	-.001	.01	-.28	.780
Race (White)	-.26	.16	-1.66	.098	-.35	.15	-2.29	.022
Education	-.05	.05	-1.07	.287	-.05	.05	-1.02	.307
Income	-.03	.02	-1.38	.168	-.03	.02	-1.52	.129
Political (Conservative)	-.08	.04	-1.78	.075	-.02	.05	-.46	.644
Religiosity	.03	.04	.782	.434	.06	.04	1.52	.128
Collectivism	.44	.09	5.06	<.001	.45	.08	5.74	<.001
Product Replicate Dummies	Yes				Yes			
Covariance Parameters	B	SE	Z	P	B	SE	Z	p
Residuals	3.68	.11	34.61	<.001	3.68	.11	34.61	<.001
Person Variance	1.90	.16	12.24	<.001	1.87	.15	12.18	<.001

Moral Prescription. Another regression analysis revealed that participants with higher binding values were more likely to morally prescribe the pursuit of social pleasure over sensory pleasure ($B = .48$, $SE = .03$, $t = 18.49$, $p < .001$). And, the moral prescription of social pleasure predicts greater desirability of products framed with social pleasure slogans ($B = .17$, $SE = .04$, $t = 4.13$, $p < .001$), but less desirability of products framed with sensory pleasure slogans ($B = -.23$, $SE = .04$, $t = -5.46$, $p < .001$). Further, an analysis using PROCESS Model 15 (Hayes, 2013) shows that the index of moderated mediation is significant [.13, .25]. The effect of the binding

values on the desire for sensory products is mediated by moral prescription (standardized indirect effect [-.15, -.07]). Similarly, the effect of the binding values on the desire for social products is mediated by moral prescription (standardized indirect effect [.04, .12]).

Discussion

People with stronger binding values showed less desire for products framed as providing sensory pleasure, but they showed a greater desire for the same products when they were framed as providing social pleasure. Hence, this study unequivocally demonstrates that the effects are driven by the pursuit of different pleasures. Further, this study also shows that the effects hold for oral, olfactory, and haptic sensory products as well as for both vertical and horizontal social products.

General Discussion

This research demonstrates that moral values can alter the pursuit of pleasure. The binding values suppress sensory pleasures but sanction social pleasures, shifting consumption preferences. An archival dataset showed that countries reporting a higher prevalence of binding values are less likely to consume sensory products (e.g., tobacco, alcohol). However, these countries are more likely to consume social products (e.g., jewelry, cosmetics). Three controlled studies replicated these findings and delineated the causal effect.

Notably, while we cannot conclude whether the switch from sensory to social pleasures produces any benefits (or harm) for individuals and societies, this research does have implications for understanding how moral values can influence societal development and well-being. Philosophers and religious leaders have long argued that the moral suppression of sensory desires would herald a virtuous culture wherein people will abandon transient sensory pleasures and pursue happiness through higher ideals such as self-discovery and metaphysical knowledge

(Dalai Lama, 2009; Gandhi, 1948; Mill, 1863). However, this research suggests that using binding moral values to suppress sensory pleasure might not lead to asceticism or minimalism, rather it can lead to greater social comparisons and status consumption.

Further, these results offer a novel explanation for the social variation in the pursuit of sensory and social pleasures. The results show that the moral values adopted by countries and social groups can have a direct bearing on marketplace behaviors. Thus, these results suggest that moral economics—the study of the interplay of moral values and economic decisions—is a promising new domain at the intersection of philosophy, psychology, and economics that can offer fascinating insights into people's behaviors.

CHAPTER 3

The Moral Objections to Accepting Welfare Handouts

Abstract

Low-income households might have to meet work requirements, such as working 20 hours a week, to participate in some government welfare programs. Policymakers believe that relaxing such work requirements can increase participation rates in welfare programs. We demonstrate that relaxing the work requirement does not uniformly increase participation rates; rather, participation is contingent upon peoples' moral beliefs. Analysis of historic state-level supplemental nutritional assistance program (SNAP) participation shows that low-income households in conservative states were less likely to enroll in the welfare program when the work requirement was waived. Controlled experiments replicate this finding and demonstrate that conservatives' moral beliefs hinder their acceptance of welfare handouts. Results suggest that redesigned outreach materials can mitigate these moral beliefs and boost conservatives' welfare participation.

The Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) is a U.S. federal welfare program that helps lower-income families meet their nutrition needs. To enroll in the program, households must complete a rigorous application procedure, undergo significant scrutiny, and fulfill various eligibility requirements. Therefore, unsurprisingly, a key issue facing the program is the enrollment rate – the proportion of low-income households that enroll in the program (Bertrand et al., 2004; Finkelstein & Notowidigdo, 2019).

Extant research has identified several economic and policy levers that can help increase enrollment, such as increasing awareness, simplifying application procedures, and widening eligibility criteria (Klerman & Danielson, 2011; Reich & West, 2015; Wolkwitz, 2008). Notably, one factor that significantly impedes enrollment is the work requirement policy (Besley & Coate, 1992b; Falk et al., 2014; Rosenbaum, 2013). Per this policy, low-income individuals aged 18 to 50, not living with children, can avail only three months of SNAP benefits in any 36-month period if they are not employed for at least 20 hours a week. While the political debate around the societal merits of this work requirement policy remains contentious, it is invariably acknowledged that waiving the work requirement would increase participation rates (Ganong & Liebman, 2018). In fact, the federal government modified the work exemption rules to effectively waive the work requirement policy for the entire country in February 2009 with the specific intention to boost welfare participation during the great recession (*Waivers Add Key State Flexibility to SNAP's Three-Month Time Limit*, 2017).

In this research, we propose that waiving the work requirement did not uniformly boost enrollment. Instead, the effect of this policy change was heterogeneous across the political spectrum. Namely, even though waiving the work requirement made it objectively easier for

everyone in the country to enroll in the program, households in conservatives' states were less likely than households in liberal states to enroll in this welfare program.

A more critical question is understanding *why* conservative households were less likely to enroll in the welfare program without work requirements. At first blush, one might attribute the dampened enrollment to economic and logistical factors in the conservative states. That is, states have some flexibility in operational decisions (*Balancing State Flexibility Without Weakening SNAP's Success*, 2016). Therefore, perhaps conservative states gave lower benefits amounts in response to the federal policy change. Relatedly, conservative states might have allocated lower budgets to staff hiring and outreach activities. Thus, the heterogeneity in welfare participation could be attributed to specific logistical decisions made by the conservative states.

However, in this research, we propose a novel psychological mechanism to explain the welfare enrollment pattern. We argue that conservatives believe it is morally wrong to accept welfare that does not have attached work requirements (i.e., welfare handouts). Specifically, conservatives believe that accepting welfare handouts will make them a “burden” on society, and therefore, they are less likely to enroll in the SNAP program when the work requirement is eased. Hence, we propose that the moral response to welfare programs is an important overlooked factor that can explain the heterogeneous pattern of welfare participation after the work requirement policy change.

Our theorization of conservatives' moral beliefs is derived from the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) (Haidt, 2007). This theory proposes that moral values are comprised of five factors. The care and fairness factors together are called the *individualizing* foundations. They emphasize protecting individuals and provide for individual rights in society. Contrastingly, the authority, loyalty, and purity factors are called the *binding* foundations as they emphasize the

group's welfare. These foundations "limit individual autonomy and self-expression to bind people into emergent social entities such as families, clans, and nations" (Graham & Haidt, 2010, p. 144). Importantly, conservatives (vs. liberals) place greater emphasis on the binding moral foundations (Graham et al., 2009, 2013; Haidt, 2012).

One critical consequence of the conservatives' binding moral values is that they motivate people to sacrifice their self-interest in the service of their group (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Mooijman et al., 2018). These values nudge people to place group welfare above their own welfare. Consequently, conservatives' emphasis on the group's welfare makes them sensitive to accepting welfare handouts at the cost of the group's limited resources. They believe that accepting a welfare handout will make them a "burden" on society. That is, they only deserve welfare if they contribute back to the community in equal measure. Thus, when the government changed the work requirement policy to make it easier for everyone to participate in SNAP, despite the increased utilitarian benefits, conservatives' moral beliefs make them hesitant to participate in the welfare program.

Importantly, characterizing the role of moral beliefs in response to welfare programs can inform strategies to increase participation in such programs. If conservatives are reluctant to accept welfare handouts because doing so will make them a "burden" on the community, then conservatives should have no qualms in accepting welfare from programs that require some community initiative or repayment. Similarly, they should be willing to accept welfare from programs that are framed to be in accordance with community growth. We test these predictions in our studies.

It is also important to note that our theorization is distinct from the previous theories of social stigma in welfare enrollment (Besley & Coate, 1992a; Currie, 2004; Moffitt, 1983). Our

theorization is about how moral beliefs shape an individuals' response to welfare policies, not about the negative influence of social stigma. While social stigma of welfare in conservative societies might certainly play a role in suppressing enrollment, we argue that conservatives' imbibed moral values are a unique impediment for enrollment. Hence, our studies are designed to demonstrate this distinct effect of moral beliefs.

In sum, we propose that conservatives are less likely than liberals to participate in welfare programs when the work requirement is removed. Further, this behavior is driven by conservatives' emphasis on the binding moral values which makes them sensitive to the moral deservingness of welfare. To test our predictions, we first analyze historic state-level SNAP participation data to examine how relaxing the work requirement policy in 2008 influenced enrollment across the states. Subsequently, we run controlled preregistered experiments to establish causality and delineate the underlying theorization. Finally, we assess how redesigned outreach materials can be utilized to counter the moral beliefs and boost enrollment.

State-Level SNAP Participation

The federal government modified the work exemption rules to effectively waive the work requirements for the SNAP program in February 2009 (*Waivers Add Key State Flexibility to SNAP's Three-Month Time Limit*, 2017). We analyze the effect of this policy change on participation rates at the state level. Specifically, we examined whether states with higher republican vote share were less sensitive to this policy change compared to states with lower republican vote share.

We acquired the state-level SNAP participation data from the USDA public records (*USDA SNAP Database*). This database indicates what percent of poverty-prone individuals in a state are enrolled in the SNAP program for a given year (participation rate). We extracted the

data for the years 2005-2016 for all the 50 states. The states that reported the lowest participation rate on average were Wyoming ($M = 39.65\%$), California ($M = 46.52\%$), and Utah ($M = 46.84\%$), while states that reported the highest participation rate were Maine ($M = 89.06\%$), Oregon ($M = 85.89\%$), and Delaware ($M = 85.55\%$).

We acquired the state-level voter data from a public election dataset (*Data / MIT Election Lab*). We acquired the percent of votes cast for the U.S. Republican presidential candidate in the state for the years 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016. We then averaged the vote share across the years. Hence, for each state, we computed one republican vote share score. The states that reported the highest republican vote share were Wyoming ($M = 67.26\%$), Oklahoma ($M = 65.83\%$), and Idaho ($M = 63.42\%$). And, states that reported the lowest republican vote share were Hawaii ($M = 32.21\%$), Vermont ($M = 32.50\%$), and New York ($M = 33.16\%$).

We combined the different datasets, to examine the relationship between SNAP participation, work policy change, and republican vote share across the states (Fig. 1).

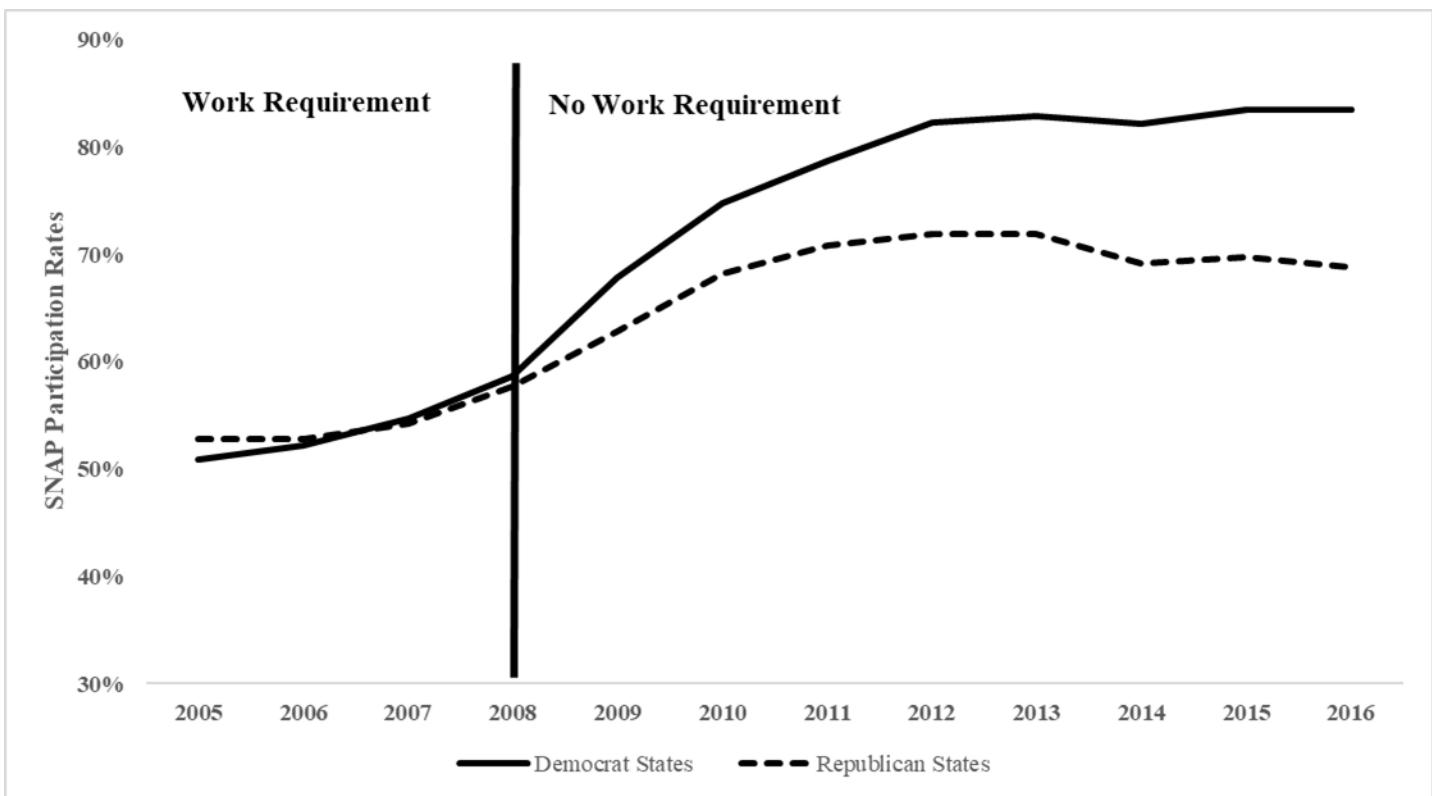


Figure 1. Relationship between SNAP participation and political vote share across the states. Vertical axis represents the SNAP participation rate. Horizontal axis represents a time series. The lines demonstrate a binary split of the states by republican vote share. The work requirement was waived in the year 2009

Table 1.
Regression using Republican Vote Share to predict State-Level SNAP Participation

	B	SE	t	p
Intercept	-29.45	2.55	-11.53	<.001
Work Requirement Removal	.34	.03	9.99	<.001
Republican Vote Share in State	-.12	.16	-.77	.443
Republican * Work Requirement Removal	-.56	.05	-10.41	<.001
Year (2005-2016)	.01	.001	11.41	<.001
State GDP (per capita)	-.05	.02	-2.82	.005
State Poverty Count	.01	.02	.52	.605
Avg. Monthly Benefits (per person)	.04	.01	4.21	<.001
State's Admin Expenses	.03	.01	2.29	.023
Covariance Parameters	B	SE	Z	p
Residuals	.003	.000	16.34	<.001
State Variance	.01	.002	4.53	<.001

We performed a linear mixed-model regression analysis (Table 1). The SNAP participation rate was regressed on a dummy variable identifying the work requirement policy change (0 = 2005-2008 work required; 1 = 2009-2016 work not required), standardized values of the republican vote share of each state, and their interaction term.

Additionally, we also utilized some controls in the analysis. We included fixed effects of standardized annual per-capita GDP of the states acquired from the national bureau of economic analysis. Further, we included fixed effects of the number of people below the poverty line in the state (standardized), the average monthly SNAP benefits allocated per person (standardized), and the natural logarithmic values of the state's administrative expenditures (variables acquired from USDA database). These controls help account for heterogeneity in income levels across the states as well and the variance between states' operational logistics. Finally, we included a fixed effect of Year. State was treated as a random effect to control for any unobserved heterogeneity.

Results show that, after controlling for economic and logistic variance, removing the work requirement had a significant positive increase on SNAP participation ($B = .34$, $SE = .03$, $t = 9.99$, $p < .001$). However, this effect was moderated by vote share as the interaction between the policy dummy variable and the republican vote share was significant ($B = -.56$, $SE = .05$, $t = -10.41$, $p < .001$). That is, before the work requirement was removed, republican vote share did not significantly predict SNAP participation (simple effect: $B = -.12$, $SE = .15$, $t = -.77$, $p = .443$). However, after the work requirement was removed, republican vote share significantly predicted lower SNAP participation (simple effect: $B = -.68$, $SE = .16$, $t = -4.32$, $p < .001$).

Hence, these results show that removing the work requirement had a heterogeneous effect on welfare enrollment. States with higher republican vote share recorded lower levels of SNAP participation after the work requirement was removed. Note, to test for robustness, we also

performed the analysis using a different measure of politics – survey report of the percent of people in a state that identify as republican - and find the same pattern of results.

Nevertheless, this analysis is quasi-experimental. The state-level vote share data are correlated with other unobserved metrics, which might be driving our results. Furthermore, the federal government also made some other changes to the SNAP program in the preceding year, aside from the work requirement policy, which might have influenced the participation rates (*A Short History of SNAP / USDA-FNS*). Moreover, these results do not identify the role of moral beliefs. Therefore, to address these concerns and demonstrate the underlying moral values mechanism, we conducted some controlled experiments.

Study 1

This study aimed to replicate the findings of the archival analysis utilizing a controlled randomized preregistered experiment. We examined how an individual's political identity can predict their intention to participate in the SNAP program when the work requirement is experimentally manipulated. We recruited participants ($N = 288$) online through Amazon Mechanical-Turk in exchange for a small compensation. We specifically sought to recruit participants eligible for welfare participation; hence, participants were required to be U.S. citizens with annual household income less than \$50K.

We measured participant's political identity using a self-report scale (1: *Liberal*; 7: *Conservative*). We also measured participant's intention to participate in a welfare program, where the program was manipulated to either have or not have a work requirement. Participants were given details about a new food assistance program with information about enrollment procedure, benefit amounts, redemption method, etc. These details were similar to the existing SNAP program. Crucially, within the program description, we manipulated the work

requirement. Half the participants were randomly assigned to the Work Required condition, where they read that “able-bodied adults must be actively employed for at least 20hrs/week. If a participant is unemployed, then they must engage in community service. Unemployed citizens are not eligible for this assistance.” The other half of participants were assigned to the Work Not Required condition, where they read that “there are no employment/working requirements. Unemployed citizens are eligible for this assistance.” After reading the program description, participants responded to the question “How likely are you to participate in this food assistance program?” (1 = *Not at All*, 7 = *Extremely*).

Participation intention was regressed on the standardized responses to the politics measure, a dummy variable identifying the two work conditions (0 = Work Required, 1 = Work Not Required), their interaction term, and demographic controls. Results show a significant interaction between political identity and the work policy condition ($B = -1.45$, $SE = .23$, $t = -6.23$, $p < .001$). In the work required condition, conservative identity did not predict SNAP participation (simple effect: $B = -.04$, $SE = .17$, $t = -.21$, $p = .836$). However, in the work-not-required condition, conservative identity negatively predicted SNAP participation (simple effect: $B = -1.49$, $SE = .17$, $t = -9.01$, $p < .001$). Thus, these results converge with the findings of the state-level analysis to show that individuals with stronger conservative identity are less likely to participate in the welfare program when the work requirement is removed.

The second aim of this study was to demonstrate support for our underlying theorization – conservatives’ emphasis on the binding moral values makes them believe that they are not morally deserving of welfare handouts. To test this theorization, participants were administered the 30-item Moral Foundations Questionnaire (Graham et al., 2011). This widely used scale assesses a person’s adherence to the different moral foundations through various morality-related

statements (e.g., “Respect for authority is something all children need to learn,” “I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural.”) measured on a 6-point scale (0: *Strongly Disagree*; 5: *Strongly Agree*). Hence, this scale allows us to assess the extent to which a person emphasizes the binding moral foundations. Additionally, to assess beliefs of moral deservingness, participants were also asked to respond to a three-item scale – I think it is wrong to accept help from food assistance programs, if I don't deserve the money/if it is a free handout/ if I don't contribute back to society - on a seven-point bipolar scale (1: *Strongly Disagree*; 7: *Strongly Agree*).

A mediation analysis (Fig. 2) shows that participants with conservative identity showed a greater endorsement of the binding moral values ($B = .49$, $SE = .05$, $t = 10.02$, $p < .001$). And, stronger binding values indicated higher scores on the moral deservingness scale ($B = .48$, $SE = .09$, $t = 4.93$, $p < .001$). Importantly, the binding moral foundations and the moral deservingness measure mediate the effect of conservative identity on participation intention in the work-not-required condition (standardized indirect effect [.004, .13]). Hence, these results support the theorization that conservatives are less likely to accept welfare handouts because they emphasize moral deservingness of welfare.

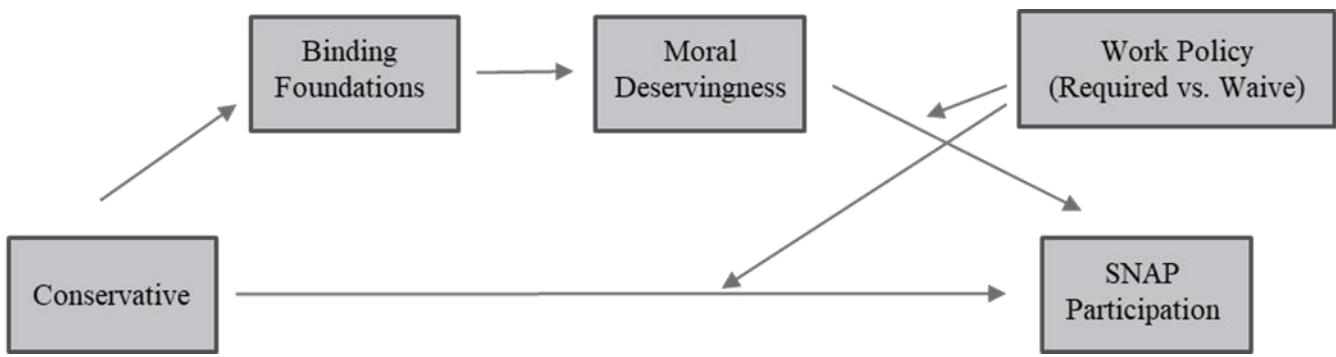


Figure 2. The effect of conservative identity on SNAP participation is mediated by the binding foundations and moral deservingness (Study 1).

Study 2

We ran another randomized preregistered experiment to demonstrate further support for the underlying moral values theorization. In this study, we directly manipulated the momentary salience of binding values. Hence, this design allows to ascertain that the conservatives' hesitance to accept welfare handouts is indeed casually driven by the binding moral values.

We recruited a separate set of low-income individuals ($N = 286$) online through Amazon MTurk. All participants were eligible for welfare but had not previously participated in the SNAP program. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two moral prime conditions (Individualizing vs. Binding), and the momentary salience of the moral values was manipulated using an established method (Goenka & Thomas, 2020; Mooijman et al., 2018). Subsequently, participants were asked to indicate their participation intention for the two food assistance programs from the previous study, with and without a work requirement.

A 2 x 2 mixed ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between the moral prime condition and the work requirement ($F(1, 284) = 11.14, p = .001, n_p^2 = .04$) (Fig. S1). Participants primed with individualizing moral values show an increased likelihood to participate in the welfare program when work requirement is removed ($M_{\text{diff}} = .69, SE = .18, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.33, 1.06]$). However, participants primed with the binding values did not show an increased

likelihood to participate in the welfare program when work requirement is removed ($M_{\text{diff}} = -.17$, $SE = .19$, $p = .348$, 95% CI [-.54, .19]). Further, a mediation analysis shows that the moral deservingness measure mediates the effect of binding values on participation intention in the work-not-required condition (standardized indirect effect [-.42, -.09]). Hence, these results converge with the findings of the archival analysis and the previous study to suggest that the binding moral values have a causal role in reducing participation in welfare programs without work requirements.

Study 3

This study was designed to test a policy implication of our moral values theorization. We propose that the conservatives are hesitant to participate in welfare programs without work requirements because they believe that it is morally wrong to become a burden on society. We sought to counter this belief by redesigning the SNAP information brochures with new messaging that addresses these feelings of moral deservingness. We tested the redesigned brochure on the target population utilizing a randomized preregistered experimental design. Notably, this study allows us to isolate the moral beliefs mechanism from that of social stigma and the aforementioned logistical explanations. Namely, our redesigned brochure specifically manipulated moral beliefs in the messaging, not social stigma or other logistical factors, highlighting the distinct role of moral beliefs.

We recruited participants from Amazon MTurk who were eligible for welfare ($N = 291$). Participants were asked to evaluate a SNAP information brochure. First, they saw the cover page and the basic information page of the brochure. These two pages were taken directly from an existing SNAP information brochure. Note that the brochure stated that the program does not have a work requirement.

Then, participants saw the second brochure page with a testimonial (Fig. 3). Half the participants were randomly assigned to see a health-oriented testimonial. This testimonial reflects the current messaging strategy used by the program (*SNAP Homepage*). The other half of the participants saw a moral deservingness-oriented testimonial explaining how the SNAP program has helped the participant become a better member of the community. After seeing either one of the two testimonials, participants indicated their participation intention for the SNAP program “How likely are you to participate in this food assistance program?” (1 = *Not at All*, 7 = *Extremely*). Participant's political identity was assessed using a self-report measure as before.

Participation intention was regressed on the standardized responses to political identity measure, a dummy variable identifying the two brochure conditions (0 = Health message, 1 = Moral deservingness message), their interaction term, and demographic controls. As predicted, we see a significant interaction between political identity and the brochure condition ($B = .62$, $SE = .23$, $t = 2.67$, $p = .008$). In the health-message condition, conservative identity significantly predicts less SNAP participation (simple effect: $B = -.63$, $SE = .17$, $t = -3.78$, $p < .001$), replicating results of the state-level analysis and previous experiments. Crucially, however, in the moral-deservingness-message condition, conservative identity does not reduce SNAP participation intention (simple effect: $B = -.02$, $SE = .16$, $t = -.12$, $p = .905$).

That is, the effect of conservative identity on SNAP welfare participation (without work requirement) is attenuated in the presence of the modified brochure, which counters the moral beliefs. Again, a mediation analysis reveals that the adherence to the binding values and the moral deservingness measure mediate the effect of conservative identity on participation intention in the health brochure condition (standardized indirect effect [-.08, -.01]), but not in the

moral brochure condition (standardized indirect effect [-.02, .03]). Hence, these results propose an important practical implication for policymakers such that targeted communication strategies can counter the moral beliefs that impede conservatives' welfare participation.

<u>Testimonial A</u>	<u>Testimonial B</u>
	
<p><i>"SNAP has been a lifesaver. It has allowed me to improve my family's health with access to healthy nutritious food. Now I don't worry about my daughter's next meal."</i></p> <p><i>- Meghan Hilliard</i></p>	<p><i>"At first, I hesitated to participate in the program. I felt like my family would become a burden on society. But my SNAP worker helped me realize that improving our health actually makes us better workers and strengthens our community. SNAP frees me from worrying about my daughter's next meal, allowing me to focus on my job."</i></p> <p><i>- Meghan Hilliard</i></p>
<p>Where can I get more information about SNAP in my State?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Locate your State phone number.■ Call the toll-free national SNAP information line at 1-800-221-5689.■ Visit www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/map.htm.■ Look in the phone book in the government pages under "social services" or "human services" for the phone number.	<p>Where can I get more information about SNAP in my State?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Locate your State phone number.■ Call the toll-free national SNAP information line at 1-800-221-5689.■ Visit www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/map.htm.■ Look in the phone book in the government pages under "social services" or "human services" for the phone number.

Figure 3. Brochure testimonial stimuli used in Study 3. Testimonial A represents health-based messaging. Testimonial B represents moral deservingness-based messaging.

General Discussion

Altogether, a state-level SNAP participation analysis and three controlled experiments show that easing the work requirement policy in the SNAP program does not uniformly increase enrollment. Conservatives are less likely to participate in the welfare program as they believe it is morally objectionable to accept welfare handouts.

Our findings present a novel theoretical understanding of the antecedents of welfare enrollment. Extant research has primarily examined economic, logistic, and policy levers that shape participation (Besley & Coate, 1992b; Falk et al., 2014; Finkelstein & Notowidigdo, 2019; Klerman & Danielson, 2011; Reich & West, 2015; Wolkwitz, 2008) or how social stigma can hinder participation (Bertrand et al., 2004; Bird & Wallace, 1996; Currie, 2004; Moffitt, 1983). The present work is the first, to the best of our knowledge, to demonstrate that moral beliefs can distinctly influence welfare participation. Our results demonstrate that conservatives' distinct beliefs (i.e., binding values) can counteract utilitarian judgments to impede enrollment in welfare programs. Subsequently, these results add to the growing stream of work that explores the psychology of lower-income individuals (Haushofer & Fehr, 2014; Mani et al., 2013; Shah et al., 2012).

Importantly, our findings also present novel policy implications for the SNAP program. First, these results inform the debate surrounding the work requirement policy by shedding light on its heterogeneous impact. That is, attempting to make welfare programs more accessible through policies like waiving the work requirement, does not uniformly boost enrollment. Thus, recognizing that some sections of society are averse to welfare handouts can assist policymakers in better understanding the impact of their proposed changes.

Notably, we also present preliminary data to suggest how to counter these moral objections to welfare. We suggest that the root cause of the moral objections is the belief that accepting welfare makes one a “burden” on society. Hence, one possible means to reframe this perception is through targeted communication materials. Conceivably, there might be several other enrollment stages, such as the interview process, that could benefit by countering these moral beliefs. Hence, even though some sections of society might be averse to accepting welfare handouts, their moral beliefs can be addressed through targeted nudges.

In conclusion, this research extends the burgeoning stream of work demonstrating how the moral values adopted by social groups can have a direct bearing on significant economic decisions (Graham, 2014; Hofmann et al., 2014; G. Miller, 2008; Rozin et al., 2009; Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). Thus, these results suggest that moral economics—the study of the interplay of moral values and economic decisions—is a promising new domain at the intersection of philosophy, psychology, and economics that can offer fascinating insights into human behavior.

CHAPTER 4

The Moral Objections to Bodily Markets

Abstract

People hold strong moral objections to commercial bodily markets – the buying and selling of the human body and its components (e.g., prostitution, kidney trade). In this research, we take a novel descriptive approach to understand *why* people object to the commercialization of the human body. Drawing from Moral Foundations Theory, we develop a framework to understand the moral objections towards bodily markets across the political spectrum. We propose that liberals object to these markets as they are sensitive to exploitation concerns in these markets. However, conservatives object to these markets as they are sensitive to violation of sanctity concerns in these markets. This framework sheds light on understanding the socio-political discourse around the bodily markets. We study how liberal versus conservative pastors use these different moral objections to sermonize about prostitution. Further, we show that the different moral objections lead liberals and conservatives to support different punitive laws to govern these markets. Finally, we show how the different moral objections can be utilized to design targeted political advocacy campaigns and influence opposition to these markets. Hence, this is the first research to demonstrate the heterogeneity in the moral objections towards bodily markets, generating implications for policymakers and advocacy groups.

Commercial bodily markets involve the buying and selling of the human body and its components (Hoeyer, 2013). These markets include prostitution, commercial surrogacy, the trade of organs (i.e., kidney, liver) and bodily products (i.e., blood plasma, sperm, ovum, breast milk), and even the trade of human fetuses and cadavers. The key defining feature of these markets is the exchange of a bodily product or service in lieu of some commercial payment. That is, these markets are economically and psychologically distinct from cases of altruistic organ donation (e.g., Belk 1988; Burnett 1981; Pessemier, Bemmaor, and Hanssens 1977). Needless to say, commercial bodily markets are morally contentious and mostly illegal across the world⁴.

Numerous scholars in the fields of philosophy (Chadwick, 1989; J. S. Taylor, 2017), legal studies (Crespi, 1994; Weitzer, 2010), medical sciences (Erin & Harris, 2003; Radcliffe-Richards et al., 1998), economics (Arunachalam & Shah, 2008; Roth & Sönmez, 2005), sociology (Budiani-Saberi & Delmonico, 2008; K. Davis, 1937), and feminism (Bailey, 2011; Shrage, 1989) have deliberated upon the morality of bodily markets. Notably, the extant research centers on the normative debate of the permissibility of these markets. That is, the authors take a stance on whether the bodily market is morally acceptable or unacceptable and then present an argument for their position. For instance, Sullivan (2010) argues that prostitution should be decriminalized and presents an analysis of the beneficial social impact of decriminalization in Australia. Contrastingly, Raymond (2004) argues that prostitution should not be legalized and outlines a socio-historical analysis of the negative impact of decriminalization in the Netherlands to make her case. Thus, extant research has largely taken a prescriptive approach to discuss the morality of bodily markets.

⁴ There are a few exceptions where the commercial bodily exchanges are legal such as kidney trade in Iran, commercial surrogacy in Russia, blood plasma trade in the U.S, and prostitution in, for example, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and certain parts of Nevada.

In the present research, we deviate from past research to take a novel descriptive approach. That is, we do not take a stance on whether these markets are morally right or wrong. Instead, we seek to understand laypeople's moral attitudes towards these bodily markets. *Why* do people find bodily markets to be morally objectionable? What are the underlying moral values that shape these objections? Importantly, do these moral objections differ across the political spectrum?

At first blush, one might posit that conservatives would object to commercial bodily markets, but liberals would support these markets. This may be because liberals tend to support (and conservatives tend to oppose) other social practices related to the human body such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and stem cell research (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Koleva et al., 2012). However, we cannot extrapolate from these causes as they do not involve the buying and selling of the human body. Importantly, recent real-world anecdotal evidence suggests that liberals may also oppose bodily markets. For instance, liberal movements are sprouting in countries like the Netherlands that aim to criminalize the legal prostitution industry (Holligan, 2019). Furthermore, liberal advocates blocked a New York state government bill seeking to legalize commercial surrogate pregnancy (V. Wang, 2019). Hence, it is not apparent that only conservatives would oppose bodily markets.

Instead, in this research, we propose that both liberalism and conservatism may be associated with moral objections to bodily markets. However, liberals and conservatives would object to bodily markets for different reasons. Drawing from Moral Foundations Theory (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt, 2007), we posit that liberals' adherence to the individualizing moral foundations increases sensitivity to the exploitation concerns in these markets. Contrastingly, conservatives' adherence to the binding moral foundations increases sensitivity to the violation

of sanctity concerns in these markets. Based on this theorization, we show how these different moral objections shape the socio-political conversation around bodily markets. We find that liberal and conservative pastors use different moral objections to decry prostitution in church sermons. Moreover, we also demonstrate how liberals and conservatives support different punitive laws to govern these markets. Finally, we show how these different moral objections can be utilized to design targeted political advocacy campaigns.

Hence, this is the first research, to the best of our knowledge, to utilize a descriptive psychological approach and demonstrate the heterogeneity in the underlying moral objections to bodily markets across the political spectrum. Thus, we develop a new theoretical framework to understand the moral attitudes towards the commercialization of the human body, extending the literatures on market ethics (Bhattacharjee et al., 2017; Campbell & Winterich, 2018; Giesler & Veresiu, 2014; Shaddy & Shah, 2018), consumer morality (Goenka & Thomas, 2020; Goenka & van Osselaer, 2019; Olson et al., 2016; Paharia, 2020; Winterich et al., 2009), and political identity (John T. Jost, 2017; Kaikati et al., 2017; Kidwell et al., 2013; Ordabayeva & Fernandes, 2018; Winterich et al., 2012). Consequently, our findings generate novel implications for policymakers and advocacy groups engaged with the bodily markets.

Politics and Morality

Moral Foundations Theory presents a framework to understand the different moral attitudes between liberals and conservatives (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt, 2007; Haidt & Graham, 2007). The theory posits that liberals tend to emphasize the *individualizing* moral foundations (care and fairness), while conservatives tend to emphasize the *binding* moral foundations (loyalty, authority, and purity). The individualizing foundations focus on the provision and protection of individual rights through equality and welfare. These values protect people from

being harmed, oppressed, or treated unfairly by other members of the group or by the institutional systems. On the other hand, the binding foundations focus on keeping individual autonomy and self-expression in check for the good of one's family, group, clan, or country. These values bind people into social institutions by "promoting and celebrating those who support and sacrifice for the group (in-group loyalty), respect and obey traditions (authority), and rise above their base urges and exercise self-control (purity)" (Napier & Luguri, 2013).

Extant research has utilized this theory to shed light on several differences between liberals and conservatives. For instance, researchers have used this theory to understand liberal versus conservative attitudes towards climate change (Wolsko et al., 2016), recycling (Kidwell et al., 2013), prosocial behaviors (Kaikati et al., 2017; Winterich et al., 2012), social causes (Helzer & Pizarro, 2011; Inbar et al., 2012; Koleva et al., 2012; Wright & Baril, 2011), out-group discrimination (Smith et al., 2014; van Leeuwen & Park, 2009), religious beliefs (Graham & Haidt, 2010), self-control (Mooijman et al., 2018), and conspicuous consumption (Goenka & Thomas, 2020).

In this research, we suggest that the moral foundations theory can also be used to understand liberals' and conservatives' moral objections towards bodily markets. Specifically, because the two groups adhere to different moral concerns, they should be sensitive to different moral objections in bodily markets. The next section outlines our theoretical framework and derives the central hypotheses.

Theoretical Framework

We draw from Moral Foundations Theory to create a framework for understanding liberal and conservative moral objections towards bodily markets (Fig 1). We posit that their adherence to the different moral foundations (individualizing vs. binding) increases their sensitivity to

different moral concerns (exploitation vs. violation of sanctity), which subsequently drives their moral objections. The framework generates implications for understanding socio-political discourse, support for punitive laws, and support for advocacy campaigns across the political spectrum.

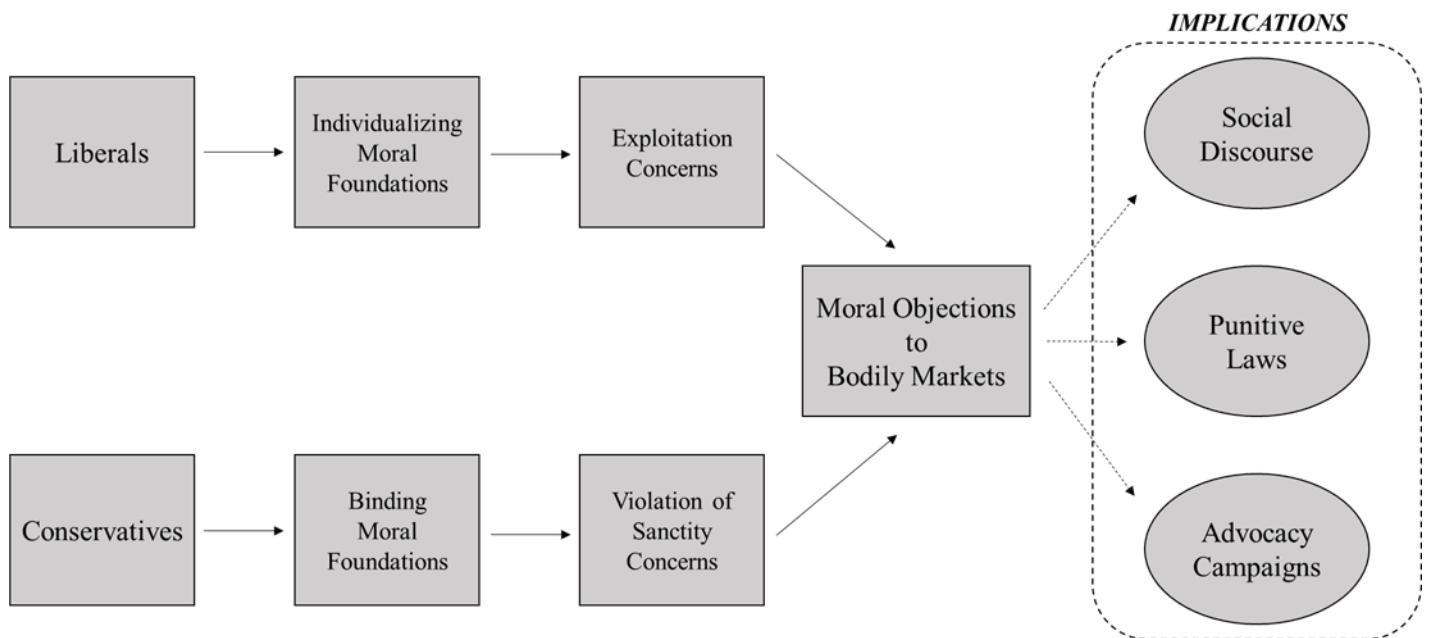


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Liberals' Moral Objections

We propose that liberals' moral objections towards bodily markets are driven by their adherence to the individualizing (harm and fairness) moral foundations. As outlined above, liberals (vs. conservatives) are especially cognizant of situations where individuals are harmed or denied their rights (Haidt & Graham, 2007). These moral foundations make liberals particularly sensitive to exploitation concerns in bodily markets. That is, liberals are attuned to the notion that the commercialization of these markets can cause harm to vulnerable people and magnify the entrenched inequality in society.

For instance, the noted liberal feminist Gloria Steinem (2019) wrote a letter decrying the

New York State bill to legalize commercial surrogacy. She emphasized that commercial surrogacy markets “allows women in economic need to become commercial vessels for rent...puts disenfranchised women at the financial and emotional mercy of wealthier and more privileged individuals...and carries the big risk of human trafficking for reproductive and other exploitation of both women and children.” Hence, we hypothesize that liberals are more likely to believe that bodily markets can become another means for rich buyers to exploit poor sellers, causing the latter systematic physical, psychological, and economic harm. Consequently, these exploitation concerns render commercial bodily markets morally objectionable.

This theorization of liberals’ moral objections generates some testable implications. First, liberals’ socio-political discourse around bodily markets should emphasize exploitation concerns. Second, liberals (vs. conservatives) should be more likely to support punitive laws that punish the buyer. That is, because liberals are more sensitive to the exploitation concerns, they should want to punish the agent who is causing the exploitation (i.e., the buyer). Third, liberals should be more willing to support advocacy campaigns that emphasize exploitation concerns.

Conservatives’ Moral Objections

We propose that conservatives’ moral objections towards the bodily markets are driven by their adherence to the binding (authority, loyalty, purity) moral foundations. As outlined above, conservatives (vs. liberals) are especially sensitive to maintaining social order, tradition, and sacred laws that serve to strengthen group fitness. These foundations serve to preserve social, psychological, spiritual, physical, and physiological sanctity to promote group order and group success (Haidt, 2012; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Inbar & Pizarro, 2014). Hence, conservatives are more averse to social contaminants, spiritual corruption, and non-traditional sexual behavior (Horberg et al., 2009; Koleva et al., 2012; Rozin et al., 2008). We suggest that

conservatives' adherence to the binding moral foundations should also make them especially sensitive to the violation of sanctity concerns in the bodily markets.

For instance, the conservative-leaning National Kidney Foundation (2003) outlines their objections to commercial kidney markets by writing that "Any attempt to assign a monetary value to the human body, or body parts, either arbitrarily, or through market forces, diminishes human dignity...by treating the body as property, in the hope of increasing organ supply, we risk devaluing the very human life we seek to save." Hence, conservatives believe that the commercialization of these markets places a monetary value on the human body and reduces it to become like any other commodity. This commoditization of the body violates the inherent dignity of the divinely created human body and is harmful to the preservation of group order and group success. Consequently, this violation of sanctity concern renders commercial bodily markets to be morally objectionable.

This theorization of conservatives' moral attitudes generates some testable implications. First, conservatives' socio-political discourse around bodily markets should emphasize violation of sanctity concerns. Second, conservatives (vs. liberals) should support punitive laws that punish the seller *and* the buyer. That is, because conservatives are more sensitive to the violation of sanctity concerns, they should want to punish all agents who are violating sanctity by commoditizing the body (i.e., both the buyer and the seller). Third, conservatives should be more willing to support advocacy campaigns that emphasize the violation of sanctity concerns.

Overview of Studies

We conducted four studies to examine liberals versus conservatives' moral objections towards bodily markets. First, study 1 examines the prevalence of moral objections in real-world social discourse. Specifically, we assess how liberal and conservative pastors use the different

moral objections to sermonize about prostitution. Results show that liberal pastors tend to emphasize exploitation concerns, but conservative pastors tend to emphasize violation of sanctity concerns. Study 2 utilizes a survey design to show that individuals' political identity predicts their moral objections towards a range of bodily markets (prostitution, kidney trade, etc.). This study also tests our conceptual framework. Study 3 uses an experimental approach to assess the causal link between political identity and the different moral objections. This study also demonstrates that liberals and conservatives support different punitive laws in bodily markets. Finally, study 4 demonstrates how the different moral objections can be utilized in marketing communications to design targeted advocacy campaigns and influence opposition towards these markets.

All data were collected after receiving an exemption status from the university research ethics committee (Protocol ID# 1904008735). For all studies, we determined the sample size in advance and performed the analysis only after data collection was complete. We report all experimental conditions and all measures collected in each study.

Study 1: Church Sermons

The first study was designed to assess whether we can observe different moral objections towards bodily markets for liberals and conservatives in real-world socio-political discourse. Specifically, we examined how liberal versus conservative pastors sermonize about prostitution. We acquired a historical archive of church sermons on prostitution and coded the moral objections expressed in the sermons. We then examined the relationship between these moral objections and the political leaning of the church. We hypothesized that sermons given in liberal churches would emphasize the exploitation concerns in prostitution, but sermons given in conservative churches would emphasize the violation of sanctity concerns in prostitution. The

hypotheses, data collection method, and analysis methods were preregistered.

Data Collection

Church Sermon Coding. The church sermons were extracted from the website - www.sermon.net. We searched for sermons using the keyword ‘prostitute’ and extracted 120 unique sermon audio recordings along with the name of the church congregation associated with the sermon. Two independent research assistants separately listened to each sermon. For each sermon, they responded to the questions - To what extent does the sermon deem prostitution to be morally wrong? / To what extent does the sermon say prostitution exploits vulnerable people? / To what extent does the sermon say prostitution violates the sanctity of the human body? (1: Not at All; 5: Extremely). The responses of the two RAs were averaged to form the three dependent variables of interest – moral evaluations of prostitution ($\alpha = .56$, $M = 3.25$, $SD = .80$)⁵, exploitation concerns ($\alpha = .77$, $M = 1.76$, $SD = 1.01$), and violation of sanctity concerns ($\alpha = .75$, $M = 2.48$, $SD = .95$).

Church Political Leaning. The political leaning of the church was acquired from two independent sources. The first set of political ratings was taken from a working paper by Hersh and Malina (2017). The researchers surveyed 130,000 religious leaders across 40 church denominations in the United States to assess their political leanings. For each church denomination, they report the percent of pastors who identify as a democrat, republican, or independent. We utilized this data to compute a political rating for each church denomination (% Republican Pastors - % Democrat Pastors). On this metric, the most liberal-leaning churches were the Unitarian Universalist (-.73) and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (-.72), while

⁵ The lower inter-RA reliability for the moral evaluation measure can be attributed to a higher degree of subjectivity in expressing and understanding moral evaluations. Analyzing each RA’s responses separately yielded the same statistically significant results.

the most conservative-leaning churches were the Lutheran Church (+.73) and the Church of God (+.57).

The second set of political ratings was acquired from the Pew Research Center (Lipka, 2016). The center surveyed 35,000 U.S. adults in 2014 to examine their religious affiliations and political leanings. For each church denomination, they report the percent of attendees who identify as a democrat, republican, or independent. We utilized this data to again compute a political rating for each church denomination (% Republican Attendees - % Democrat Attendees). On this metric, the most liberal-leaning churches were again the Unitarian Universalist (-.70) and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (-.88), while the most conservative-leaning churches were the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (+.51) and the Church of Nazarene (+.39). Hence, we were able to compute the political leaning of the churches through two independent datasets - a survey of the church pastors and a survey of the church attendees. As expected, both political ratings were highly correlated ($r = .83, p < .001$).

Dataset Compilation. We combined the sermon coding data with the two political rating datasets. Each sermon was associated with a church at the congregation level, but the political rating was available at the church denomination level. Hence, to merge the datasets, we had to identify the denomination for each specific church congregation in the sermon dataset (see Ensign-George 2017 for an overview of church organizational structures). For this purpose, the first author visited the website for each church to identify and record its denomination (e.g., The denomination for ‘Hope Baptist Church’ is Southern Baptist Convention; the denomination for ‘Saint Patrick’s Church’ is Roman Catholic). Note, eight churches in the dataset were independent/non-denominational and had to be removed from the dataset. Hence, the final dataset consisted of 112 sermons. For each sermon, we had measures of moral evaluations,

exploitation concerns, and violation of sanctity concerns, the church congregation and church denomination where the sermon was recited, and two measures for the political ratings of the church denomination.

Results

Moral Evaluation of Prostitution. First, we examined the relationship between the church's political rating and the moral evaluations of prostitution. We performed a random-effects linear regression analysis. The moral evaluations measure was the dependent variable, and the standardized values of the political rating (pastor survey measure) was the fixed effects independent variable. Church congregation was inputted as a random effect to control for any unobserved heterogeneity. The analysis showed that church political rating did not significantly predict moral evaluation of prostitution ($B = .05, SE = .08, t = .64, p = .527, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.11, .21]$). We performed another regression analysis using the standardized values of the political rating (attendees survey measure) as the independent variable. Again, the analysis showed that church political rating did not significantly predict moral evaluation of prostitution ($B = .03, SE = .08, t = .45, p = .657, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.12, .19]$). Hence, the liberal and conservative church denominations seemed equally concerned with the morality of prostitution.

Exploitation vs. Sanctity Concerns. Next, we examined the relationship between the church's political rating and the exploitation and sanctity concerns towards prostitution. We performed another random-effects linear regression analysis. The exploitation and sanctity concern measures were inputted as the dependent variables and the standardized values of the political rating (pastor survey measure) were inputted as a fixed effect predictor variable. Again, church congregation was inputted as a random effect. The results showed a significant interaction between political rating and the concern-type ($B = .64, SE = .12, t = 5.22, p < .001$,

95% CI [.39, .89]). Conservative political rating significantly predicted lower exploitation concerns (simple slope: $B = -.23$, $SE = .09$, $t = -2.62$, $p = .009$, 95% CI [-.40, -.06]). However, conservative political rating significantly predicted greater sanctity concerns (simple slope: $B = .41$, $SE = .08$, $t = 4.74$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.24, .59]).

We performed another regression analysis using the standardized values of the political rating (attendees survey measure) as the independent variable. Again, the analysis showed a significant interaction between political rating and the concern-type ($B = .75$, $SE = .12$, $t = 6.35$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.52, .99]). Conservative political rating significantly predicted lower exploitation concerns (simple slope: $B = -.31$, $SE = .09$, $t = -3.62$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.48, -.14]). However, conservative political rating significantly predicted greater sanctity concerns (simple slope: $B = .44$, $SE = .09$, $t = 5.15$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.27, .61]). Hence, both political rating measures revealed convergent results. As pastors and congregations become more conservative, they become more concerned about violation of sanctity. As pastors and congregations become more liberal, they become more concerned about exploitation of sellers.

Discussion

The results of this study provide initial evidence for our propositions and suggest that the different moral objections can be observed in real-world social discourse. Liberal and conservative churches both decry prostitution to be morally wrong; however, they emphasize different moral objections. The sermons in liberal churches were more likely to express exploitation concerns, while the sermons in conservative churches were more likely to express concerns about the violation of sanctity. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that this observational analysis has certain limitations. For instance, the churches vary on metrics aside from political leaning (e.g., location, racial demographics) that might contribute to the different moral

objections. Hence, subsequent studies will examine our propositions using more controlled designs.

Study 2: Theoretical Framework

This study was designed to examine our theoretical framework. We assessed participants' political identities and moral foundations. We also measured their moral evaluations towards a range of bodily markets (prostitution, kidney, blood plasma, etc.) and measured their different moral concerns in these markets. We predicted that liberals and conservatives would both find the bodily markets to be morally wrong, but they would be sensitive to different moral concerns. Liberals will be sensitive to the exploitation concerns in these markets, while conservatives will be sensitive to the violation of sanctity concerns in these markets. Further, these different moral concerns would be driven by liberals and conservatives' adherence to the different moral foundations.

Method

We recruited 500 participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk to complete the study online in exchange for a small monetary compensation ($M_{age} = 36.58$ years, 45.4% female). Participants were first asked to indicate their political identity on a 7-point slider scale (1: Extremely Liberal; 7: Extremely Conservative). Next, participants were administered the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham et al. 2011). This scale assesses a person's adherence to the five moral foundations through 30 morality statements (e.g., "When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly," "I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural.") measured on a 6-point scale (0: Strongly Disagree; 5: Strongly Agree).

Following this, participants were asked their moral opinions on five bodily markets –

prostitution, surrogacy market, blood plasma market, kidney market, and sperm market. For each market, participants indicated their moral judgment of the market - “I think the commercial ____ market is” (1: Morally acceptable in most or all cases; 7: Morally wrong in most or all cases). This measure of moral evaluations was adapted from Koleva et al. (2012). Next, participants were asked two questions to assess their sensitivity to the exploitation and violation of sanctity concerns in these markets – “To what extent does the commercial ____ market exploit vulnerable people” and “To what extent does the commercial ____ market violate the sanctity of the human body” (1: Not At All; 7: Extremely). All participants answered the three questions for all five bodily markets, presented in a randomized order. Finally, basic demographics were collected along with participants’ religiosity (“I see myself as someone who is very religious” 1: Strongly Disagree; 7: Strongly Agree).

Results

Moral Evaluations. First, we examined the relationship between political identity and moral evaluations of the bodily markets. We performed a random-effects linear regression analysis. The moral evaluations measure was inputted as the dependent variable and political identity was inputted as a fixed effect predictor variable. Further, we included gender (male = 0, female = 1), age, education, race (1 = white, 0 = other), income, and religiosity as controls in the analysis. Dummy variables representing the different bodily markets were also inputted as fixed effects. Participant was treated as a random effect to account for unobserved heterogeneity. The results showed that political identity did not significantly predict moral evaluations ($B = .02$, $SE = .04$, $t = .54$, $p = .593$, 95% CI [-.05, .01]). Hence, liberals and conservatives found bodily markets to be morally wrong to a similar extent.

Exploitation vs. Sanctity Concerns. Next, we examined the relationship between

political identity and the sensitivity to exploitation and sanctity concerns in the markets. We performed another random-effects linear regression analysis. The exploitation and sanctity concern measures were inputted as the dependent variable, and political identity was inputted as the fixed effect predictor variable. The analysis included the same controls as above. Results showed a significant interaction between political identity and the concern-type ($B = .47$, $SE = .02$, $t = 19.60$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.42, .51]). Conservative political identity significantly predicted lower exploitation concerns in the bodily markets (simple slope: $B = -.23$, $SE = .03$, $t = -6.58$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.29, -.16]). However, conservative political identity significantly predicted greater sanctity concerns in the bodily markets (simple slope: $B = .24$, $SE = .03$, $t = 6.80$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.17, .31]). Hence, liberals were more sensitive to exploitation in the markets, but conservatives were more sensitive to violation of sanctity concerns in the markets.

Mediation Analysis. Next, we examined whether the relationship between political identity and the moral concerns of the bodily markets can be explained by the adherence to the different moral foundations (Fig 2). First, we see that conservative political identity predicted less adherence to the individualizing moral foundations ($B = -.14$, $SE = .01$, $t = -16.09$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.15, -.12]) but greater adherence to the binding moral foundations ($B = .16$, $SE = .01$, $t = 16.29$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.15, .18]), replicating extant research (Graham et al., 2009, 2011a). Then, we performed a mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 82 (Hayes, 2013). Political identity was the independent variable, and the moral evaluations measure was the dependent variable. The analysis included two parallel mediation pathways. In the first parallel mediation pathway, scores of the individualizing moral values and the exploitation concerns were inputted as serial mediators. In the second mediation pathway, scores of the binding moral foundations and the violation of sanctity concerns were inputted as serial mediators. We also included the

demographic controls in the analysis. The results revealed that the indirect pathway through individualizing values and exploitation concerns was significant (standardized indirect effect [-.014, -.006]). Similarly, the indirect pathway through binding foundations and sanctity concerns was also significant (standardized indirect effect [.04, .06]). Thus, this mediation analysis provides direct support for our theoretical framework by demonstrating that the effect of political identity on the moral evaluations of the bodily markets is mediated by two different parallel pathways.

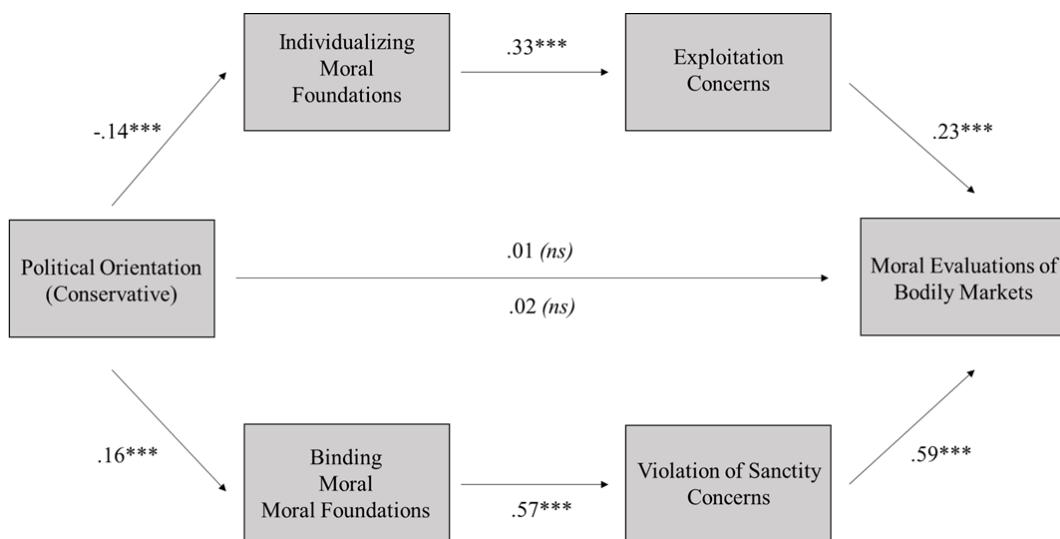


Figure 2. Mediation Analysis (Study 2)

Discussion

This study provides support for our proposed theoretical framework. The results demonstrate that both liberals and conservatives find a range of bodily markets (prostitution, kidney, surrogacy, etc.) to be morally wrong. However, they have different moral objections to bodily markets. Liberals' adherence to the individualizing moral foundations makes them more sensitive to the exploitation concerns in the bodily markets. Contrastingly, conservatives' adherence to the binding moral foundations makes them sensitive to the violation of sanctity

concerns in the bodily markets. Hence, these results show that whereas liberals and conservatives may both object to bodily markets, they do so due to different moral concerns.

Study 3: Punitive Laws

This study was designed to demonstrate one policy implication of our propositions. Because liberals and conservatives are sensitive to different moral concerns in the bodily markets, they should support different punitive laws to govern these markets. The second aim of this study was to establish the causal effect of political identity on moral objections. Therefore, in this study, we manipulated the salience of liberal versus conservative identity and assessed the impact of this manipulation on moral concerns towards the bodily markets. We hypothesized that inducing a liberal identity will increase the sensitivity to the exploitation concerns in the markets and subsequently increase the desire to punish the buyer (who is responsible for the exploitation) over the seller. However, inducing a conservative identity will increase sensitivity to the violation of sanctity concerns in the markets and subsequently lead to the desire to punish both the buyer and the seller (who are both responsible for the violating sanctity, because one is commoditizing the body by selling and the other is commoditizing the body by inducing the seller to sell). Further, we predicted that adherence to the different moral foundations would mediate these moral concerns. The hypotheses, study design, and method of analysis were preregistered.

Method

We recruited 500 participants from MTurk to complete the study online in exchange for a small monetary compensation ($M_{age} = 37.04$ years, 51.9% female). First, the salience of political identity was manipulated using a procedure from Ordabayeva and Fernandes (2018). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions and asked to recall a social

interaction on a political issue. In the liberal condition (conservative condition), participants were asked to write a paragraph about a social interaction where they felt they had a more liberal stance (conservative stance) than the other person. Because our manipulation involved a subtle shift of political identity, it was essential to ensure that participants engaged with the task. We apriori decided to remove all participants who wrote less than one sentence in the task (exclusion criterion was preregistered). Thus, 67 participants (13% of the sample) were removed (Final $N = 433$).

Following the essay task, as a manipulation check participants were asked to indicate their political identity on a slider scale (1: Extremely Liberal; 7: Extremely Conservative). Indeed, participants assigned to the conservative condition ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.83$) indicated that a higher conservative identity than participants in the liberal condition ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.71$; $M_{diff} = .82$, $SE = .17$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.48, 1.15]).

Then, participants were asked to complete the moral foundations questionnaire (Graham et al., 2011). Following this, participants were presented with the same five bodily markets as study 2. For each market, participants responded to the same exploitation and violation of sanctity concerns measures as before. In addition, we also asked them to respond to two questions that would measure the support for punitive laws in these markets. The first question measured blame towards the buyer -- Consider that the government is designing laws to make the _____ market a punishable offense. To what extent should the buyer - the person who pays money to buy _____ services - be punished (fines, prison time, etc.) for engaging in this behavior? (1: Not At All; 7: Extremely). The second question measured blame towards the seller -- Consider that the government is designing laws to make the _____ market a punishable offense. To what extent should the seller - the person who sells _____ services for money - be punished

(fines, prison time, etc.) for engaging in this behavior? (1: Not At All; 7: Extremely). Finally, basic demographics were collected.

Results

Exploitation vs. Sanctity Concerns. First, we examined whether the political identity manipulation influenced the sensitivity to the exploitation and sanctity concerns in the bodily markets. We performed a $2 \times 5 \times 2$ mixed factorial ANOVA with the exploitation and sanctity concern measures of the five body markets as the repeated dependent variables and the politics condition as the between subjects independent factor. Results showed a significant interaction between concern-type and the politics condition ($F(1, 1724) = 27.90, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$). We explored this interaction through planned contrasts. We see that inducing liberal identity ($M = 4.26, SD = 1.34$) compared to conservative identity ($M = 3.93, SD = 1.46$) significantly increased sensitivity to exploitation concerns across all the five bodily markets ($M_{diff} = .33, SE = .14, F(1, 431) = 5.95, p = .015, \eta_p^2 = .01$). However, inducing conservative identity ($M = 3.54, SD = 1.62$) compared to liberal identity ($M = 3.18, SD = 1.55$) significantly increased sensitivity to violation of sanctity concerns across all the five bodily markets ($M_{diff} = .37, SE = .15, F(1, 431) = 5.71, p = .017, \eta_p^2 = .01$). Hence, these results replicate the findings from study 2 to show that inducing liberal versus conservative identity highlights different moral concerns in the bodily markets.

Punishment Measures. Next, we examined how the political identity manipulation influenced participants' views on punishment in the bodily markets (Fig 3). We performed another $2 \times 5 \times 2$ mixed factorial ANOVA with the buyer and seller punishment measures of the five body markets as the repeated dependent variables and the politics condition as the between subjects independent factor. Results showed a significant interaction between agent-type and the politics condition ($F(1, 1724) = 27.44, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$). We explored this interaction through

planned contrasts. We see that inducing liberal identity increased the desire to punish the buyer ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.54$) compared to the seller ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.64$) across all the five bodily markets ($M_{diff} = .84$, $SE = .09$, $F(1, 431) = 77.76$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$). However, inducing conservative identity led to similar levels of desire to punish the buyer ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.57$) and the seller ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.62$) across all the five bodily markets ($M_{diff} = .12$, $SE = .09$, $F(1, 431) = 1.52$, $p = .218$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$). Looking at the contrasts another way, we see that inducing liberal identity compared to conservative identity significantly increased the willingness to punish the buyer across all the five bodily markets ($M_{diff} = .36$, $SE = .15$, $F(1, 431) = 5.73$, $p = .017$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$). However, inducing conservative identity compared to liberal identity significantly increased willingness to punish the seller across all the five bodily markets ($M_{diff} = .36$, $SE = .16$, $F(1, 431) = 5.22$, $p = .023$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$). Hence, these results suggest that liberals versus conservatives support different types of punitive laws to govern bodily markets.

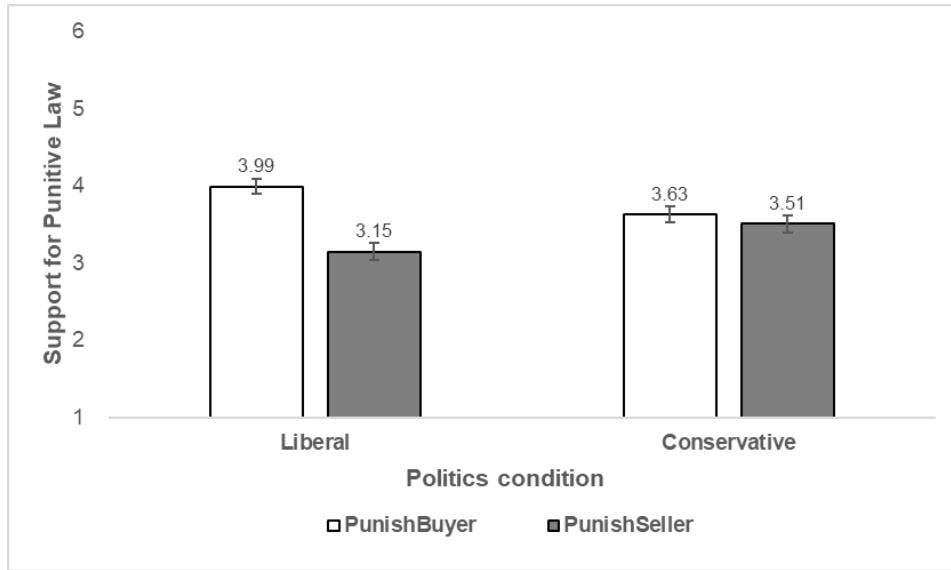


Figure 3. Support for punitive laws across political conditions (Study 3)

Mediation Analysis. Next, we examined whether the effect of the political identity on the willingness to punish the agents was mediated by the different moral foundations (Fig 4). First, we see that inducing conservative identity reduced adherence to the individualizing moral values ($B = -.17$, $SE = .07$, $t = -2.18$, $p = .030$, 95% CI [.02, .32]) but increased adherence to the binding moral values ($B = .25$, $SE = .10$, $t = 2.46$, $p = .014$, 95% CI [.05, .45]). Then, we performed a mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 6 (Hayes, 2013). A dummy variable for the liberal condition was the independent variable and the willingness to punish the buyer was the dependent variable. The scores of the individualizing values and exploitation concerns were inputted as two serial mediators. The analysis revealed that the indirect effect of serial mediation was significant (standardized indirect effect [.01, .07]). Then, we performed another mediation analysis using a dummy variable for the conservative condition as the independent variable and the willingness to punish the seller as the dependent variable. The scores of the binding moral values and violation of sanctity concerns were inputted as two serial mediators. The analysis revealed that the indirect effect of serial mediation was significant (standardized indirect effect [.01, .13]). Hence, these mediation analyses show that priming the different political identities increased sensitivity to different moral concerns, which subsequently influenced the desire to punish different agents in these markets.

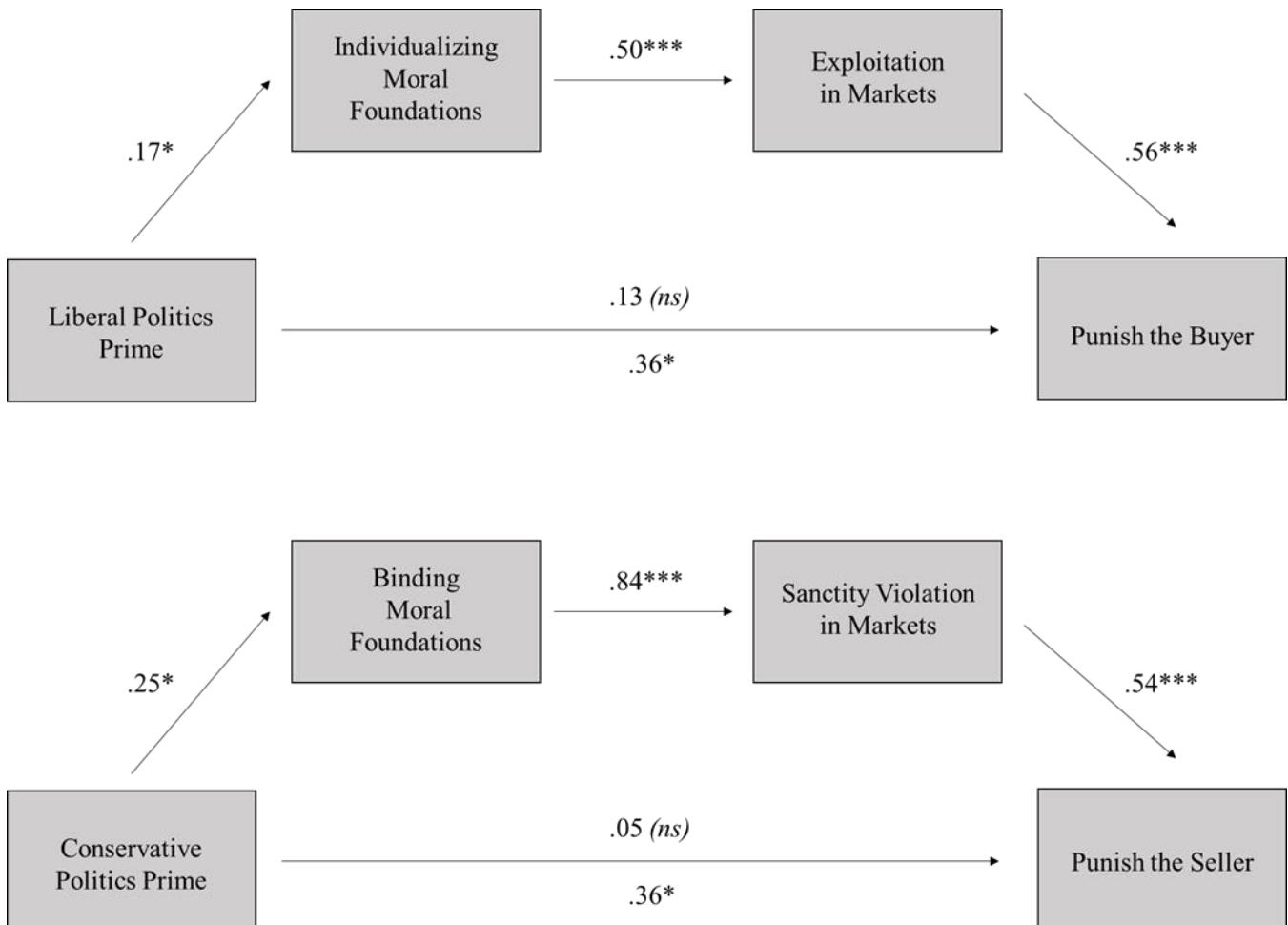


Figure 4. Mediation Analysis (Study 3)

Discussion

The results of this study extend the previous findings to support our central propositions. First, they replicate the findings of study 2 and demonstrate the causal effect of political identity on moral concerns. Inducing a liberal identity increased adherence to the individualizing moral foundations and increased the sensitivity to exploitation concerns in the bodily markets. However, inducing a conservative identity increased the adherence to the binding moral foundations and increased the sensitivity to the violation of sanctity concern in the bodily markets. Consequently, liberals were more likely than conservatives to punish the buyer, but conservatives were more likely than liberals to punish the seller in these markets. Notably,

conservatives were equally likely to punish the buyer and seller. Hence, these results suggest that liberals and conservatives would favor different punitive laws to govern these markets.

Study 4: Advocacy Campaigns

This study was designed to demonstrate an implication of our theorization for political marketing communications using a behavioral measure. Because liberals and conservatives are sensitive to different moral concerns in the bodily markets, these different concerns can be utilized to design targeted political advocacy campaigns. We demonstrate this in the context of the current political debate around prostitution. Specifically, in June 2019, the New York state government introduced a bill to decriminalize prostitution. This bill has sparked a storm of outrage from both liberal and conservative groups (McKinley, 2019). As is typical in such socio-political causes, the groups launched petition campaigns to gather support from the general public and sway political opinion. We propose that our theorization can be utilized to increase the effectiveness of these advocacy campaigns.

We designed two petitions that advocated against the NY state bill by highlighting either the exploitation concerns or the violation of sanctity concerns in prostitution. We then tested the effectiveness of these petitions in drawing support from liberals and conservatives. We predicted that liberals would be more likely to endorse the petition opposing prostitution when it highlighted exploitation concerns, but conservatives would be more likely to endorse the petition opposing prostitution when it highlighted the violation of sanctity concerns. The hypotheses, study design, and analysis methods were preregistered.

Method

We recruited 1000 participants from MTurk to complete the study online in exchange for a small monetary compensation ($M_{age} = 37.92$ years, 60.7% female). First, participants indicated

their political identity on a 7-point slider scale (1: Extremely Liberal; 7: Extremely Conservative). Next, participants were introduced to a study on political petitions. Participants were shown a petition opposing the NY state's prostitution bill. Half the participants saw a petition which highlighted exploitation concerns in the prostitution market ("Prostitution is extremely harmful and coercive to women and children...Dont legalize prostitution"). The other half of the participants saw a petition which highlighted the violation of sanctity concerns in the prostitution market ("Placing a monetary value on the body violates the inherent sanctity of the human body...Dont legalize prostitution"). These petitions were pretested to ensure that they increased sensitivity to the different concerns.

Below each petition, participants saw the text -- Click Here If you are willing to support this petition. The link will take you through the steps. Supporting this petition is voluntary and does not affect your study compensation. -- We measured whether the participant clicked on the hyperlink to support the petition as our main dependent variable.

Note, instead of leading to an actual petition, we routed the hyperlink to an error page. Thus whereas this was a "real, consequential behavior" measure in the sense that the participants thought they would be signing a real petition, we did not actually make participants sign a petition. This is because making participants sign a petition against an existing government bill raises several ethical concerns, especially considering that our study involves an experimental manipulation. Further, making participants sign a petition would violate their anonymity. Hence, due to these ethical challenges, we were only able to measure whether a participant clicked on the hyperlink, expressing their intention to support the petition. Importantly, from the participant's perspective, they viewed a request to sign a petition for a current ongoing political debate and were voluntarily willing to visit an external website to support the petition. Hence,

assessing whether the participant clicked on the hyperlink is a reliable measure of their likelihood of signing the petition in the real-world.

Following the petition, we deployed a standard attention check (exclusion criterion was preregistered). One hundred and thirty-three participants (13.3% of the sample) failed the attention check and were removed from the sample (Final $N = 867$). Finally, basic demographics were measured and participants were debriefed.

Results

Petition Clicks. First, we see that the percentage of participants that clicked on the exploitation petition (26.20%) and the percentage of participants that clicked on the sanctity petition (24.50%) were statistically equivalent ($N = 867$, $\chi^2(1) = .32$, $p = .571$). Hence, participants found both the petitions to be equally persuasive.

Next, we examined the relationship between the petition clicks and the participant's political identity. We performed a binary logistic regression with the petition click measure (1: Clicked on link, 0: Did not click on link) as the dependent variable. Participant's political identity, petition-type (exploitation vs. sanctity), and their interaction term were inputted as predictor variables. Further, we also included gender (male = 0, female = 1), age, education, race (1 = white, 0 = other), income, and religiosity as controls in the analysis. The results showed a significant interaction between political identity and the petition-type ($B = .74$, $SE = .10$, $Z = 54.31$, $p < .001$). Conservative political identity predicted lower likelihood of clicks for the exploitation petition (simple slope: $B = -.35$, $SE = .08$, $Z = 21.57$, $p < .001$). However, conservative political identity predicted greater likelihood of clicks for the sanctity petition (simple slope: $B = .39$, $SE = .07$, $Z = 28.88$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

The results of this study extend the findings of the previous studies by demonstrating an implication of our theoretical framework for political advocacy campaigns. Liberals are more likely to endorse a petition against prostitution that highlights exploitation concerns, but conservatives are more likely to endorse a petition against prostitution that highlights violation of sanctity concerns. Hence, the sensitivity to the different moral concerns can be utilized to design targeted political advocacy campaigns.

General Discussion

Four studies tested our conceptual framework to show that liberals and conservatives hold different moral objections towards bodily markets. Study 1 showed that the different moral objections can be observed in socio-political discourse. Sermons in liberal churches tend to emphasize exploitation concerns in prostitution, but sermons in conservative churches tend to emphasize violation of sanctity concerns in prostitution. Study 2 showed that individuals' political identities predict their moral objections towards a range of bodily markets (e.g., prostitution, kidney, surrogate pregnancy). This study also demonstrated that the liberals' adherence to the individualizing foundations increases their sensitivity to the exploitation concerns, while conservatives' adherence to the binding foundations increases their sensitivity to the violation of sanctity concerns. Study 3 demonstrated causality by showing that inducing liberal versus conservative political identity changes sensitivity to the different moral concerns. Further, this study also demonstrated that liberals are more likely to punish the buyers over the sellers, but conservatives wish to punish both the buyers and the sellers in the bodily markets. Finally, study 4 demonstrated how the framework can be utilized to design targeted advocacy campaigns. Liberals are more likely to endorse a petition that highlights exploitation concerns in prostitution, but conservatives are more likely to endorse a petition that highlights the violation

of sanctity in prostitution.

Together these four studies employed archival observational data, individual difference measures, and experimental designs. We demonstrated the findings through real-world socio-political discourse, attitude measures, and an actionable behavioral measure (petition signing). The MTurk sample surveyed represents the entire political spectrum of U.S. adults from all 50 states. Further, we tested the moral objections towards a range of bodily markets that represent diverse contexts and involve both genders. Across all studies, we find robust evidence for our theoretical framework that liberals versus conservatives hold different moral objections towards the bodily markets.

Theoretical Contributions

As outlined before, several scholars in the fields of philosophy, legal studies, medical sciences, feminism, and sociology have deliberated upon the morality of bodily markets (e.g., Arunachalam and Shah 2008; Bailey 2011; Roth and Sönmez 2005; Shrage 1989). However, these works have largely taken a prescriptive approach to present a case for or against the permissibility of bodily markets. This is the first research, to the best of our knowledge, to take a descriptive approach to understand *why* laypeople morally object to bodily markets⁶. We develop a novel framework to explain the underlying moral objections towards the markets and demonstrate the heterogeneity in these objections across the political spectrum. Hence, we explain why both liberals and conservatives oppose bodily markets but demonstrate their

⁶Some papers (e.g., Elias, Lacetera, and Macis 2015; Leider and Roth 2010) take a survey approach to investigate laypeople's support for legalization of the bodily market. These works test different market scenarios (e.g., varying compensation amount, source of compensation) to see which market scenario would be more favorable by the general population. However, these works do not investigate the psychological and/or moral underpinnings that drive the objections to the markets.

different underlying moral concerns (exploitation vs. violation of sanctity) driving these attitudes.

By showing the influence of political identity on a hitherto unexplored marketplace, we extend the literature on consumer politics (e.g., Crockett and Wallendorf 2004; Jost 2017; Kidwell et al. 2013; Krishna and Sokolova 2017; Ordabayeva and Fernandes 2018; Shavitt 2017). Relatedly, our research contributes to the nascent stream of literature investigating how moral attitudes shape consumption preferences and economic decisions (e.g., Bhattacharjee, Berman, and Reed 2013; Campbell and Winterich 2018; Goenka and van Osselaer 2019; Goenka and Thomas 2019; Olson et al. 2016; Paharia 2020; Winterich et al. 2009, 2012). Finally, by demonstrating the ethical challenges and complexities associated with the bodily markets, we also extend the literature on market ethics and market design (e.g., Bhattacharjee et al. 2017; Giesler and Veresiu 2014; Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010; Martin and Schouten 2014; Shaddy and Shah 2018).

Policy Implications

This research presents several policy implications for political and advocacy groups engaged with the bodily markets. First, our framework sheds light on understanding the socio-political discourse around the bodily markets. That is, the framework explains what specific concerns liberal versus conservative groups will highlight when debating the morality of these markets. Findings show that liberal churches are more likely to sermonize about prostitution by highlighting the exploitation concerns, but conservative churches are more likely to sermonize about prostitution by highlighting the violation of sanctity concerns. Thus, this research can help predict how liberal versus conservative political leaders, religious leaders, and social groups will discuss these markets and predict their central concerns with the markets.

Relatedly, our findings also help elucidate the different laws that liberals and conservatives would support to govern bodily markets. That is, governments need to design laws that would penalize individuals who engage in black-market organ trade and illegal prostitution. Yet, there is little consensus on how the punitive laws should be designed. Our findings show that liberals are more likely to support laws that punish the buyer over the seller. However, conservatives are more likely to support laws that punish both the buyer and seller. Notably, support for our proposition can be seen in prostitution laws across the world. For instance, many liberal countries (e.g., Norway, Canada, France) have adopted the ‘Nordic Model’ for prostitution wherein only the buyer (client) is punished and the seller (prostitute) faces no legal charges (Mathieson et al., 2015). On the other hand, in more conservative Asian countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia, China, U.A.E) both the buyer and the seller face legal charges for engaging in prostitution (Clark-Flory, 2010). Hence, our theoretical framework explains why these countries have adopted different laws in accordance with their political leaning. Going forward, policymakers can utilize our framework to inform the design of punitive laws for all other bodily markets, keeping in mind the political leaning of their audience.

Finally, this research also produces implications for advocacy groups that seek to raise awareness and influence public opinion towards these markets. Our findings show that liberals are more likely to endorse a petition opposing prostitution when the petition highlights exploitation concerns; however, conservatives are more likely to endorse a petition opposing prostitution when the petition highlights violation of sanctity concerns. Thus, advocacy groups can use targeted petitions highlighting the different concerns to strengthen the efficacy of their campaigns.

Moreover, while our studies have only explored opposition to the markets, we also see

attempts to legalize various bodily markets across the world. For example, there are ongoing political debates around the legalization of commercial surrogate pregnancy in India (Virani, 2020), kidney markets in the United States (Pearl, 2019), and prostitution in Australia (Briggs, 2019). Advocacy groups promoting legalization efforts typically face difficulty gaining public support. Our findings suggest that to gain support from liberals, the exploitation concerns must be addressed. But to gain support from conservatives, the violation of sanctity concerns must be addressed. Hence, advocacy groups may also use our findings to design targeted campaigns that increase support for legalizing bodily markets.

Limitations and Future Research

The present research is the first step in understanding the heterogeneous moral objections towards bodily markets. As such, our findings present many avenues for subsequent research. First, our framework only demonstrates the main effect of political identity on moral objections. Future research can investigate various moderators and boundary conditions. For instance, opposition to the markets might be stronger for individuals higher on moral identity (Aquino & Reed, 2002) and could be influenced by various political events and social contexts (Ellemers et al., 2019). Relatedly, future work can also explore the role of emotion (Horberg et al., 2011), reasoning (Paxton et al., 2012), and cognition (Greene & Haidt, 2002; Wright & Baril, 2011) in driving the moral objections towards bodily markets. Lastly, our focus has been restricted to the bodily markets; however, our insights can help spark research in other marketplaces that deal with ethical issues like marijuana legalization and carbon taxes. Hence, we encourage researchers to utilize our paradigm to investigate the heterogeneity in moral attitudes towards various consumer markets and help strengthen the bridge between consumer research and public policy.

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