

Witnessing Moral Violations Increases Conformity in Consumption

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Contribution Statement

Previous research has established that moral violations are often recognized as breaches of social order, and mere exposure to others' immoral behaviors can heighten individuals' desire for punishment of moral transgressors (to correct transgressions) and social-norm adherence (to prevent future transgressions), which are precisely what conformist attitudes entail. Yet we know little about how exposure to moral violations may affect consumer choice, despite the fact that consumers are constantly exposed to immoral behaviors in daily life. Drawing on past research on social order and conformity, we propose that witnessing moral violations heightens perceived threat to social order, which can increase individuals' endorsement of conformist attitudes, since conformity can serve both a defensive function against the occurrence of moral transgressions and a reparative function signaling social order. The heightened desire for conformist attitudes can generalize and manifest in preferences for majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) choice alternatives in consumption domains. This research thus provides fresh insights to the morality and conformity literature by (a) documenting a novel downstream consequence of exposure to moral violations on consumer choice and (b) advancing our understanding of the psychological functions of conformity in coping with negative consequences of witnessing moral violations.

Abstract

Consumers frequently encounter moral violations (e.g., financial scandal, cheating, and corruption) in their daily life. Yet little is known about how exposure to moral violations may affect consumer choice. By synthesizing insights from research on social order and conformity, we propose that mere exposure to others' immoral behaviors heightens perceived threat to social order, which increases consumers' endorsement of conformist attitudes and hence their preferences for majority-endorsed choices in subsequently unrelated consumption situations. Five studies conducted across different experimental contexts and different product categories provided convergent evidence showing that exposure to moral violations increases consumers' subsequent conformity in consumption. Moreover, we show that the effect disappears (a) when consumers have low (vs. high) need to belong (Studies 1–3), (b) when the moral violator has already been punished by third parties (Study 4), and (c) when the majority-endorsed option is viewed as being complicit with the moral violation (Study 5). This research not only demonstrates a novel downstream consequence of witnessing moral violations on consumer choice but also advances our understanding of how conformity can buffer the negative psychological consequences of moral violations and how moral considerations can serve as an important basis for consumer choice. (196 words)

Keywords: moral violation, conformity, social influence, consumer choice, social order

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

The current research highlights a novel influence of witnessing moral violations on consumers' preference for majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) options. We propose that moral violations pose a threat to social order and that mere exposure to them could heighten individuals' endorsement of conformist attitudes by inducing a desire to correct wrongs (e.g., punishing the moral transgressors) and prevent future transgressions (e.g., adhering to social norms). In the domain of consumption, the heightened conformist attitudes could manifest symbolically through one's preference for majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) products or brands (Berger and Heath 2007). Although endorsing a majority product obviously brings no repercussion to the original transgressor and does little to actually restore the balance of social order for consumers, the feeling that they belong to a majority group may nevertheless signal social order and attenuate consumers' concern about condemning and punishing the moral violators.

In what follows, we develop a theoretical rationale for how witnessing moral violations can increase consumers' conformity tendency in subsequent consumption contexts, and describe five studies that tested our predictions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Determinants of Conformity

Seldom do consumers make decisions in a social vacuum. Instead, they are often influenced by others' choices (Huh, Vosgerau, and Morewedge 2014). Conformity refers to the process whereby individuals adjust their beliefs or behaviors to resemble those of real or imagined others (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004). Stemming from the seminal study by Asch (1946), research on conformity has revealed two main drives of conformity (Kelman 1953): (a) a desire to receive social approval (or to avoid social disapproval; normative motive) and (b) a desire to make objectively correct judgments and decisions (informative motive). Subsequently, a great amount of attention has been directed to investigating the causes of conformity. Much of previous research has shown that personality factors such as need to belong could increase conformity (Leary et al. 2013). Further, conformity tendency is generally lower in purchase contexts for products that symbolize personal identity, such as music and clothing (Berger and Heath 2007).

Moreover, recent advancements in conformity research have shown that conformity tendency can be influenced not only by relatively stable factors such as personality traits and product categories but also by more situational, transient factors including physical and emotional experiences. For instance, jointly engaging in synchronous activities can activate a general "copying others" mindset, resulting in increased conformity tendency in subsequently unrelated consumption contexts (Dong, Dai, and Wyer 2015). Similarly, circular seating arrangements can increase consumers' liking of majority-endorsed products by elevating their need to belong (Zhu and Argo 2013). Moreover, incidental emotions such as fear have been shown to increase conformity in consumers by heightening desire for self-protection (Griskevicius et al. 2009).

Moral Violation Activates Conformity

In line with the above findings showing that conformity tendency can be triggered by situational factors, the current paper explores the role of exposure to moral violations in determining consumers' subsequent conformity. Our conjecture that witnessing moral violations may activate conformity builds upon research on social order and the psychological functions of conformity. Past research suggests that people have a general desire for social order—"the effective and efficient functioning of a society" (Lin, Dahl, and Argo 2013, p. 64; see also Hechter and Horne 2009; Kay et al. 2009). Thus, individuals are motivated to restore the balance of social order when it is disrupted (Lin et al. 2013; Sampson 2009). For instance, when consumers perceive disruptions to social order by a norm violator (e.g., another customer cutting in line), they try to restore it by punishing him or her (Lin et al. 2013). Mere exposure to visual signs of disorder (e.g., litter, graffiti, abandoned cars) inspires collective efforts to restore order through both correcting past violations (e.g., by cleaning up the neighborhood) and preventing future violations (e.g., by implementing a neighborhood watch program; Sampson 2009). Similarly, system justification theory suggests that individuals are motivated to view the social system they live in as fair, justifiable, valid, and legitimate and to justify and defend the status quo when they are threatened (Jost and Banaji 1994; Kay and Zanna 2009). Thus, we posit that because moral violations are often recognized as breaches of social order, mere exposure to them can lead to perceived threat to social order (Keizer, Lindenberg, and Steg 2008) and thus activate thoughts about the importance of correcting wrongs and preventing future violations (e.g., through social-norm adherence), which are precisely what conformist attitudes entail (Murray and Schaller 2012). Although the linkage between witnessing moral violations and conformity has never been directly demonstrated, this prediction is consistent with prior literature showing

that conformity could serve both a defensive function against the occurrence of moral transgression and a reparative function signaling social order.

On the defensive side, although there are disadvantages associated with conformism (e.g., inhibiting creativity) and too much conformity can be detrimental to a society, conformity is an essential element for communities and societies to function (Bocchiaro and Zamperini 2012; Hechter and Horne 2009). This is because conformity plays a critical role in preventing threats posed by norm violations. Without conformity, societies would fall into chaos and disorder (Bocchiaro and Zamperini 2012). For social order to arise, people must be able to coordinate their actions and cooperate to attain common goals (Hechter and Horne 2009). Conformity facilitates both coordination and cooperation by setting stable expectations for social interactions. Indeed, individuals express stronger conformist attitudes when they feel vulnerable to risks and hazards posed by deviance from societal norms. For instance, salience of infectious-disease threat, which often occurs as a result of violations of norms regarding hygiene and food preparation, induces conformist attitudes and behaviors (Beall, Hofer, and Schaller 2016; Murray and Schaller 2012). This is also consistent with the finding that even distal historical and societal factors such as a history of territorial conflict or the outbreak of contagious diseases can increase the strength of societal norms and reduce tolerance for deviant behaviors (Beall et al. 2016; Gelfand et al. 2011). Moreover, belief that the world is a dangerous place has also been shown to be positively linked to preference for the status quo and social conservatism (Altemeyer 1988). If conformity indeed serves a defense function against norm violations, it follows that the perceived threat of immoral behaviors to social order should exert a powerful influence on conformist attitudes, motivating people to follow social norms (to prevent violations) and to correct wrongs.

On the reparative side, conformity could serve a symbolic, reparative function signaling to people that things are in order and where they should be. This is because belonging to a majority (vs. minority) group affords many advantages, making individuals feel safer, more recognized, and more validated, whereas being in the minority can be threatening (Cialdini 1993). For example, in the seminal conformity experiment conducted by Asch in 1951, participants who were in the minority seriously doubted the validity of their own judgment and conformed to the opinions of the majority (confederates). Moreover, in the consumption context, it has been shown that socially excluded or lonely individuals tend to prefer majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) products to avoid negative evaluations from others (Mead et al. 2011; Wang, Zhu, and Shiv 2012).

Majority influence occurs not only because of normative pressures but also because individuals tend to infer “objective consensus” from the majority opinion and position (Mackie 1987). The need for social validation is one of the greatest motivators according to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and it becomes especially prominent and salient in the face of social-norm deviance (Jost et al. 2003) or other potential threat to social order (Hechter and Horne 2009). Because conformity provides social validation and may signal social order to people, it could help buffer the negative consequences of moral violations.

We build on the above reasoning to make the novel prediction that mere exposure to moral violations could lead to greater conformist attitudes and behaviors. Moreover, the motivation to conform is just like other motivational forces, which rarely stay within the domain where they are originally induced and instead spill over to influence other domains (e.g., Xu, Schwarz and Wyer 2015; see Kruglanski et al. 2002 for a discussion on the goal generalization theory). Even though the need to be in the majority following exposure to moral violations is

induced in the moral domain, it may spill over to affect preferences in other domains. In other words, people may be motivated to be in *any* majority after exposure to moral violations. Given that consumers are known to use possessions to signal their identity and values (Berger and Heath 2007) and strategically seek products in the service of group affiliation (Mead et al. 2011), we propose that an enhanced need for conformity could be expressed as a greater desire for products endorsed by the majority (vs. minority), in line with previous research (e.g., Dong et al. 2015; Huang, Dong, and Mukhopadhyay 2014; Wan, Xu, and Ding 2014; Zhu and Argo 2013).

Formally:

- H1:** Exposure to moral violations increases consumers' subsequent conformity tendency reflected in greater preference for majority-endorsed products.
- H2:** The relationship between moral violation and preference for majority-endorsed products is mediated by consumers' heightened conformist attitudes, which is induced by greater perceived threat to social order.

Qualifications

We further propose that the effect of exposure to moral violations on consumers' conformity tendency should be attenuated or eliminated under three conditions. First, according to the optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer 1991), individuals have two foundational yet opposite needs that they strive to balance—namely, the need to belong and the need to be unique. When people feel too similar to others, they seek out ways to reassure their individuality; when they feel too different from others, they desire more proximity with others. Thus, although people in general may seek ways to promote affiliation with majority others after witnessing moral violations, this desire may induce a motivation to conform to others' preferences and choices only among those who perceive lack of affiliation with others. Those who have low need to belong or who already perceive themselves as having ample social support from their existing

social network (e.g., their family members or close friends) should feel less need to seek other forms of affiliation or conformity, which may mitigate the effect of exposure to moral violation on preferences for majority options.

Second, as we noted earlier, the desire to be associated with the majority after witnessing moral violations stems from the need to restore the balance of social order. Punishment is a critical means of correcting violations and restoring social order. For instance, when consumers perceive disruptions to social order by a norm violator (e.g., another customer messing up a store display), they punish the violator by refusing to provide assistance to him or her when help is needed (Lin et al. 2013). Further, people punish norm violators even when it is costly to punish and the punishment yields no material gain for them personally (Fehr and Gächter 2002; Fehr and Fischbacher 2003). Drawing on these findings, we expect that if the moral violator has already been punished by third parties, the need to restore social order should be fulfilled and hence the desire to conform to the majority should be lessened.

Finally, if the proposed moral violation effect is driven by heightened desire to restore social order, then the effect should not hold if conforming to the majority-endorsed option is viewed as being complicit with the moral violation, which might create further imbalance in social order. In other words, consumers exposed to moral violations should not conform to immoral majorities. These qualifications not only allowed us to test the conditions under which the effects of moral violation on conformity hold but also shed light on the underlying processes.

Formally:

- H3:** The effect of exposure to moral violation on conformity will be attenuated or eliminated (a) when consumers have low (vs. high) need to belong, (b) when the violator has (vs. has not) already been punished by third parties, and (c) when the majority-endorsed option is immoral.

OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

Five studies tested our hypotheses. In Study 1, we showed that exposure to a moral violation (financial scandal) increased consumers' conformity tendency in real product choice. Moreover, the effect was specific to moral violation and arose only for consumers with high need to belong (i.e., those who perceived scarce social support from their existing social network). Study 2 generalized the finding to a different product category and offered mediation evidence that the observed effect was driven by consumers' heightened endorsement of conformist attitudes and was moderated by their need to belong (measured directly). Study 3 replicated the effects with a behavioral manipulation of moral violation and demonstrated that the effect was comparable for direct victims and third-party observers of moral violations. Study 4 further tested the process, showing that the effect disappeared when the moral violator had already been punished by third parties. Moreover, it provided direct evidence, through a multistage mediation model, that exposure to moral violations induced greater perceptions of disruption to the social order, which increased consumers' endorsement of conformist attitudes and hence conformity in consumption. Finally, Study 5 provided more evidence to the underlying process of maintaining social order by showing that consumers exposed to moral violations will not conform to immoral majorities.

STUDY 1: FINANCIAL SCANDAL AND PRODUCT CHOICE

In Study 1, we set out to test our basic premise that exposure to others' immoral behaviors (in this case, financial scandal) could increase consumers' subsequent conformity tendency. We induced exposure to moral violation through a news comprehension task in which participants read a news report about a real financial scandal (i.e., the London Interbank Offered Rate [LIBOR] scandal). In a control condition, the LIBOR incident was described as an innocent

error, thus attenuating the perceived immorality of the bankers' behaviors. Moreover, to examine whether the effect is specific to moral violation or can generalize to any negative events that potentially threaten one's feelings of security, we added a second control condition wherein the destructive influence of a natural disaster on economic development was highlighted. Further, we tested the moderating role of need to belong. We inferred participants' need to belong indirectly by measuring their perceived social support, assuming that individuals should have greater need to belong if they have less social support. We expected the effect of exposure to a moral violation on conformity to be stronger when consumers perceived scarce social support.

Method

Participants and Design. Two hundred ten undergraduate students (68 males; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.64$ years) from a large North American University took part in this experiment for course credit. The experiment followed a one-factor, three-level (news article condition: moral violation vs. innocent error vs. natural disaster) between-subjects design. Participants took part in the study in groups of 4 to 6.

Procedure. The study consisted of two parts involving ostensibly unrelated tasks. The first part, comprising the manipulation, was titled "News Comprehension Study." Participants were instructed that the researchers were interested in students' ability to comprehend news articles and were given an article to read. They were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In the *moral violation* condition, participants were told that they would read a financial news article, purportedly taken from *The New Yorker*, that described the recent LIBOR scandal (i.e., banks were described as "engaging in fraudulent activities to manipulate interest rates"; Chan et al. 2014, p. 384) and how it would harm the development of the global financial system and worldwide economy. In the *innocent error* condition, participants read a similar

financial news article about the LIBOR incident that was revised to describe bankers' actions as an innocent error, thus attenuating the perceived immorality of their behaviors (Chan et al. 2014). In the *natural disaster* condition, participants read a news article also allegedly taken from *The New Yorker* describing the increased frequency of natural disasters and how they can potentially damage economic development (Robinson 2014; see the Web Appendix for the articles). To ensure that they read the article, participants in all three conditions were asked to think of a title for it and briefly summarize the conveyed message.

Afterward, the experimenter escorted participants individually to a different room for a second task. Before entering the second room, participants were told that they could have a free office magnet as a small token of appreciation for their participation in the first task. An experimenter who was blind to the hypothesis presented participants (individually, to avoid social pressure) with two boxes of magnets—one full box of white (or yellow) magnets and one one-quarter-full box of yellow (or white) magnets (the two colors of magnets were counterbalanced). In each case, participants were told that the boxes of magnets had both initially been full, but participants from prior sessions had taken more of the yellow (or white) magnets. To eliminate scarcity concern, participants were assured that we had enough magnets of both colors for all participants in their session. Participants' choice of magnet constituted the dependent measure. Choosing from the one-quarter-full box rather than from the full box of magnets indicated greater conformity tendency.

After making their choice, all participants proceeded to an ostensibly unrelated second study titled "About Yourself," in which they had to respond to items that were described as part of an inventory for the psychology department. Participants responded to a 9-item perceived social support scale assessing the amount of social support they could potentially get from their

relatives and friends (see the Web Appendix for the items; the last five items were adapted from the Perceived Social Support Scale; Zimet et al. 1990). We z -transformed and averaged scores for the 9 items ($\alpha = .70$) to create an index of perceived social support.

Participants then answered additional questions regarding the experiment. As manipulation checks, participants rated to what extent they perceived that the bankers described in the news report had done something immoral, unfair, or harmful and to what extent they had deceived their clients (1 = *not at all*; 9 = *a great deal*; $\alpha = .87$, averaged to provide a moral violation index; these items were omitted for participants in the natural disaster condition); to what extent the event described in the news article would hurt the economy (1 = *not at all*; 9 = *a great extent*); how realistic the article was (1 = *not at all*; 9 = *very realistic*); and how involved, engaged, and interested they had been in reading it (1 = *not at all*; 9 = *very involved/ engaged/ interested*; $\alpha = .88$, averaged to provide an involvement index). Participants also rated the perceived masculinity (1 = *very feminine*; 9 = *very masculine*), attractiveness (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very attractive*), and quality (1 = *very low*; 9 = *very high*) of the two types of magnets and how much they liked them (1 = *dislike very much*; 9 = *like very much*). No significant differences were observed in participants' evaluations of the two colored magnets along these dimensions ($ps > .12$). Finally, participants provided demographic information and were thanked and funnel debriefed. No participants correctly guessed the purpose of the study.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Check and Controls. As expected, participants in the moral violation condition ($M = 7.00$, $SD = 1.18$) indeed perceived bankers' behaviors as more immoral than did those in the innocent error condition ($M = 5.37$, $SD = 1.35$; $F(1, 139) = 58.05$, $p < .001$). Moreover, participants who read about the LIBOR incident and participants who read about the

natural disaster perceived that those respective events would damage the economy to a similar extent ($p > .11$; see Table 1 in the Appendix for means and standard deviations). Also, all participants perceived the news article to be realistic, given that all the realism ratings were significantly higher than the scale midpoint ($ps < .01$). Although participants rated the innocent error article as slightly less realistic than the other two articles ($ps < .05$), this pattern of realism ratings is different from, and hence cannot explain, the predicted (and observed) pattern of magnet choice. No significant difference was observed in participants' involvement ($p > .07$).

Choice of Magnets. A binary logistic regression model with dummy-coded conditions (Dummy 1 = innocent error; Dummy 2 = natural disaster), perceived social support index, and their interactions as predictors of magnet choice (1 = choosing the majority-endorsed magnet; 0 = choosing the minority-endorsed magnet) suggested a greater tendency for participants to choose the majority magnet in the moral violation condition (55.1%) compared to the innocent error condition (33.3%; Dummy 1: $b = -1.09$, $SE = 0.38$, $z = -2.89$, $p = .004$) and the natural disaster condition (37.7%, Dummy 2: $b = -0.87$, $SE = 0.37$, $z = -2.32$, $p = .02$). These significant main effects provided support for our prediction that exposure to moral violation would increase consumers' conformity tendency in product choice. The analysis also yielded a significant effect of perceived social support (Moderator: $b = -1.61$, $SE = 0.52$, $z = -3.08$, $p = .002$), which is consistent with prior literature showing that consumers with little social support tend to conform to the majority (Wang et al. 2012). Importantly, this effect of perceived social support was weaker in the innocent error compared to the moral violation condition (Dummy 1 \times Moderator: $b = 2.04$, $SE = 0.66$, $z = 3.08$, $p = .002$) and weaker in the natural disaster compared to the moral violation condition (Dummy 2 \times Moderator: $b = 2.00$, $SE = 0.69$, $z = 2.89$, $p = .004$).

Next, since perceived social support was a continuous variable, we used the Johnson-Neyman “floodlight” approach recommended by Spiller et al. (2013) to probe the nature of the interaction. Specifically, we examined where along the continuum of perceived social support participants’ magnet choice differed between the moral violation condition versus the innocent error and the natural disaster conditions. Results of a 5,000-sample bootstrap resampling method revealed that for participants who scored at 0.15 or below on the perceived social support scale (54.61% of the participants), the difference between the moral violation and innocent error conditions was significant, and for participants who scored at 0.07 or below on the perceived social support scale (52.90% of the participants), the difference between the moral violation and natural disaster conditions was significant (see Fig. 1). These results confirmed that participants who perceived themselves as having less social support were influenced more by the exposure to moral violation. We further illustrate these interactions by plotting the projected values for participants with higher (+1 *SD*) and lower (−1 *SD*) perceived social support in Figure 2.

Figure 1: The Effect of Moral Violation and Perceived Social Support on Magnet Choice

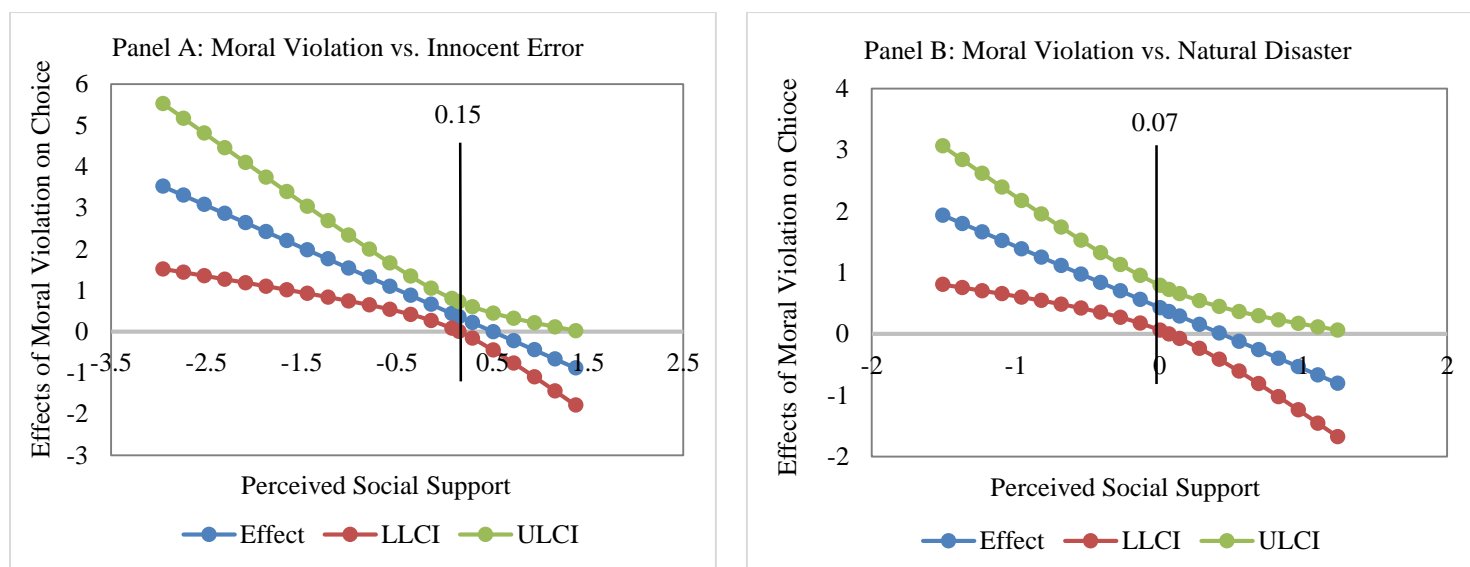
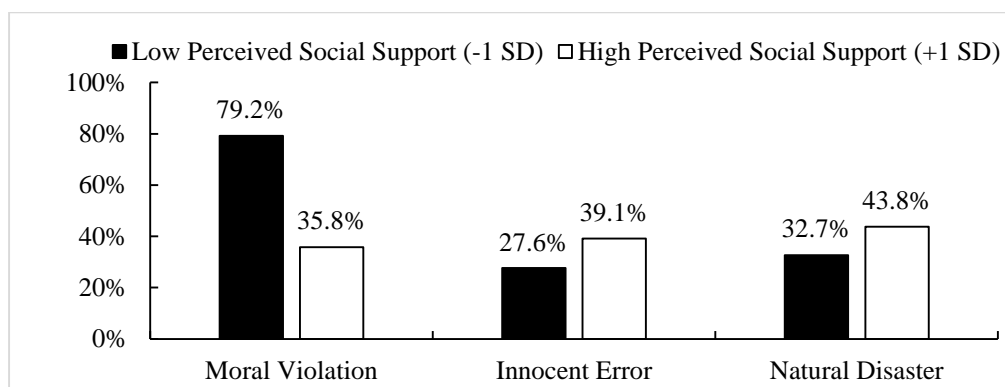


Figure 2: Participants (%) Choosing the Majority Magnet as a Function of Condition and Perceived Social Support



Discussion. Study 1 provides evidence that exposure to a moral violation (financial scandal) increased consumers' preference for majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) products using a real choice measure. Moreover, the null effect of the natural disaster condition suggests that threats from nonsocial sources could not produce the same effect as moral violations. In addition, consistent with our theorizing, the effect was observed only among those who perceived scarce social support from their existing social network (and hence felt higher need to belong).

STUDY 2: BOOK CLUB MEMBERSHIP CHOICE

Study 2 was designed to replicate the basic finding that exposure to moral violations leads to a preference for majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) options in a different product category and also to offer mediation evidence. Our central hypothesis is that witnessing moral violations should heighten conformist attitudes and therefore enhance consumers' conformity tendency in consumption. Moreover, instead of indirectly capturing consumers' need to belong by measuring perceived social support as in Study 1, we directly measured consumers' need to belong and tested its moderating role on the relationship between exposure to moral violation

and conformity. We expected that, as in Study 1, the effect of moral violation on conformity choice would be stronger when participants had higher need to belong.

Method

Participants and Design. Two hundred ninety participants recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk online panel (125 males; $M_{\text{age}} = 37.48$ years) took part in this study for payment (US\$1). They were randomly assigned to conditions of a one-factor, three-level (moral violation vs. innocent error vs. natural disaster) between-subjects design. Nineteen participants were excluded from further analysis for failing to pass an attention check (final $N = 271$).

Procedure. After providing consent, participants were instructed that they would be completing surveys for three unrelated studies. In the first study, titled "News Article Comprehension Study," we followed exactly the same procedure as in Study 1 except that participants read the news article online. To ensure that participants actually read the article, they could proceed to the next page, which included two probe questions (Question 1: "Please think of and write down a title of the article"; and Question 2: "Please summarize the main theme of the article using your own words") to check their understanding of the article, only after at least 2 minutes had elapsed. The average time participants spent reading the article was 163.21 seconds and was similar across conditions ($p > .58$).

Afterward, all participants proceeded to the second, purportedly unrelated study, titled "Book Club Membership Choice." Specifically, participants were asked to imagine that they had been looking to join a local book club and had finally narrowed down their choice to two book clubs. They were then presented with information about the two book clubs in counterbalanced order. One book club with 513 current members (i.e., the majority book club) emphasized popularity: The tagline was "Read to Belong, Are You One of Us?" The other with 43 current

members (i.e., the minority book club) stressed uniqueness: The tagline was “Read to Stand Out From the Crowd” (see the Web Appendix for details). Participants indicated which book club they preferred to join and rated their likelihood of joining each of the two book clubs along a scale from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 9 (*very likely*).

Then, participants proceeded to the third study, titled “About Yourself,” in which they were instructed that the researchers were interested in understanding people’s opinions on various topics. Participants responded to the conformist attitudes scale (Murray and Schaller 2012), which captures people’s desire to enforce punishment and social-norm adherence. Sample items include “Imposing tough laws and punishments, even to minor crimes, is an effective way to preserve the fiber of a society” and “Constantly breaking social norms often has harmful, unintended consequences”; all items are rated along a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). They also responded to the need to belong scale (Leary et al. 2013; the order of the two scales was counterbalanced). Finally, participants completed a short manipulation-check questionnaire using exactly the same items as used in Study 1, reported demographic information, and were thanked and debriefed.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Checks and Controls. As expected, participants in the moral violation condition ($M = 8.09$, $SD = 1.13$) perceived bankers described in the news article as more immoral than did those in the innocent error condition ($M = 5.86$, $SD = 2.00$; $F(1, 177) = 86.55$, $p < .001$). Moreover, all participants perceived that the incident described in the news article would damage the economy to a similar extent ($p > .33$). In addition, all participants perceived the news article to be realistic: All realism ratings were significantly higher than the scale

midpoint ($ps < .001$) and were comparable across conditions ($p > .18$). No significant difference was observed in participants' involvement across conditions ($p > .48$; see Table 1).

Book Club Choice. Replicating our findings from Study 1, a binary logistic regression model with dummy-coded conditions (Dummy 1 = innocent error; Dummy 2 = natural disaster), need to belong ($\alpha = .85$; averaged and mean-centered), and their interactions as predictors of book club choice suggested a greater tendency for participants to choose the majority book club in the moral violation condition (56.8%) compared to both the innocent error condition (38.1%; Dummy 1: $b = -0.78$, $SE = 0.32$, $z = -2.43$, $p = .015$) and the natural disaster condition (41.3%, Dummy 2: $b = -0.68$, $SE = 0.31$, $z = -2.18$, $p = .029$). The analysis also yielded a significant effect of need to belong (Moderator: $b = 0.76$, $SE = 0.22$, $z = 3.48$, $p < .001$), which is consistent with prior literature showing that consumers with high need to belong tend to conform to others' preferences (Leary et al. 2013). Moreover, this effect of need to belong was weaker in the innocent error compared to the moral violation condition (Dummy 1 \times Moderator: $b = -0.60$, $SE = 0.27$, $z = -2.20$, $p = .028$) and weaker in the natural disaster condition compared to the moral violation condition (Dummy 2 \times Moderator: $b = -0.64$, $SE = 0.26$, $z = -2.43$, $p = .015$). Using participants' relative preference for the majority (vs. minority) book club yielded the same pattern of results (see the Web Appendix for details).

To probe the nature of the interaction, we conducted a floodlight analysis with 5,000 bootstrap resamples (Spiller et al. 2013), which revealed that for participants who scored at -0.19 (4.44 if unstandardized) or above on the need-to-belong scale (53.63% of the participants), the difference between the moral violation and innocent error conditions was significant, and for participants who scored at -0.18 (4.58 if unstandardized) or above on the need-to-belong scale (58.29% of the participants), the difference between the moral violation and natural disaster

conditions was significant (see Fig. 3). We further illustrate these interactions by plotting the projected values for those with higher (+1 *SD*) and lower (-1 *SD*) need to belong in Figure 4.

Figure 3: The Effect of Moral Violation and Need to Belong on Book Club Choice

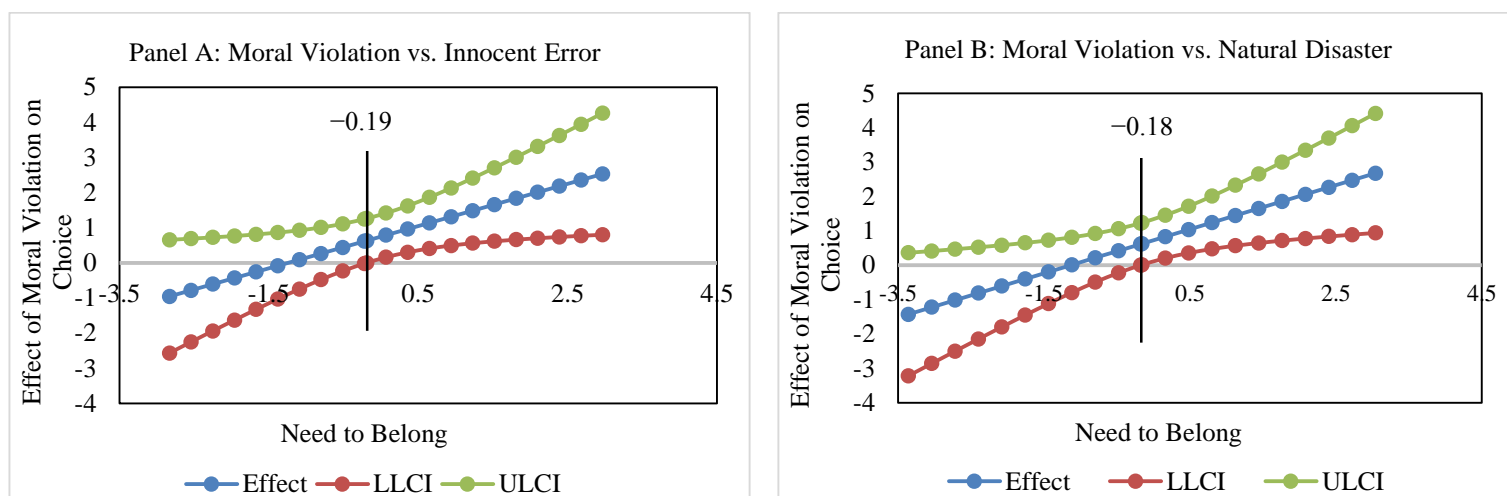
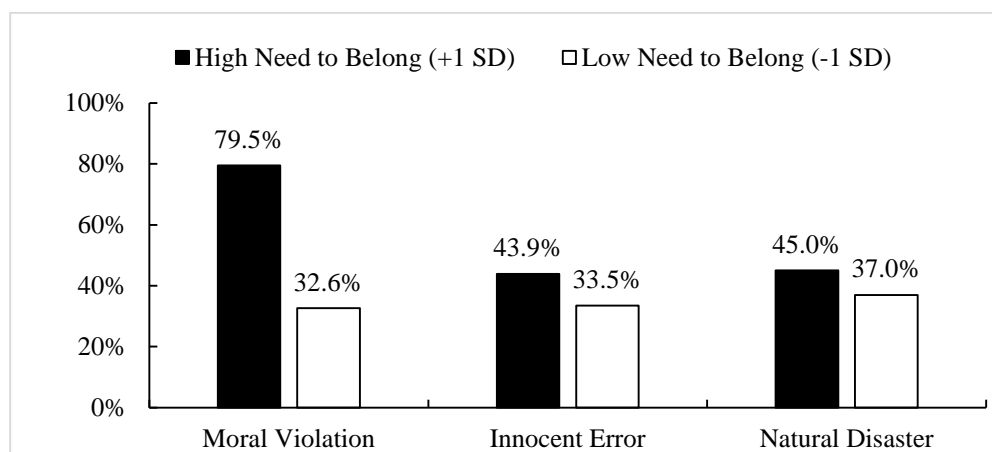


Figure 4: Participants (%) Choosing the Majority Book Club as a Function of Condition and Need to Belong



Underlying Process. Exposure to a moral violation also had a positive effect on conformist attitudes ($\alpha = .86$; exploratory factor analysis confirmed that only one factor was extracted; $M_{\text{moral violation}} = 5.03$, $SD = 1.73$; $M_{\text{innocent error}} = 4.58$, $SD = 1.75$; $M_{\text{natural disaster}} = 4.41$, $SD = 1.66$; $F(2, 268) = 3.25$, $p = .040$). However, exposure to a moral violation did not directly

affect participants' need to belong ($\alpha = .85$; $M_{\text{moral violation}} = 4.72$, $SD = 1.21$; $M_{\text{innocent error}} = 4.53$, $SD = 1.41$; $M_{\text{natural disaster}} = 4.80$, $SD = 1.47$; $F(2, 268) = 0.86$, $p > .42$).

We conducted a moderated mediation analysis (Hayes 2013) to test the process by which exposure to a moral violation affected book club choice. Specifically, we tested whether conformist attitudes mediated the relationship between exposure to moral violation and greater conformity tendency in book club choice when consumers expressed high need to belong (but not when they expressed low need to belong). Following Hayes and Preacher (2014)'s suggestion regarding mediation analyses with multicategorical independent variables, we first constructed two dummy variables, X1 and X2, representing the innocent error and natural disaster conditions, respectively. Because there were three conditions, there are two indirect effects: (a) the indirect effect of innocent error versus moral violation on book club choice through conformist attitudes and (b) the indirect effect of natural disaster versus moral violation on book club choice through conformist attitudes. We followed Hayes's recommended procedure by running PROCESS Model 14 twice, once with X1 as the independent variable and X2 as the covariate and once with X2 as the independent variable and X1 as the covariate, in order to recover each indirect effect. The indirect effect of innocent error versus moral violation through conformist attitudes, was marginally significant at high level of need to belong (+1 SD , $M = 6.05$: $b = -0.1166$, $SE = 0.0960$, 90% $CI = [-.3280, -.0067]$), but not at low level of need to belong (-1 SD , $M = 3.32$: $b = -0.0396$, $SE = 0.0591$, 90% $CI = [-.1807, .0216]$). The indirect effect of natural disaster versus moral violation, was significant at high level of need to belong (+1 SD , $M = 6.05$: $b = -0.1616$, $SE = 0.1054$, 95% $CI = [-.4418, -.0177]$), but not at low level of need to belong (-1 SD , $M = 3.32$: $b = -0.0549$, $SE = 0.0777$, 95% $CI = [-.2582, .0687]$). These results suggest that the effect of exposure to moral violation on book club choice is mediated by

conformist attitudes at high (but not low) level of need to belong. Note that not all these comparisons hold with 95% CIs. As robustness check, we also ran the same moderated mediation model with contrast-coded conditions (Rosenthal, Rosnow, and Rubin 2000; C1: innocent error = -1, natural disaster = -1, moral violation = 2; C2: innocent error = -1, natural disaster = 1, moral violation = 0). The results further confirmed the significant mediating role of conformist attitudes on book club choice among those with high need to belong (see the Web Appendix for details). Using relative preference for the majority (vs. minority) book club as the dependent variable yielded the same pattern of results (see the Web Appendix). All mediation analyses reported in this research were conducted based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples.

Discussion. The results of Study 2 thus provided additional evidence for our proposition that mere exposure to a moral violation leads to a heightened preference for majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) options in a different domain (in this case, book club membership choice). The null effect of the natural disaster condition further implied that exposure to threat in general could not produce the same effect. Moreover, the mediation analyses revealed that the effect was driven by a greater endorsement of conformist attitudes. Importantly, these effects held only when consumers had a relatively higher need to belong.

STUDY 3: CHEATING AND REAL PRODUCT CHOICE

Study 3 extended our investigation in the following three ways. First, we intended to replicate our findings in Study 2 by further testing the role of conformist attitudes in mediating the effect of exposure to cheating on conformity. Second, rather than manipulating exposure to moral violations using an article comprehension task, we exposed participants to a real, behavioral violation (i.e., cheating). Third, although prior research has shown that both direct victims and third-party observers of norm violations express a desire to punish the norm violators

(Carpenter and Matthews 2012; Fehr and Fischbacher 2004), it is unclear whether the effect of moral violation on conformity would equally hold for both groups. Study 3 empirically investigated this question.

Method

Participants and Design. One hundred eighty-six undergraduate students (69 males; $M_{age} = 19.94$ years) from a large North American University took part in the study for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions of a 2 (exposure to cheating: cheater present vs. cheater absent) \times 2 (incentive structure: third party vs. victim) between-subjects design. Each experimental session involved 4 people in total (3 participants and 1 confederate).

Procedure. Upon arrival, participants were instructed that this session consisted of several unrelated tasks. In the first task, titled “Verbal Ability Test,” participants were told that we were collaborating with researchers from the linguistics department to test students’ verbal ability. Participants were then asked to take an English synonym test as part of the assessment (10 questions in total). Participants were further told that we would offer them a cash reward, benefited through research funding, based on their performance on the test. To manipulate exposure to moral violation, in the cheater-present conditions, the confederate cheated by checking his phone three times (around Questions 2, 5, and 8). Each time he cheated, the confederate took his phone from his pocket, unlocked it with sound, put the phone on the desk, and searched the word on Dictionary.com, which was salient from each participant’s visual angle. To manipulate the perceived harm of the confederate’s cheating behavior on participants’ payoff, we varied incentive structure in the third-party and direct victim conditions. In the third-party conditions, participants were told that all participants would be paid based on their individual performance (i.e., \$0.50 per correct answer). In the direct victim conditions,

participants were told that only the participant who got the highest score in that session would get a cash reward (\$10). A pretest with 30 participants (10 males; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.8$ years) from the same participant pool verified that on average, participants answered 4.53 (out of 10) questions correctly, which translated to an individual payment of \$2.27 (i.e., $\$0.50 \times 4.53$). Based on the pretest results, the expected payment in the direct victim condition was \$9.08 (i.e., $\$2.27 \times 4$). We rounded off the payment to \$10 in the main study. Thus, the expected individual payment in both conditions was kept about the same (i.e., \$2.50). After reminding participants that to ensure accuracy of assessment, they were not allowed to look up answers on their electronic devices or discuss with each other, the experimenter left the room. The experimenter then monitored the test room from the lab control room via a video camera and went back to the room after all participants had finished the test to collect their test papers and escort them individually to a different lab for the second task. Before entering the second room, while standing in the corridor, each participant was invited individually to choose one magnet as an additional reward for his or her participation in the study. We followed exactly the same procedures used in Study 1 to implement this choice task.

Afterward, participants proceeded to an ostensibly unrelated second task titled “About Yourself,” in which they completed the same conformist attitudes scale used in Study 2 ($\alpha = .76$) and rated their need to belong ($\alpha = .81$). Finally, participants reported demographic information and were funnel debriefed. As noted by the experimenter, 2 participants (in the cheater-present conditions) cheated by checking the words in the test on their phone. Post-experiment probing revealed that 4 other participants in the cheater-present conditions did not notice the confederate’s cheating behavior. Thus, we excluded these 6 participants from further analysis (final $N = 180$).

Results and Discussion

Choice of Magnets. Binary logistic regression analyses with magnet choice (1 = majority magnet; 0 = minority magnet) as the dependent variable and exposure to cheating (1 = cheater present; -1 = cheater absent), incentive structure (1 = victim; -1 = third party), and their interaction as the independent variables revealed only a significant main effect of exposure to cheating on magnet choice ($b = 0.47$, $SE = 0.16$, $z = 3.02$, $p = .003$). No other effects were significant ($ps > .57$). Consistent with the effects observed in Studies 1 and 2, participants who had been exposed to someone else's cheating behavior were more likely to pick the majority-chosen (vs. minority-chosen) magnet than were those who had not been exposed to cheating ($M_{\text{cheater present}} = 56.0\%$ vs. $M_{\text{cheater absent}} = 33.7\%$, $\chi^2(1) = 9.07$, $p = .003$), regardless of whether they were third-party observers ($M_{\text{cheater present}} = 54.0\%$ vs. $M_{\text{cheater absent}} = 31.7\%$, $\chi^2(1) = 4.55$, $p = .033$) or direct victims ($M_{\text{cheater present}} = 58.5\%$ vs. $M_{\text{cheater absent}} = 35.4\%$, $\chi^2(1) = 4.76$, $p = .029$) of the cheating behavior. These results thus provided further support for our hypothesis that exposure to immoral behavior (in this case, cheating) promotes preference for majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) options. Moreover, the magnitude of the effect was comparable for direct victims and third-party observers.

Moderating Role of Need to Belong. As in Study 2, need to belong also moderated the effect of exposure to cheating on conformity. Given that incentive structure did not have any effects on choice, we conducted a binary logistic regression on participants' magnet choice with exposure to cheating (1 = cheater present; -1 = cheater absent), need to belong (averaged and mean-centered), and their interaction as predictors. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of exposure to cheating ($b = 0.44$, $SE = 0.17$, $z = 2.58$, $p = .01$), a significant main effect of need to belong ($b = 0.93$, $SE = 0.21$, $z = 2.29$, $p = .022$), and a significant need to belong \times

exposure to cheating interaction ($b = 0.47$, $SE = 0.20$, $z = 2.29$, $p = .022$). Floodlight analysis revealed that for participants who scored at -0.19 (5.52 if unstandardized) or above on the need-to-belong scale (59.44% of the participants), the difference between the cheater-present and cheater-absent conditions was significant (see Fig. 5). These results confirmed that participants with high (vs. low) need to belong were influenced more by the exposure to cheating. We further illustrate these interactions by plotting the projected values for those with high (+1 SD) and low ($-1 SD$) need to belong in Figure 6.

Figure 5: The Effect of Exposure to Cheating and Need to Belong on Magnet Choice

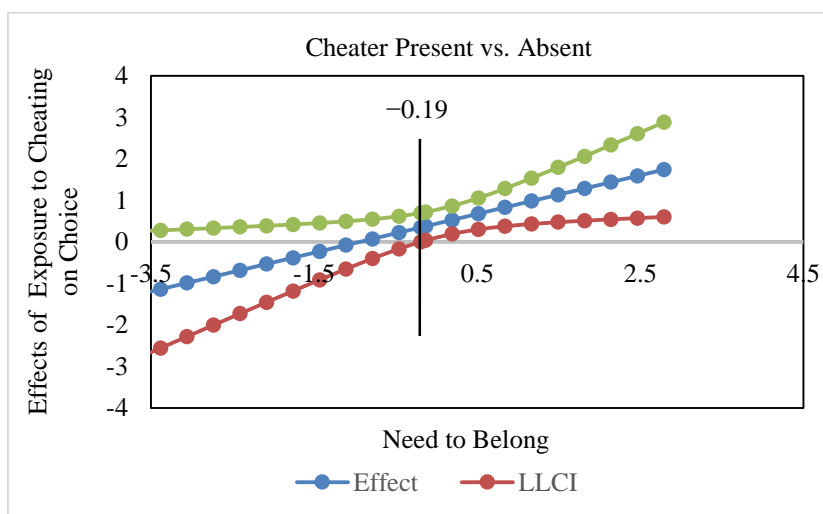
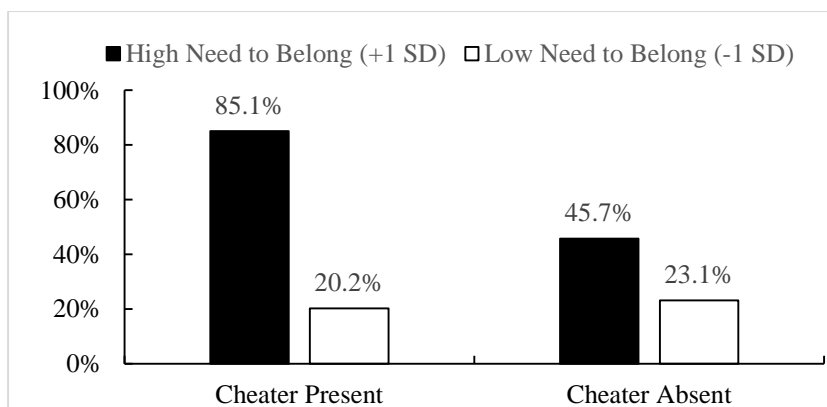


Figure 6: Participants (%) Choosing the Majority Magnet as a Function of Exposure to Cheating and Need to Belong



Underlying Process. An ANOVA with conformist attitudes as the dependent variable and exposure to cheating and incentive structure condition as the independent variables yielded only a significant main effect of exposure to cheating ($F(1, 176) = 5.23, p = .023$). Exposure to someone else's cheating behavior (vs. no exposure) increased participants' conformist attitudes ($M_{\text{cheater present}} = 5.20, SD = 1.29; M_{\text{cheater absent}} = 4.76, SD = 1.30$). Replicating the pattern of results from Study 2, exposure to cheating did not affect participants' need to belong ($M_{\text{cheater present}} = 5.77, SD = 1.12; M_{\text{cheater absent}} = 5.65, SD = 1.11; F < 1$). As in Study 2, we then tested the underlying process through a moderated mediation analysis. As expected, the indirect effect of exposure versus no exposure to cheating through conformist attitudes was significant when participants' need to belong was high (+1 *SD*; $M = 6.83; b = 0.1196, SE = 0.0837; 95\% \text{ CI: } [.0082, .3300]$), but not when their need to belong was low (-1 *SD*; $M = 4.59; b = -0.0190, SE = 0.0513; 95\% \text{ CI: } [-.1508, .0703]$). These findings provide convergent evidence that the mediational path predicting conformity tendency in consumption from witnessing moral violation is conditioned on one's need to belong.

Discussion. Taken together, the results of Study 3 corroborated our findings from Study 2 by showing that exposure to actual immoral behavior (cheating) increased consumers' conformity in their subsequent product choice, an effect driven by a greater endorsement of conformist attitudes, especially among those with higher (vs. lower) need to belong. Moreover, this pattern was comparable for direct victims and third-party observers and persisted across a different manipulation of exposure to moral violations.

STUDY 4: CORRUPTION AND BRAND PREFERENCE

The results of the first three studies were consistent with our hypothesis that witnessing moral violations should increase consumers' subsequent conformity tendency in unrelated

domains. Study 4 was designed with the following three aims in mind. First, as noted earlier, we postulate that this increase in conformity tendency occurs because the temporary salience of moral violations induces greater perceptions of social order disruption. We predict that it is the increased perceived threat to social order that causes individuals exposed to moral violations to endorse heightened conformist attitudes. Thus, we directly tested whether perceived threat to social order is the precursor of heightened conformist attitudes through a multistage mediation model in Study 4. Second, we hypothesize that if the increase in conformity tendency caused by exposure to moral violations is indeed driven by a heightened desire to restore social order, then subsequent desire to conform should be attenuated or eliminated if the violator has already been punished by third parties and social order has thus been restored. Therefore, in addition to a no-transgression baseline condition, we included a condition wherein the violation (corruption) occurred but was later corrected through the punishment of the transgressor. If moral violations induce a desire to restore social order, then we should observe that exposure to moral violation leads to stronger preferences for majority options only if the violator goes unpunished. Finally, we further gauged the generalizability of the observed effect by using a different manipulation of moral violation and a different measure of conformity tendency.

Before conducting the main Study 4, we conducted a pretest to verify our assumption that witnessing moral violations would lead to perceived threat to social order, which would in turn increase consumers' endorsement of conformist attitudes (see the Web Appendix for details).

Method

Participants and Design. Two hundred fifty participants (112 males; $M_{\text{age}} = 35.92$ years) from Amazon's Mechanical Turk completed the study for payment (US\$1). Twelve participants

did not pass the attention check and were eliminated from further analysis (final $N = 238$). The study was advertised as a survey on social issues and consumption preferences.

Procedure. After providing consent, participants were instructed that the study consisted of three parts. In the first task, participants were told that the researchers were interested in people's impression formation and evaluation of others. They were randomly assigned to conditions of a one-factor, three-level (unpunished corrupt CEO, punished corrupt CEO, and control) between-subjects design. Participants in the *unpunished-corrupt-CEO* condition read a story in which a CEO, "despite his poor managerial performance and reckless spending of shareholders' money towards his luxurious lifestyle, was awarded a large sum of bonus by the company's board" (Zhu 2014, p. 38), thus representing a violation of the moral principle of justice. Participants in the *punished-corrupt-CEO* condition read the same story except that the corrupt CEO was eventually fired for his poor performance and sued by the company's board, and justice was thus upheld. Those in the control condition read about a typical daily experience of a CEO (Nikumb 2013; see the Web Appendix for the articles). To ensure the effectiveness of the manipulation, following Zhu (2014), participants were told that the story was based on a real event with identifying information removed. As in Study 2, to ensure that participants actually read the story, they could proceed to the next page, which included questions to check their understanding of the article (participants were asked to briefly summarize the story and to indicate how involved, interested, and engaged they had been in reading the story, using a scale from 1 = *not at all* to 9 = *very much*; $\alpha = .95$, averaged to form an index of involvement), after at least 100 seconds had elapsed. The average time participants spent reading the article was 131.48 seconds and was similar across conditions ($p > .80$; see Table 1).

Next, participants proceeded to an ostensibly unrelated second study titled “Consumption Preference Survey,” in which participants performed a brand preference task using a measure similar to that employed in prior research (Berger and Heath 2007; Dong et al. 2015). Participants were told that the researchers were interested in surveying people’s brand preferences across several product categories. They were then asked to indicate their preference for each of five product categories based on market share information (ostensibly taken from a recent consumer survey). Specifically, they were asked to choose one of three brands in each of five different product categories (bike lights, remote controls, sofas, home stereo systems, and digital picture frames). The alternatives varied in terms of market share. In a typical item, for example, one brand was preferred by around 70% of consumers, the second by around 20%, and the third by around 10%. Participants’ choices were coded as 1 (the lowest market share option), 2 (the middle market share option), or 3 (the highest market share option). These choices were summed across the five categories to form a conformity-tendency score with a possible range from 5 to 15. Higher numbers indicated greater tendency to conform to others’ preferences.

Afterwards, participants indicated perceived threat to social order (adapted from Fischer et al. 2007). Specifically, they were asked to think back to the moment when reading the CEO’s story and indicate to what extent they perceived the CEO’s behavior would threaten the order of society, to what extent corruption would harm the order of society, to what extent the corruption situation in current society is threatening, and to what extent the current corruption situation is problematic for society, all along a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*). A factor analysis of these items yielded only one factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1, so responses were averaged into a composite index of perceived threat to social order ($\alpha = .95$). They also responded to the same conformist attitudes scale ($\alpha = .85$) used in Studies 2 and 3 (the order of

presenting these two scales was counterbalanced). Lastly, participants completed a short manipulation-check questionnaire titled “Additional Questions Regarding the CEO’s Story” (Question 1: “How do you think of the CEO described in the story?,” rated from 1 = *moral/honest/upright/helpful to his company* to 9 = *immoral/corrupt/ deceptive/harmful to his company*; $\alpha = .98$, averaged to provide an index of perceived immorality of the CEO’s behavior; Question 2: “I think the CEO should be punished for what he has done,” rated from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 9 = *strongly agree*; Question 3: “Based on the story, the CEO has received _____ punishment for his actions,” rated from 1 = *little* to 9 = *adequate*; the last two questions were omitted for the control condition). Participants then reported demographic details.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Checks. As expected, participants who read the story of a corrupt CEO rated the CEO as more immoral than did those who read about the typical daily experience of a CEO ($M_{\text{unpunished corrupt CEO}} = 8.08$, $SD = 1.35$; $M_{\text{punished corrupt CEO}} = 8.37$, $SD = .86$; $M_{\text{control}} = 3.16$, $SD = 1.51$; $F(2, 235) = 419.18$, $p < .001$). No significant difference was observed for the two corrupt-CEO conditions ($p > .15$). Moreover, while participants in the two corrupt-CEO conditions believed that the CEO should be punished to the same extent ($p > .23$), those in the unpunished- (vs. punished-) corrupt-CEO condition reported that the CEO did not receive adequate punishment for his bad deeds ($p < .001$), confirming the success of our manipulation of punishment. Also, participants did not differ in terms of involvement ($p > .24$; see Table 1).

Brand Preference. As predicted, participants who read the story describing a corrupt CEO who went unpunished ($M = 14.21$, $SD = 1.38$) were more likely to prefer brands with larger market share, compared with those who read a similar story describing the same corrupt CEO being punished and sued ($M = 13.50$, $SD = 2.23$; $F(1, 235) = 5.06$, $p = .025$) or those who read

about a CEO's daily life ($M = 13.46$, $SD = 2.25$; $F(1, 235) = 5.75$, $p = .017$). No significant difference was observed between the latter two conditions ($p > .88$). The main effect of condition on participants' subsequent conformity tendency was significant ($F(2, 235) = 3.63$, $p = .028$).

Perceived Threat to Social Order. Exposure to unpunished corruption also had a positive effect on participants' perceived threat to social order ($F(2, 235) = 44.91$, $p < .001$). Participants in the unpunished-corrupt-CEO condition expressed a higher perceived threat to social order ($M = 6.76$, $SD = 1.88$) than did those in the punished-corrupt-CEO ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 2.07$; $F(1, 235) = 3.19$, $p = .002$) or the control condition ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 2.25$; $F(1, 235) = 9.34$, $p < .001$).

Conformist Attitudes. Replicating Studies 2 and 3, we found a significant effect of exposure to moral violations on conformist attitudes ($F(2, 235) = 5.78$, $p = .004$). Specifically, participants who were exposed to unpunished corruption ($M = 5.21$, $SD = 1.42$) endorsed conformist attitudes to a greater extent than did those exposed to punished corruption ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.36$; $F(1, 235) = 6.71$, $p = .01$) or those unexposed to corruption ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.76$; $F(1, 235) = 10.17$, $p = .002$).

Multistage Mediation. We expected that exposure to moral violations should increase conformity by enhancing perceived threat to social order, which in turn should boost participants' endorsement of conformist attitudes. To verify this prediction, we conducted a multistage mediation model (Hayes 2013). The first contrast compared the unpunished-corrupt-CEO condition to the punished-corrupt-CEO condition. The second contrast compared the unpunished-corrupt-CEO condition to the control condition. As hypothesized, exposure to unpunished (vs. punished) corruption heightened the perceived threat to social order, which increased conformist attitudes, leading to greater conformity tendency (*indirect effect* = -0.0274 , $SE = 0.0191$; 95% CI = $[-.0881, -.0038]$). Similarly, the multistage mediation model was also

supported for the effect of the second contrast (unpunished corrupt CEO vs. control) on conformity tendency (*indirect effect* = -0.0800 , $SE = 0.0518$; 95% CI = $[-.2224, -.0071]$).

Moreover, the alternative multistage mediation model (exposure to moral violation → conformist attitudes → threat to social order → brand preference) was not supported for either the first contrast (95% CI: $[-.0560, .0008]$) or the second contrast (95% CI: $[-.0749, .0005]$).

Discussion. In summary, the results of Study 4 extended our understanding of the observed phenomena by showing that exposure to a moral violation increased consumers' conformity tendency in consumption by heightening perceived threat to social order and hence increasing their endorsement of conformist attitudes. Also important, this study provided additional evidence for our proposed mechanism by showing that once the need to restore social order was eliminated (i.e., when the moral violator had already been punished), consumers' tendency to conform was reduced to its baseline level.

STUDY 5 WHEN THE MAJORITY IS PERCEIVED AS IMMORAL

Study 5 sought to further test our proposed underlying process by using a moderation-by-process design (Spencer, Zanna, and Fong 2005). Our logic is that if the majority-endorsed option is viewed as being complicit with the immoral others and may create further imbalance in social order, consumers would not conform to the majority. In other words, the immorality of the majority option should mitigate the observed effect of moral violation.

Method

Participants and Design. Three hundred twenty-four participants recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk online panel (177 males; $M_{\text{age}} = 36.65$ years) took part in this study for payment (US\$0.5). They were randomly assigned to conditions of a 2 (exposure to: moral

violation vs. innocent error) \times 2 (majority morality: immoral vs. control) between-subjects design.

Procedure. To manipulate exposure to moral violation, we followed exactly the same procedures as in Study 2 except that we only included the moral violation and innocent error conditions, as the effect was restricted to moral violation and could not generalize to any negative threats such as natural disaster (Studies 1 and 2). After reading the assigned news article, participants answered the same two questions intended for checking their understanding of the article. The average time participants spent reading the article was 166.10 seconds and was similar across conditions ($p > .89$).

Next, all participants proceeded to the second, ostensibly unrelated study, titled “Book Club Membership Choice.” In the majority control conditions, participants were presented with exactly the same book club choice task as used in Study 2. In the immoral majority conditions, we explicitly pitted the perceived morality of the book clubs against the perceived popularity by providing different information about the occupation of members in the two book clubs. Specifically, participants were told that most members of the majority book club were financial industry employees, whereas most members of the minority book club were nonprofit organization employees. In all conditions, participants were asked to indicate which book club they preferred to join and rated their likelihood of joining each of the two book clubs along the same scale (1 = *very unlikely*; 9 = *very likely*), as in Study 2. We chose financial industry workers to manipulate immoral majority because they are commonly perceived to be unethical and opportunistic (Alton 2015; Federwisch 2015). Indeed, a pretest with 50 participants (22 males; $M_{\text{age}} = 34.54$ years) from the same participant pool verified that financial industry employees ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 1.67$; $F(1, 49) = 6.16$, $p = .017$) were rated less moral than the

general population ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.56$), which was in turn rated less moral than nonprofit organization employees ($M = 6.92$, $SD = 1.55$; $F(1, 49) = 28.25$, $p < .001$) (along a scale from 1 *very immoral* to 9 *very moral*).

Lastly, participants indicated to what extent they thought employees of the financial industry and those of the nonprofit organizations mentioned in the book club manipulation were moral or immoral along a scale from 1 (*very immoral*) to 9 (*very moral*) as a manipulation check. Participants then reported their demographic details and were thanked and funnel debriefed. No participant correctly guessed the purpose of this study. Prior to analysis, sixteen participants were excluded for failing to pass an attention check. Moreover, post-experimental probe revealed that nine participants in the immoral majority conditions were unaware of the occupation information of most members for each book club (which manipulated the perceived morality of each book club) and the data of these participants were excluded from further analysis. Screening based on these two exclusion criteria left us a final sample of 302.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Check. As expected, participants in the moral violation condition ($M = 8.06$, $SD = 1.25$) perceived bankers involved in the LIBOR incident as more immoral than did those in the innocent error condition ($M = 5.98$, $SD = 2.15$; $F(1, 300) = 107.59$, $p < .001$). Moreover, all participants perceived that the LIBOR incident described in the news article would damage the economy to a similar extent ($p > .08$). In addition, all participants perceived the news article to be realistic since the realism ratings were significantly higher than the scale midpoint ($ps < .001$) and were comparable across conditions ($p > .08$). No significant difference was observed in participants' involvement across conditions ($p > .12$; see Table 1). Finally, for majority morality manipulation check, participants indeed rated employees of financial industry

($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.76$) as less moral than those of nonprofit organizations ($M = 6.83$, $SD = 1.66$; $F(1, 301) = 372.12$, $p < .001$).

Since we used financial industry employees to manipulate immoral majority, it is possible that there might be some nonindependence between the moral violation manipulation and the majority morality manipulation. In other words, participants might perceive financial industry employees in the book club manipulation to be more immoral in the moral violation condition than the innocent error condition. To rule out that possibility, we compared participants' morality rating of financial industry employees between the moral violation and innocent error conditions and found no difference (4.26 vs. 4.22; $F < 1$). This suggests that the morality majority manipulation was successful and was independent of the moral violation manipulation.

Book Club Choice. A binary logistic regression model with moral violation (1 = moral violation; -1 = innocent error), majority morality (1 = immoral; -1 = control), and their interaction as predictors of book club choice (1 = choosing the majority book club; 0 = choosing the minority book club) yielded a significant main effect of majority morality ($b = -0.35$, $SE = 0.14$, $z = -2.59$, $p = .010$) and a significant moral violation \times majority morality interaction effect ($b = -0.28$, $SE = 0.13$, $z = -2.09$, $p = .037$). Planned contrast revealed that exposure to moral violation (vs. innocent error) increased preference for the majority book club (44.7% vs. 25.4%; $\chi^2(1) = 6.06$, $p = .014$) for those in the majority control conditions. In the immoral majority conditions, participants had relatively lower preferences for the majority book club and their preferences did not significantly differ between the moral violation and innocent error conditions (19.2% vs. 23.4%, respectively; $\chi^2(1) = .39$; $p > .53$). Using participants' relative preference for the majority (vs. minority) book club yielded the same conclusion (see the Web Appendix).

Discussion. The results of this study demonstrate the critical role of the morality of the majority—exposure to moral violation does not always increase conformity tendency in consumption, rather, individuals conform only as a function of the morality of the majority. These results thereby provide further support for our argument that the effect of exposure to moral violation on conformity is driven by a heightened desire to restore social order. When choosing the majority-endorsed option is viewed as being complicit with the immoral others and may therefore further disrupt the balance of social order, the effect disappeared.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Taken together, the results of five studies provide converging evidence that exposure to moral violations leads to increased preference for majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) options in domains different from where the moral violation occurred. We demonstrated that exposure to moral violations heightens consumers' perceived threat to social order, which increases their endorsement of conformist attitudes and therefore leads to greater conformity tendency in consumption. Critically, the effect of exposure to moral violations on conformity disappears (a) when consumers have low (vs. high) need to belong, as inferred indirectly from participants' perceived social support (Study 1) or measured directly (Studies 2 and 3), (b) when the moral violator has already been punished by third parties (Study 4), and (c) when the majority option is viewed as being complicit with the moral violation (Study 5).

Importantly, we observed consistent effects across studies despite variations in study contexts and materials. For instance, we found the predicted effect of exposure to moral violations in both laboratory (Studies 1 and 3) and online settings (Studies 2, 4, and 5). We found it using different manipulations of exposure to moral violations, involving news articles describing a financial scandal (Studies 1, 2, and 5), stories about a corrupt CEO (Study 4), and

actual cheating behavior (Study 3). We also found evidence for the effect across different product categories and across different measures of conformity—both self-reported preferences (Studies 2, 4, and 5) and real choices (Studies 1 and 3).

Our results rule out a number of alternative interpretations. For example, the effect cannot be attributed to a mere heightened motivation to protect oneself and cannot be generalized to any events that elicit threats or negative affect. If that were the case, people who were exposed to a natural disaster threat should also have been more inclined to choose majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) options, which did not happen (Studies 1 and 2). In addition, the effect cannot be explained by a mere heightened salience of norm deviance and a mere desire for normative behavior after exposure to moral violations. If that were true, participants in the punished-corrupt-CEO condition should have expressed a tendency to conform equal to that of participants in the unpunished-corrupt-CEO condition (Study 4). Finally, neither moral emotions (additional measures of Studies 2 through 4; see the Web Appendix) nor desire for power, control, or status (additional measures of Study 1; see the Web Appendix) could account for the effect.

Theoretical Contributions of the Research

Our conceptualization of these effects intersects with theory and research in three different areas, involving (a) the psychological consequences of witnessing moral violations, (b) the psychological functions of conformity, and (c) the power of symbolic consumption in coping with negative feelings and experiences, and thus contributes to each of these research areas.

First, this research extends current literature on the psychological consequences of witnessing moral violations by documenting a novel effect of witnessing moral violations on consumer choice. We offer a new mechanism through which exposure to moral violations can

influence consumer choice. Whereas extant research has primarily focused on how witnessing moral violations leads to moral disgust (Chapman et al. 2009), which intensifies disgust reactions toward gustatory and olfactory stimuli (Skarlicki et al. 2013) and reduces consumers' consumption of food and drinks (Chan et al. 2014), we instead bring to light the influence of witnessing moral violations on consumers' preference for consumption choice options that are endorsed by the majority (vs. minority). Our research suggests that when actions aimed at directly condemning and punishing moral violations are not immediately available, consumers have a tendency to conform to the majority. This tendency is driven by a generalized desire for maintaining social order after being exposed to moral violations, and it manifests symbolically in consumers' greater preference for majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) choice options (e.g., brands with larger vs. smaller market share).

Second, by identifying a novel antecedent of conformity, this research contributes to the conformity literature by documenting another important psychological function of conformity, in addition to normative and informative functions (i.e., obtaining social acceptance and making the right judgments and decisions, respectively). The present research suggests that a potential third motive for conforming to others' preferences and behaviors is to symbolically build up a moral majority—the feeling that one is accompanied by many on the same moral ground—which signals social order. Although endorsing or choosing a majority-endorsed product in an unrelated domain may not exert any real repercussions for the moral transgressor personally, being in the majority (vs. minority) group may nevertheless signal social order to those exposed to moral transgressions and attenuate their concern about condemning and punishing moral violators.

Third, this research contributes to the increasing body of literature examining how consumers may symbolically cope with negative feelings and experiences through consumption

(e.g., Cutright et al. 2011; Dong, Huang, and Wyer 2013; Gao, Wheeler, and Shiv 2009; Kay et al. 2009). Moreover, the current investigation highlights the role of moral values and their associated motivational responses in driving actions aimed at coping with the negative consequences of witnessing moral violations. Our results suggest that acquiring majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) products can be one symbolic strategy used by consumers to cope with the negative consequences associated with moral violations.

Relation to Previous Research and Opportunities for Future Research

Political Ideology. Although our theorizing does not incorporate individuals' political ideology, the chronic differences in the preference for common and unique choice alternatives as a function of one's political ideology should be noted. Extant literature has shown that political conservatism is associated with a systematic preference for established national brands (vs. their generic substitutes) and with a lower tendency to buy new products (Khan, Misra, and Singh 2013). More broadly, conservative ideology has been shown to be associated with a preference for tradition and the status quo (Jost et al. 2003), skepticism about new experiences (McCrae 1996), and greater conformist attitudes (Murray and Schaller 2012). These ideology-based differences could have an influence on the disposition to conform to majority preferences independently of the factors we investigated. On the other hand, it is possible that the effect we observed is more pronounced among individuals who gravitate toward conservative (vs. liberal) ideology, because two factors (i.e., exposure to moral violations and trait-level high conservatism) directing to the same consequence (i.e., greater conformity tendency) might exert an even stronger motivational force. This possibility may be worth examining in future studies.

Group Dynamics. The positive effect of witnessing moral violations on individuals' tendency to conform to the majority (vs. minority) group's preferences and behaviors is

noteworthy in the context of research on the social nature of morality more generally, which largely emphasizes group competition (Haidt 2012). For instance, prior research has demonstrated that unethical behaviors of out-group (vs. in-group) members are more likely to be perceived as breaches of social norms (Gino, Ayal, and Ariely 2009) and, as a result, violations by out-group (vs. in-group) members may elicit a stronger perceived threat to social order and thus greater conformist attitudes and behavior. Future research could examine whether the effect we found would be attenuated for violations by in-group members. Moreover, another important question concerning group competition is whether moral behaviors may sometimes provoke conformity. For instance, although moral rebels may be embraced by uninvolved third parties, they are often rejected by their peers who feel that such rebellion implicitly calls their own behavior into question (Monin, Sawyer, and Marquez 2008). Thus, people's conformity tendency after observing moral rebels may be largely determined by their self-perception of their own moral standing, such that they may tend to conform if they are uninvolved third-party observers of immoral behavior but choose to stand out if they are involved in immoral behavior that is rejected by the moral rebel. In this sense, it is not moral violation, per se, but the perceived threat to social order that causes conformist attitudes and choices. While witnessing moral violations is one of the most prevalent experiences of threat to social order, it is important to recognize that social order can also be challenged by moral acts.

Types of Violations. In our studies, we have looked into three types of moral violations, concerning financial scandals, cheating, and corruption. Based on the typology of the Moral Foundations Theory (Haidt 2012), these violations can be categorized as breaches of the moral principles of fairness and loyalty. Future research could examine whether the observed effect generalizes to violations of other types of moral principles (e.g., care, sanctity, liberty).

The Role of Severity of Moral Violations. Future research could also seek to improve our understanding of the relationship between the severity of moral violations and desire for conformity. One possibility is that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship whereby moderately severe moral violations trigger actions toward conforming to the majority but extremely severe violations can be depleting and daunting. Indeed, Rucker et al. (2004) showed that when people perceived threats to social order (vs. no threats), they expressed a greater tendency to punish the transgressors, but “only when the perceived severity of the transgression or crime was relatively moderate” (p. 673). Therefore, we expect that the effect we observed might also be more likely to occur for violations that are relatively moderate in terms of their perceived severity. Another possibility is that the relationship between exposure to moral violations and conformity follows a step function, such that the effect will occur as long as people perceive social order being disrupted, regardless of how severe the transgression is. Our results from Study 3 appear to be more in line with the step-function hypothesis because the effect was comparable in magnitude for both direct victims (for whom the perceived severity of cheating behavior might be higher) and third-party observers. Future research could explicitly manipulate the severity of moral violations and test whether the magnitude of the effect varies as a function of severity.

Cultural Differences. Given that our experiments were run exclusively with North American samples, future research could examine potential cultural influences on the observed effect. Two cultural dimensions may be relevant. The first dimension pertains to interdependence versus independence. We expect that the effect might be stronger for people in interdependent cultures, who may desire more social support and have a higher need to belong. Another relevant cultural-difference dimension pertains to “tightness” versus “looseness” (Gelfand et al. 2011). It

is possible that the effect may be stronger in tight (vs. loose) cultures, in which the tolerance of morally deviant behaviors tends to be lower (vs. higher).

Nature of Products. Finally, we used neutral products in all our studies. Future research could explore whether the effect disappears or even reverses for products that are perceived as immoral (e.g., counterfeit products). Endorsing immoral products that are owned by the majority may be perceived as further disrupting the already imbalanced social order, which may activate strong aversive reactions to the majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) products, thus attenuating or even reversing the effect we observed.

While the current research leaves multiple questions open for future research, it is an important first step in demonstrating that exposure to others' immoral behaviors can increase desire for majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) options.

Practical Implications

Practically, this research has important managerial implications for marketers. With the advent of online retailing, direct marketing communications targeting different consumers has become easier than ever. Marketers can therefore make use of our research to tailor their marketing communications in different countries or regions where residents have varying chances of observing unethical behaviors. For instance, in areas with high crime rates or countries with higher perceived corruption levels, marketers may consider employing advertising messages stressing the popularity (vs. uniqueness) of their products to strategically manage the selling traffic of majority versus minority brands.

Moreover, this work has implications for managing consumers' online search behavior. For instance, when searching on Amazon.com, consumers are typically provided with several options, including options to search by "Best Sellers," "Hot New Releases," "Most Wished For,"

“Movers & Shakers” (i.e., biggest gainers in sales rank over the past 24 hours), average customer reviews, price, and relevance. Of relevance to our research is the search by “Best Sellers,” which displays the most popular products based on sales and is updated hourly. Our findings suggest that to facilitate sales of popular products, marketers may consider changing the default search criteria to “Best Sellers” in markets where consumers have relatively high chances of witnessing moral violations.

Finally, our findings carry practical implications for crowdfunding. On crowdfunding sites such as Kickstarter.com, project creators raise funds from potential buyers to start their ventures and offer products to the buyers in return. In light of our research showing that mere exposure to moral violations can increase consumers’ desire to associate with a larger (vs. smaller) crowd of people, witnessing moral violations might increase consumers’ tendency to fund projects that set a higher (vs. lower) bar (e.g., the project will be effective only if 10, 000 vs. 100 people agree to contribute). That is because once a project with a higher bar becomes effective, there will be more customers certain to own it, since consumers need to precommit and pledge money for the product. Moreover, we suspect that this effect might be more likely to occur for moderately desirable projects or ventures than for extremely desirable ones to which consumers are already highly committed (e.g., a new book by one’s favorite writer). Thus, creators of crowdfunding projects might consider launching higher-bar projects in countries or areas where consumers have relatively high chances of witnessing moral violations.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Summary of Manipulation Check and Control Variables for Studies 1, 2, 4, and 5

Study 1 (N = 210)	<i>Moral Violation</i>	<i>Innocent Error</i>	<i>Natural Disaster</i>
Immorality of behavior	7.00(1.18) ^a	5.37(1.35) ^b	—
Damage economy	6.14(1.61) ^a	5.56(1.63) ^a	5.90(1.80) ^a
Realistic rating	6.48(1.71) ^a	5.93(1.18) ^b	6.80(1.30) ^a
Involvement	6.28(1.66) ^a	5.84(1.47) ^a	6.39(1.36) ^a
Study 2 (N = 290)	<i>Moral Violation</i>	<i>Innocent Error</i>	<i>Natural Disaster</i>
Time spent reading the story	165.83(88.36) ^a	168.37(95.38) ^a	155.80(73.03) ^a
Immorality of behavior	8.09(1.13) ^a	5.86(2.00) ^b	—
Damage economy	5.79(2.21) ^a	5.46(1.95) ^a	5.88(1.66) ^a
Realistic rating	6.93(1.84) ^a	6.40(2.20) ^a	6.55(1.87) ^a
Involvement	7.88(1.45) ^a	7.65(1.64) ^a	7.89(1.35) ^a
Study 4—Main Study (N = 250)	<i>Unpunished-Corrupt-CEO</i>	<i>Punished-Corrupt-CEO</i>	<i>Typical Day</i>
Time spent reading the article	129.16(44.20) ^a	131.66(41.72) ^a	133.69(46.30) ^a
Immorality of behavior	8.08(1.35) ^a	8.37(0.86) ^a	3.16(1.51) ^b
Deserve to be punished	7.74(1.63) ^a	8.05(1.63) ^a	—
Punishment adequacy	1.52(1.33) ^a	4.28(2.59) ^b	—
Involvement	7.77(1.51) ^a	7.99(1.50) ^a	7.59(1.44) ^a
Study 5 (N = 324)	<i>Moral Violation</i>	<i>Innocent Error</i>	
Time spent reading the article	167.55(91.98) ^a	161.61(69.92) ^a	
Immorality of behavior	8.06(1.25) ^a	5.98(2.15) ^b	
Damage economy	5.96(2.03) ^a	5.56(2.03) ^a	
Realistic rating	6.95(1.80) ^a	6.58(1.97) ^a	
Involvement	7.79 (1.56) ^a	7.52(1.60) ^a	

Note: Cells with different superscripts in each row differ significantly at $p < .05$.

WEB APPENDIX

I. Additional Measures and Results

1. Additional Measures and Analyses of Study 1
2. Additional Measures and Analyses of Study 2
3. Additional Measures and Analyses of Study 3
4. Additional Measures and Analyses of Study 4
5. Additional Measures and Analyses of Study 5

II. Study Stimuli and Measures

1. Study 1 Stimuli
2. Study 2 Stimuli
3. Study 4 Stimuli

III. Additional Studies

1. Pilot Test of Study 1
2. Pretest of Study 4

I. ADDITIONAL MEASURES AND RESULTS

Additional Measures and Analyses – Study 1

As prior research shows that people with higher moral identity were more likely to respond to moral violations (e.g., justice violation; O'Reilly, Aquino, and Skarlicki 2016), we measured participants' moral identity (i.e., to what extent morality is important to one's self-image; Aquino and Reed 2002) to see whether it would moderate or account for the effect we observed. Moreover, prior research suggests that participants' desire for control, power, or status (Wan, Xu, and Ding 2014), and their desire for unique consumer products ([DUCP], Lynn and Harris 1997) may reduce one's tendency to conform to others' preferences and are shown to fluctuate with temporary manipulations (Huang, Dong, and Mukhopadhyay 2014; Wan et al. 2014). Thus, we included these measures in the end of Study 1 as control variables. Specifically, participants responded to the moral identity scale (including the internalization and symbolization subscales; Aquino and Reed 2002), desire for unique consumer products scale (DUCP; 8 items; Lynn and Harris 1997; $\alpha = .82$), desire for control (5 items; Burger and Cooper 1979; $\alpha = .72$), status (2 items; Wan et al. 2014; $r = .57, p < .001$), and power (4 items; Wan et al. 2014; $\alpha = .70$) scales, all along scales from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). They also indicated their mood (1 = *very sad*; 9 = *very happy*), arousal (1 = *very calm*, 9 = *very aroused*), and powerful feeling (1 = *very powerless*; 9 = *very powerful*) to see if exposure to moral violations changes their mood and feelings of power (similar as desire for power, feelings of power is also associated with higher uniqueness seeking tendency; Lynn and Harris 1997).

Analyses revealed that participants in the three conditions did not differ in their desire for control, power, or status, desire for unique consumer products, or their mood, arousal, feelings of power ($ps > .28$; see Table S1 for means and *SDs*). Moreover, the effect of exposure to moral violation on conformity was independent of ones' moral identity (see Table S2a for details). Lastly, logistic regression with magnet choice on moral violation, mood, arousal, feeling of power, desire for control, power and status, desire for unique consumer products as well as the interactions between moral violation and each of the control variables revealed only a significant main effect of moral violation ($b = .41, SE = .16, z = 2.55, p = .01$; see Table S2b). No other effects were found significant ($ps > .17$). This result suggests that none of the above measures could account for the effects.

Table S1. Summary of Results for Additional Measures (Studies 1-4)

Study 1 (N = 210)	<i>Moral Violation</i>	<i>Innocent Error</i>	<i>Natural Disaster</i>
Desire for control	5.28(1.02) ^a	5.40(0.78) ^a	5.36(1.24) ^a
Desire for power	4.30(1.35) ^a	4.59(1.14) ^a	4.51(1.35) ^a
Desire for status	4.25(1.50) ^a	4.62(1.49) ^a	4.59(1.64) ^a
Internalization	6.26(0.72) ^a	6.10(0.85) ^a	6.08(1.04) ^a
Symbolization	4.76(1.09) ^a	4.14(1.24) ^b	4.36(0.98) ^b
Mood	5.84(1.64) ^a	5.86(1.48) ^a	5.67(1.29) ^a
Arousal	3.65(2.44) ^a	3.67(2.04) ^a	3.28(1.82) ^a
Powerful feeling	5.00(1.55) ^a	5.29(1.52) ^a	5.38(1.63) ^a
Study 2 (N = 290)	<i>Moral Violation</i>	<i>Innocent Error</i>	<i>Natural Disaster</i>
Moral anger	4.57(2.27) ^a	3.65(2.13) ^b	3.00(1.91) ^b
Moral disgust	5.22(2.78) ^a	4.23(2.68) ^b	2.77(2.21) ^c
Positive affect index	5.12(1.67) ^a	5.15(1.92) ^a	4.96(1.79) ^a
Negative affect index	2.01(1.37) ^a	1.44(0.80) ^b	1.58(1.05) ^b
Study 3 (N = 186)	<i>Cheater Present</i>	<i>Cheater Absent</i>	
Moral anger	3.60(1.58) ^a	3.13(1.69) ^a	
Moral disgust	3.16(1.93) ^a	2.65(1.98) ^a	
Mood	5.55(1.65) ^a	5.39(1.61) ^a	
Study 4—Main Study (N = 250)	<i>Unpunished- Corrupt-CEO</i>	<i>Punished- Corrupt-CEO</i>	<i>Typical Day</i>
Mood	6.02(1.90) ^a	6.35(1.54) ^a	6.39(1.46) ^a
Arousal	4.02(2.28) ^a	4.37(2.43) ^a	4.39(2.53) ^a
Fearful feeling	2.64(1.08) ^a	2.72(1.28) ^a	2.90(1.44) ^a

Note: Cells with different superscripts in each row differ significantly at $p < .05$.

Table S2a: Effects of Moral Violation and Moral Identity on Choice for Study 1

<i>Parameter</i>	DV: Magnet Choice
Constant	0.10(1.35)
Moral Violation (1 = Moral Violation, -1 = Otherwise)	0.43(0.16) [*]
Internalization	-0.08(0.21)
Symbolization	0.06(0.14)
Moral Violation × Internalization	-0.24(0.18)
Moral Violation × Symbolization	-0.23(0.16)
Cox & Snell R^2	0.06
Nagelkerke R^2	0.08

Note: Unstandardized coefficients are given, with standard errors in parentheses. ^{*} $p < .01$

Table S2b: Full Model Logistic Regression Results for Study 1

<i>Parameter</i>	DV: Magnet Choice
Constant	-0.18(0.16)
Moral Violation (1 = Moral Violation, -1 = Otherwise)	0.41(0.16)*
Mood	-0.14(0.11)
Arousal	-0.02(0.07)
Powerful Feeling	0.08(0.10)
Desire for Control	0.04(0.24)
Desire for Power	-0.17(0.19)
Desire for Status	-0.02(0.11)
DUCP	0.17(0.12)
Moral Violation × Mood	-0.13(0.11)
Moral Violation × Arousal	-0.01(0.07)
Moral Violation × Powerful Feeling	0.13(0.10)
Moral Violation × Desire for Control	0.05(0.24)
Moral Violation × Desire for Power	-0.10(0.19)
Moral Violation × Desire for Status	-0.02(0.11)
Moral Violation × DUCP	-0.10(0.12)
Cox & Snell R^2	0.08
Nagelkerke R^2	0.11

Note: Unstandardized coefficients are given, with standard errors in parentheses. * $p < .05$

Additional Measures and Analyses – Study 2

Manipulation Check of the Two Book Club Options. After participants indicated their choice and preference for each of the two book clubs, as manipulation checks, participants rated the perceived popularity (“The slogan emphasizes on the popularity of joining the club”, “The slogan emphasizes the book club’s mission to help people get together”; averaged to form an index of popularity appeal; $r_{majority_club} = .45, p < .001$; $r_{minority_club} = .65, p < .001$) and perceived uniqueness (“The slogan emphasizes on the uniqueness of joining the club”, “The slogan emphasizes the message that joining the club will make one stand out from the crowd”; averaged to form an index of uniqueness appeal; $r_{majority_club} = .67, p < .001$; $r_{minority_club} = .78, p < .001$) of each of the two book clubs (all from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 9 = *strongly agree*; measures adapted from Huang et al. 2014). Repeated analyses were conducted to verify the effectiveness of the manipulation. The analyses showed that the majority book club was indeed rated as more popular ($M_{majority} = 6.12, SD = 1.84$; $M_{minority} = 3.61, SD = 2.14, F(1, 270) = 262.47, p < .001$), whereas the minority book club was rated as more unique ($M_{majority} = 4.60, SD = 2.00$; $M_{minority} = 7.71, SD = 1.36; F(1, 270) = 430.32, p < .001$), confirming the validity of the manipulation of majority versus minority book clubs.

Moderated Mediation with Contrast Coding. To further test the robustness of these results, we conducted the same moderated mediation analysis (as reported in the main text) using contrast coding (Rosenthal, Rosnow, and Rubin 2000; C1: innocent error = -1, natural disaster = -1, moral violation = 2; C2: innocent error = -1, natural disaster = 1, moral violation = 0). The

first contrast (C1) compared the moral violation condition to the two other conditions. The second contrast (C2) compared the innocent error condition to the natural disaster condition. As expected, conformist attitudes mediated the effect of the first contrast on book club choice among participants with high need to belong (+1 *SD*; $M = 6.05$; $b = 0.0464$, $SE = 0.0311$; 95% CI: [.0043, .1303]), but not among those with low need to belong (-1 *SD*; $M = 3.32$; $b = 0.0157$, $SE = .0220$; 95% CI: [-.0197, .0676]). Moreover, consistent with the finding of no differences in book club choice or conformist attitudes between the innocent error and natural disaster conditions, conformist attitudes did not mediate the effect of the second contrast on book club choice for either participants with high (+1 *SD*; $M = 6.05$; $b = -0.0280$, $SE = 0.0434$; 95% CI: [-.1226, 0.0396]) or those with low (-1 *SD*; $M = 3.32$; $b = -0.0090$, $SE = .0207$; 95% CI: [-.0906, .0248]) levels of need to belong.

Relative Preference for Majority (vs. Minority) Book Club. Consistent with the results using book club choice as the dependent variable, regression analysis with dummy coding (Dummy 1 = innocent error; Dummy 2 = natural disaster), need to belong ($\alpha = .85$; averaged and mean-centered), and their interactions as predictors of relative preference for the majority book club suggested that participants in the moral violation condition ($M = 1.13$, $SD = 4.34$) expressed a greater preference for the majority book club, compared to the innocent error condition ($M = -0.98$, $SD = 4.41$; $b = -1.96$, $SE = 0.61$, $t(265) = -3.22$, $p = .001$), and in the moral violation condition compared to the natural disaster condition ($M = -0.20$, $SD = 3.88$; $b = -1.28$, $SE = 0.59$, $t(265) = -2.16$, $p = .032$). The analysis also yielded a significant effect of need to belong (moderator: $b = 1.62$, $SE = 0.34$, $t(265) = 4.73$, $p < .001$), which is consistent with prior literature showing that consumers with higher need to belong tend to conform (Leary et al. 2013). Yet, this effect of need to belong was weaker in the innocent error condition compared to the moral violation condition (Dummy 1 \times Moderator: $b = -1.02$, $SE = 0.47$, $t(265) = -2.18$, $p = .030$), and weaker in the natural disaster compared to the moral violation condition (Dummy 2 \times Moderator: $b = -1.56$, $SE = 0.45$, $t(265) = -3.47$, $p < .001$).

Following the same procedure as we did in the main text with book club choice as dependent variable, we conducted the moderated mediation analysis with relative preference for majority club as the dependent variable. The indirect effect of innocent error versus moral violation, with a 90% bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence interval, was significant at high level of need to belong (+1 *SD*, $M = 6.05$: $b = -.2047$, $SE = .1747$, 90% CI = [-.6324, -.0107]), but not low need to belong (-1 *SD*, $M = 3.32$: $b = -.0921$, 90% CI = [-.3837, .0315]). The indirect effect of natural disaster versus moral violation, with a 95% bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence interval, was significant at high level of need to belong (+1 *SD*, $M = 6.05$: $b = -.2836$, $SE = .2028$, 95% CI = [-.8577, -.0114]), but not low need to belong (-1 *SD*, $M = 3.32$: $b = -.1276$, 95% CI = [-.5215, .1094]).

Mediation of the effect through conformist attitudes also holds when the three conditions were coded using contrast coding (Rosenthal, Rosnow, and Rubin 2000; C1: innocent error = -1, natural disaster = -1, moral violation = 2; C2: innocent error = -1, natural disaster = 1, moral violation = 0). As expected, mediation occurred when need to belong was higher (+1 *SD*; $M = 6.05$; $b = 0.0814$, $SE = 0.0591$; 95% CI: [.0023, .2400]), but not when need to belong was lower (-1 *SD*; $M = 3.32$; $b = 0.0366$, $SE = 0.0434$; 95% CI: [-.0298, .1446]). Moreover, consistent with the finding of no differences in book club choice or conformist attitudes between the two control conditions, conformist attitudes did not mediate the effect of the second contrast on book club choice for neither higher (+1 *SD*; $M = 6.05$; $b = -0.0532$, $SE = 0.0850$; 95% CI: [-.2491, .0580])

nor lower (-1 SD; $M = 3.32$; $b = -0.0213$, $SE = 0.0457$; 95% CI: $[-.1769, .0307]$) levels of need to belong.

Moral Emotions. To test whether moral emotions could account for the effect, participants reported to what extent they experienced moral anger (angry, upset, and hostile; $\alpha = .92$; averaged to form an index of moral anger), disgust, positive (averaged 10-items; $\alpha = .91$) and negative affect (averaged 10-items; $\alpha = .93$) captured by the PANAS scale, along 1 (not at all) to 9 (extremely) after they responded to the conformist attitude and need to belong scales. Replicating previous findings (Chan et al. 2014; Skarlicki et al. 2013), participants in the moral violation condition also experienced greater moral anger ($F(2, 268) = 13.09$, $p < .001$) and disgust ($F(2, 268) = 21.95$, $p < .001$; see Table S1 for means and SDs) than those in the two control conditions. In addition, although participants in the three conditions did not differ in positive affect ($p > .73$), those in the moral violation condition reported feeling more negative affect ($F(2, 268) = 6.46$, $p = .002$). However, similar moderated mediation analyses revealed that neither negative affect (95% CI for the index of moderated mediation for the first contrast: $[-1.0238, 1.7449]$; 95% CI for the second contrast: $[-1.1430, 1.2195]$) nor moral emotions (moral anger: 95% CI for the first contrast: $[-.5503, .9634]$ and for the second contrast: $[-.7183, .8774]$; moral disgust: 95% CI for the first contrast: $[-.5014, 2.7934]$ and for the second contrast: $[-1.5661, 2.5435]$) mediated the effect of exposure to moral violations on book club choice (using relative preference for the majority vs. minority book club yielded the same conclusion). These findings cast doubt on the account that participants were choosing majority options out of mere moral anger or disgust.

Preference for Social Networking Tools (Exploratory Measures). In the last part of Study 2, embedded in the demographic information section, we also included a measure tapping on participants' opinions towards various social media products to examine whether exposure to moral violations would carry over to influence participants' attitude towards social network tools, which can facilitate their goal of rallying social support from the virtual community in order to feel being in the majority. Participants were asked to indicate their attitudes towards seven major existing social network tools including Facebook, Twitter, Google +, Youtube, Instagram, Whatsapp, and Tumblr. For each social network tool, participants first indicated whether they are a current user of the product (1 = yes; 0 = no). If yes, they then indicated their attitude toward each of the social network tools along two dimensions (1 = *very undesirable /not willing to use it frequently* to 9 = *very desirable /willing to use it frequently*). If not, they then reported their attitude toward each of the social network tools along two dimensions anchored from 1 = *very undesirable /not willing to join it* to 9 = *very desirable /willing to join it*; r^2 's $> .81$, p 's $< .001$). The two items were averaged to provide an index of participants' desirability for each of the seven social network tools. The results of participants' preference for social network tools as a function of their current status and experimental condition were presented below (see Table S3). For current users, we did not observe any significant differences except for Youtube. Participants in the moral violation condition expressed a greater desire for Youtube, compared to those in the innocent error condition (7.61 vs. 6.91, $F(1, 244) = 6.03$, $p < .05$). For current non-users, we did find that participants expressed a more favorable attitude towards Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, and Tumblr after witnessing moral violation (vs. innocent error or natural disaster).

Table S3. Desirability of Social Network Tools (Exploratory Measure) – Study 2

<i>Current Users</i>					
	N	Moral Violation	Innocent Error	Natural Disaster	<i>F</i> -test and <i>p</i> -value
Facebook	228	6.75 (1.90) ^a	6.90 (1.67) ^a	6.78 (1.69) ^a	$F(2, 225) = 0.15, p = .86$
Twitter	119	5.90 (1.98) ^a	6.38 (1.97) ^a	6.04 (1.96) ^a	$F(2, 116) = 0.60, p = .55$
Google+	94	5.50 (2.28) ^a	5.58 (1.94) ^a	5.29 (1.88) ^a	$F(2, 91) = 0.18, p = .84$
Youtube	247	7.61 (1.37) ^a	6.91 (2.00) ^b	7.10 (2.02) ^{a,b}	$F(2, 244) = 3.31, p = .04$
Whatsapp	26	7.00 (1.25) ^a	7.88 (0.95) ^a	6.81 (2.20) ^a	$F(2, 23) = 1.11, p = .3547$
Instagram	86	7.86 (1.36) ^a	7.57 (2.12) ^a	7.37 (1.53) ^a	$F(2, 83) = 0.64, p = .53$
Tumblr	39	7.27 (1.82) ^a	7.54 (1.95) ^a	6.17 (1.95) ^a	$F(2, 36) = 1.79, p = .18$
<i>Non-Users</i>					
	N	Moral Violation	Innocent Error	Natural Disaster	<i>F</i> -test and <i>p</i> -value
Facebook	43	3.59 (1.94) ^a	2.18 (1.33) ^b	1.89 (0.93) ^b	$F(2, 40) = 5.02, p = .01$
Twitter	152	3.72 (2.24) ^a	3.26 (1.85) ^a	3.30 (1.74) ^a	$F(2, 149) = 0.86, p = .43$
Google+	177	3.74 (2.19) ^a	3.87 (1.69) ^a	3.62 (2.13) ^a	$F(2, 174) = 0.22, p = .81$
Youtube	24	5.00 (2.00) ^a	4.28 (2.08) ^a	4.20 (1.96) ^a	$F(2, 21) = 0.29, p = .75$
Whatsapp	245	4.56 (2.20) ^a	3.80 (1.98) ^b	3.89 (1.89) ^b	$F(2, 242) = 3.45, p = .03$
Instagram	185	4.58 (2.02) ^a	3.74 (2.01) ^b	3.70 (2.27) ^b	$F(2, 182) = 3.58, p = .03$
Tumblr	232	3.91 (2.01) ^a	3.15 (1.77) ^b	3.31 (1.99) ^b	$F(2, 229) = 3.63, p = .04$

Note: Cells with different superscripts in each row were significantly different at $p < .05$.

Additional Measures and Analyses – Study 3

Moral Emotions. After participants responded to the conformist attitude and need to belong scales, participants also reported their mood (1 = *sad*; 9 = *happy*), moral anger (averaged 3-items: angry, upset, and hostile; $\alpha = .85$) and disgust, all from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*extremely*). A 2 (exposure to cheating) \times 2 (incentive structure) ANOVA yielded that participants reported experiencing marginally more moral anger ($F(1, 176) = 3.70, p = .056$) and disgust ($F(1, 176) = 3.25, p = .073$) in cheater present conditions (Anger: $M = 3.60, SD = 1.58$; disgust: $M = 3.16, SD = 1.93$) than in cheater absent conditions (Anger: $M = 3.13, SD = 1.69$; disgust: $M = 2.65, SD = 1.98$). However, similar moderated mediation analyses (as we conducted in the main text of study 3) revealed that neither moral anger (95% CI: $[-.0423, .1239]$) nor disgust (95% CI: $[-.0857, .0467]$) mediated the observed effect. No significant mood differences were observed across conditions ($ps > .13$).

Additional Measures and Analyses – Study 4

Mood, Arousal, and Fear. After participants responded to the manipulation check items in the main study 4, participants also reported their mood, arousal and fearful feeling, all from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*extremely*). No significant differences were observed in participants' mood, arousal, or fearful feeling ($ps > .30$), and regression analyses revealed that none of them could predict participants' conformity tendency in brand choice ($ps > .62$). The main effect of

condition on conformity tendency remained significant even after controlling for these factors ($F(2, 232) = 3.74, p = .025$; see Table S1 for means and *SDs*).

Additional Measures and Analyses – Study 5

Manipulation Check of the Two Book Club Options. As in Study 2, after participants indicated their choice and preference for each of the two book clubs, as manipulation checks, participants also rated the perceived popularity (“The slogan emphasizes on the popularity of joining the club”, “The slogan emphasizes the book club’s mission to help people get together”; averaged to form an index of popularity appeal; $r_{majority_club} = .51, p < .001$; $r_{minority_club} = .61, p < .001$) and perceived uniqueness (“The slogan emphasizes on the uniqueness of joining the club”, “The slogan emphasizes the message that joining the club will make one stand out from the crowd”; averaged to form an index of uniqueness appeal; $r_{majority_club} = .69, p < .001$; $r_{minority_club} = .63, p < .001$) of each of the two book clubs (all from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 9 = *strongly agree*; measures adapted from Huang et al. 2014). Repeated analyses were conducted to verify the effectiveness of the manipulation. The analyses showed that the majority book club was indeed rated as more popular ($M_{majority} = 6.71, SD = 1.75$; $M_{minority} = 4.25, SD = 2.03, F(1, 301) = 200.83, p < .001$), whereas the minority book club was rated as more unique ($M_{majority} = 7.76, SD = 1.33$; $M_{minority} = 3.74, SD = 2.22; F(1, 301) = 595.97, p < .001$), confirming the validity of the manipulation of majority versus minority book clubs.

Relative Preference for Majority (vs. Minority) Book Club. Consistent with the results using book club choice as the dependent variable, a 2 (moral violation) \times 2 (majority morality) ANOVA with moral violation condition (1 = moral violation; -1 = innocent error) and nature of the majority (1 = immoral; -1 = control) as the independent variables, and participants relative preference the majority (vs. minority) book club (i.e., participants’ rated likelihood to join the majority book club subtracted by their rated likelihood to join the minority book club) yielded a significant main effect of nature of majority ($F(1, 298) = 18.37, p < .001$) as well as a significant moral violation \times majority morality interaction effect ($F(1, 298) = 6.30, p = .013$). Specifically, participants in the majority control conditions expressed a greater preference for the majority book club if they had read the moral violation news article than if they had read the innocent error article ($M_{moral\ violation} = -0.15, SD = 4.10$ vs. $M_{innocent\ error} = -1.93, SD = 3.94; F(1, 298) = 7.71, p = .006$). In the immoral majority conditions, however, the difference disappeared and participants in both the moral violation and the innocent error condition had relatively low preferences for the majority book club ($M_{moral\ violation} = -3.22, SD = 3.60$ vs. $M_{innocent\ error} = -2.73, SD = 3.93; F(1, 298) = .59, p = .44$).

II. STUDY STIMULI

STUDY 1: MANIPULATIONS AND SCALE MEASURES

Part a. News Article Excerpts

News Article for the Moral Violation Condition



BY JAMES SUROWIECKI

THE FINANCIAL PAGE | July 30, 2012 ISSUE

In order to work well, markets need a basic level of trust. As Alan Greenspan once said, —In virtually all transactions, we rely on the word of those with whom we do business. So what happens to a market in which the most fundamental assumptions turn out to be lies? That is the question in a scandal that has roiled the banking industry all summer. The LIBOR (or the London Inter-bank Offered Rate) is the most important set of numbers in the global financial system. Used as a benchmark for interest rates around the world, it’s assembled by asking a panel of big banks to estimate what it would cost them to borrow money today if they had to.

Hundreds of trillions of dollars in derivatives, corporate loans, and mortgages are pegged to these rates. Yet we now know that for years LIBOR rates were rigged. Barclays has agreed to pay nearly half a billion dollars to regulators for its manipulations, and a host of other big banks are under investigation for similar misdeeds.

Rigging LIBOR was shockingly easy. The estimates aren’t audited. They’re not compared with market prices. And LIBOR is put together by a trade group, without any real supervision from government regulators. In other words, manipulating LIBOR didn’t require any complicated financial hoodoo. The banks just had to tell some simple lies. They had plenty of reasons to do so. At Barclays, for instance, traders were making big bets on derivatives whose value depended on LIBOR; changing rates by even a tiny bit could be exceptionally lucrative. In the years leading up to the financial crisis, these manipulations were, in the words of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, —common and pervasive. The result was that, instead of reflecting what was real, LIBOR reflected what the banks wanted us to believe was real.

The most striking thing about this scandal is that it was predictable—yet no one did anything to stop it. So how do we rein them in? We could start by making it harder for the banks to game the system—LIBOR, for instance, should be revamped so that it reflects actual market rates, not self-serving guesses. Bankers were asked a simple question, and they lied in response. This new approach would be intrusive and overbearing, and would make it harder for bankers to do what they want. In other words, it’s exactly what the financial industry needs.

It is reported that this scandal would cause several different types of economic harm and hurt the sound growth of the global financial market.

News Article for the Innocent Error Control Condition



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NEWS CULTURE BOOKS & FICTION SCIENCE & TECH BUSINESS HUMOR MAGAZINE ARCHIVE [SUBSCRIBE](#)

BY JAMES SUROWIECKI

THE FINANCIAL PAGE | July 30, 2012 ISSUE

In order to work well, markets need a basic level of efficiency. As Alan Greenspan once said, —In virtually all transactions we rely on those with whom we do business. So what happens to a market in which the most fundamental assumptions turn out to be flawed? That is the question that has perplexed the financial industry all summer. The LIBOR (or the London Inter-bank Offered Rate) is the most important set of numbers in the global financial system. Used as a benchmark for interest rates around the world, it's assembled by asking a panel of industry analysts to estimate what it would cost them to borrow money today if they had to. Hundreds of trillions of dollars in derivatives, corporate loans, and mortgages are pegged to these rates. Yet we now know that for years LIBOR rates were inaccurate. One group has agreed to spend nearly half a billion dollars to correct for its unintentional errors, and a host of others are being studied for similar mistakes.

Miscalculating LIBOR was surprisingly easy. The estimates aren't verified. They're not compared with market prices. And LIBOR is put together by a trade group, without any real involvement from government. In other words, miscalculating LIBOR didn't require any complicated financial instruments. The group just had to make their best estimates. They had plenty of reasons to do so. At Barclays, for instance, traders were making big bets on derivatives whose value depended on LIBOR; changing rates by even a tiny bit could be exceptionally important. In the years leading up to the financial crisis, these innocent mistakes were, in the words of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, —common and pervasive. The result was that, instead of reflecting what was real, LIBOR reflected what the industry believed was real.

The most striking thing about this is that it was unforeseeable—no one could do anything to stop it. So how do we improve this? We could start by making it harder for the system to go awry—LIBOR, for instance, should be revamped so that it reflects actual market rates, not best guesses. Analysts were asked a question, but they were unable to give precise responses. This new approach would be helpful and effective, and would make it easier for everyone. In other words, it's exactly what the financial industry needs.

It is reported that the inaccuracy of the LIBOR rate would cause several different types of economic harm and hurt the sound growth of the global financial market.

News Article for the Natural Disaster Control Condition



BY JAMES SUROWIECKI

THE FINANCIAL PAGE | July 30, 2012 ISSUE

In recent years, North Americans have experienced a steady increase in the number of storms, floods, droughts and other extreme weather events. In fact, the average number of natural catastrophes per year has risen 250% since the 1970s. At the same time, populations and economic activity continue to grow in vulnerable cities and regions.

The United Nations estimates that, by 2050, almost 70% of the world's population will reside in cities - many of which are located near coasts, floodplains and fault lines at risk for natural hazards. As a result, disasters now tend to exact higher economic tolls. Indeed, the average yearly economic cost of disasters has quadrupled since the 1980s.

Here in US and in Canada, these trends are clearer than ever. In U.S., flooding, for instance, intensifies in its many regions, even in areas where total precipitation is projected to decline. In Canada, the recent floods in Southern Alberta and in the Greater Toronto Area are a stark reminder of the country's vulnerability. The Alberta floods were the costliest natural disaster in Canadian history and the Toronto floods were the costliest natural disaster in Ontario's history.

Large natural disasters have a negative impact on economic outcomes. A typical disaster lowers gross domestic product (GDP) growth by approximately one percentage point and GDP by about 2%. However, major catastrophes can have even more pronounced effects. The 1995 Kobe earthquake, for instance, reduced residents' GDP per capita by 13% over the long term.

How quickly an economy rebounds depends on the extent to which losses are contained to avoid contagion to the rest of the economy. After Hurricane Katrina, for example, each dollar in direct losses led to an additional 39 cents in indirect losses. Natural disasters can also negatively affect public finances and debt sustainability. When a catastrophe strikes, government finances are hurt two ways: tax revenues drop as a result of a reduction in economic activity, while at the same time, public spending increases to pay for emergency relief and reconstruction. A recent World Bank study found that, on average, disasters lower tax revenues by 10% and raise government spending by 15%, leading to a combined 25% increase in budget deficits.

It is reported that the more frequent extreme weather and natural disaster would cause several different types of economic harm and hurt the sound growth of the global financial market.

Part b. Perceived Social Support Measures

1. How many close friends do you have: _____
2. How many immediate family members (excluding yourself) do you have? _____
Note: Immediate family includes a person's parents, spouses, siblings and children.
3. I have _____ social support when things go wrong: (1 = *very little*; 9 = *a lot of*)
4. My friends and relatives are _____ when I am in need. (1 = *not accessible at all*; 9 = *very accessible*)
5. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:
 - (a) There is a special person who is around when I am in need. (1 = *strongly disagree*, 9 = *strongly agree*)
 - (b) There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows. (1 = *strongly disagree*, 9 = *strongly agree*)
 - (c) My friends really try to help me. (1 = *strongly disagree*, 9 = *strongly agree*)
 - (d) I can count on my friends when things go wrong. (1 = *strongly disagree*, 9 = *strongly agree*)
 - (e) There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings. (1 = *strongly disagree*, 9 = *strongly agree*)

STUDY 2: MANIPULATIONS AND SCALE MEASURES

Part a. Information of the Two Book Clubs

Club A ("Words of Wisdom" Book Club): "We have 513 book readers. We are dedicated to providing a friendly environment to discuss books that inspire rewarding conversations on subjects that are of common interest to all of our group members. We emphasize commonality among our group members. Our slogan is 'Read to Belong, Are You One of Us?'"

Club B ("Beyond Words" Book Club): "We have 43 book readers. We are dedicated to engaging our members in readings and having lively and stimulating discussions on unique subjects. We regard the unique traits and characteristics of our group members as very important. Our slogan is 'Read To Stand Out from the Crowd'"

Part b. Scale Measures

Need to Belong Scale (indicates reverse-coded items):*

- (1) If other people don't seem to accept me, I don't let it bother me*.
- (2) I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me.
- (3) I seldom worry about whether other people care about me*.
- (4) I need to feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need.
- (5) I want other people to accept me.
- (6) I do not like being alone.
- (7) Being apart from my friends for long periods of time does not bother me*.
- (8) I have a strong need to belong.
- (9) It bothers me a great deal when I am not included in other people's plans.
- (10) My feelings are easily hurt when I feel that others do not accept me.

Conformist Attitudes Scale:

- (1) Imposing tough laws and punishments, even to minor crimes, is an effective way to preserve the fiber of a society.
- (2) Constantly breaking social norms often has harmful, unintended consequences.
- (3) The most important part of any game is a well-defined set of rules.
- (4) Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn.
- (5) People are constantly prying into matters that should remain unquestioned.
- (6) Too many new ideas in one country can cause its values to erode.

STUDY 4: STORIES USED IN THE MANIPULATIONS***Unpunished-Corrupt-CEO Condition:***

Harrison Buchanan is the CEO of Emerson Technologies (ET). ET was founded in 1923 and has been providing a wide range of electronic products and consulting services to the technology industry. For many years, ET was a market leader in the technology industry producing innovative and stylish products.

Three years ago, Harrison Buchanan became CEO. Since Mr. Buchanan took office, ET has seen its position in the industry gradually weaken as a result of a series of reforms he introduced. One of these was an expansion plan that completely shifted resources from the most established and profitable graphic chipset business to support the various newly acquired start-up enterprises. His plan to expand ET not only caused the first loss ever in its history, but also unprecedentedly increased the operating cost of ET to what analysts described as an “unsustainable” level. Mr. Buchanan dealt with this crisis with another “consolidation plan” which featured the downsizing ET’s R&D department, which he described as “too costly.” Furthermore, he implemented the layoff plan by eliminating the highest paid employees first. As a result of this plan, ET survived the first crisis but unfortunately was lead into another: ET lost many of its best researchers, who also happened to be among the highest paid, and so their competitive advantages over their competitors eroded. More recently, it has discovered that Mr. Buchanan spent over \$2,230,000 during his time as CEO purchasing luxurious vehicles for his personal use, hosting lavish parties, and renovating his office and home. One example of his extravagant purchases was a \$26,500 coffee table that he put in his office. At the end of the last fiscal year, ET’s stock fell by 15%. Yet in spite of the decline in stock, ETs board of directors voted to retain Mr. Buchanan and to “reward him for his visionary leadership during difficult times” with a \$3,000,000 bonus which, along with stock options that he cashed prior to ET’s stock plunge, is worth an additional \$7,000,000 in pay above his \$2,000,000 salary.

Punished-Corrupt-CEO Condition:

Harrison Buchanan is the CEO of Emerson Technologies (ET). ET was founded in 1923 and has been providing a wide range of electronic products and consulting services to the technology industry. For many years, ET was a market leader in the technology industry producing innovative and stylish products.

Three years ago, Harrison Buchanan became CEO. Since Mr. Buchanan took office, ET has seen its position in the industry gradually weaken as a result of a series of reforms he introduced. One of these was an expansion plan that completely shifted resources from the most established and profitable graphic chipset business to support the various newly acquired start-up enterprises. His plan to expand ET not only caused the first loss ever in its history, but also unprecedentedly increased the operating cost of ET to what analysts described as an “unsustainable” level. Mr. Buchanan dealt with this crisis with another “consolidation plan” which featured the downsizing ET’s R&D department, which he described as “too costly.” Furthermore, he implemented the layoff plan by eliminating the highest paid employees first. As a result of this plan, ET survived the first crisis but unfortunately was lead into another: ET lost many of its best researchers, who also happened to be among the highest paid, and so their competitive advantages over their competitors eroded. More recently, it has discovered that Mr. Buchanan spent over \$2,230,000 during his time as CEO purchasing luxurious vehicles for his personal use, hosting lavish parties, and renovating his office and home. One example of his extravagant purchases was a \$26,500 coffee table that he put in his office. At the end of the last fiscal year, ET’s stock fell by 15%. After their yearly performance review of Mr. Buchanan’s performance, ET’s board of directors unanimously agreed to fire him for underperformance. Furthermore, they threatened to file a lawsuit against Mr. Buchanan for inappropriately using company resources for personal benefit. Facing the prospect of a court battle, Mr. Buchanan settled with the company and agreed to pay “a substantial amount” of money to the company to compensate them for their losses.

Control Condition (A Typical Day of a CEO):

Harrison Buchanan is the CEO of Emerson Technologies (ET). ET was founded in 1923 and has been providing a wide range of electronic products and consulting services to the technology industry. For many years, ET was a market leader in the technology industry producing innovative and stylish products.

As the CEO, Harrison receives \$2,000,000 per year as his salary. Below describes a typical day experience of its CEO Harrison Buchanan:

He dedicates a large part of his day to try and absorb latest news, events and information and what it means for their business. As far as external environment goes, he loves to refer to newspapers, magazines, and CNBC every single day while he turns to internal reports, consultant decks or phone calls to their contacts for business-specific information.

He also spends a disproportionate time of his life in meetings. While people may have differing opinions on the overall value of time spent in meetings, they remain a significant part of the CEO’s diary. As the CEO, Harrison tries and spends a good amount of time meeting clients and fostering business relationships. Internal meetings of the Board, committees, departments, external vendors etc. are omnipresent, but Harrison has learnt to keep them really short and simple.

A day in the life of a CEO is a busy one, and one day is never the same. Like Harrison, most CEOs report that they wake up to emails and go to bed to emails, and being at home never means that they are off. With all of this responsibility, you can expect to earn a sizable salary. The average salary reported for Chief Executive Officers in the United States is \$759,189 per year.

This average is enough to motivate many individuals who want to be leaders to climb their way up the ladder so that they can experience a typical day for a CEO for themselves.

As a typical CEO, he spends more time on the road in a year than an average person spends in his entire working life. Apart from this, he also pursues a sport/hobby including golf, tennis or just a simple walk.

III ADDITIONAL STUDY

Pilot Test of Study 1

Before commencing a full test of the predictions in Study 1, a pilot study was conducted to (a) check whether the products used to represent the majority-endorsed and the minority-endorsed options were equally attractive to participants, (b) verify the effectiveness of the manipulation using news comprehension task, and (c) provide a pilot testing for the predicted main effect of exposure to moral violation on consumers' subsequent conformity tendency in real choice.

Method

59 participants (14 male; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.32$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 1.40$) from a large North American University participated for course credit. The procedures of this pilot test were exactly the same as the main Study 1 except that (a) we only included the moral violation and innocent error conditions, and (b) we did not measure participants' perceived social support, desire for unique consumer products, and their moral identity. One participant misunderstood the experimenters' instructions and three participants refused to choose neither magnet, leaving us a final sample of 55 participants for further analysis.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation checks: As expected, participants in the moral violation condition ($M = 7.05$, $SD = 1.35$) perceived bankers' behaviors as more immoral (averaged 4-item scale; $\alpha = .87$) than those in the innocent error condition ($M = 5.93$, $SD = 1.68$; $F(1, 53) = 7.55$, $p = .008$), suggesting that our manipulation of moral violation was successful. In addition, participants rated the articles as equally realistic ($M_{\text{moral violation}} = 5.79$, $SD = 2.33$; $M_{\text{control}} = 5.26$, $SD = 1.85$; $F(1, 53) = .86$, $p = .359$) and were equally involved in the news comprehension task ($M_{\text{moral violation}} = 5.51$, $SD = 1.93$; $M_{\text{innocent error}} = 4.98$, $SD = 1.77$; $F(1, 53) = 1.16$, $p = .287$).

Choice of Magnet. As predicted, participants who were in the moral violation condition were more likely to choose from the $\frac{1}{4}$ full box magnets (i.e., the majority-endorsed option rather than minority-endorsed option), compared with those who were in the innocent error condition ($M_{\text{moral violation}} = 64.3\%$ vs. $M_{\text{innocent error}} = 40.7\%$; $\chi^2(1) = 3.06$, $p = .080$). The difference was also confirmed in a binary logistic regression ($b = 0.96$, $SE = 0.56$, $z = 1.73$, $p = .083$) with magnet choice (1 = choosing the majority-endorsed magnet; 0 = choosing the minority-endorsed magnet) as the dependent variable and moral violation condition (1 = moral violation; 0 = innocent error).

Desire for Control, Power, and Status Seeking. Analysis of variance results showed that the news article condition did not influence participants' desire for control ($\alpha = .83$; $M_{\text{moral violation}} = 5.37$, $SD = 1.46$; $M_{\text{innocent error}} = 4.91$, $SD = 1.33$; $F(1, 53) = 1.49$, $p = .228$), power ($\alpha = .83$;

$M_{\text{violation}} = 4.42$, $SD = 2.14$; $M_{\text{control}} = 4.15$, $SD = 1.48$; $F(1, 53) = 0.30$, $p = .588$) or status seeking ($r = .71$, $p < .001$; $M_{\text{moral violation}} = 3.84$, $SD = 1.58$; $M_{\text{innocent error}} = 3.59$, $SD = 1.80$; $F(1, 53) = 0.29$, $p = .591$). These results suggest that desire for control, power, and status seeking cannot account for the observed effect.

Moreover, repeated analyses suggested that the white and yellow magnets were rated similarly in terms of perceived quality ($M_{\text{white}} = 4.75$, $SD = 1.79$; $M_{\text{yellow}} = 4.78$, $SD = 1.72$; $F(1, 54) = 0.02$, $p = .887$), masculinity ($M_{\text{white}} = 4.42$, $SD = 1.51$; $M_{\text{yellow}} = 4.78$, $SD = 1.36$; $F(1, 54) = 1.57$, $p = .216$), attractiveness ($M_{\text{white}} = 5.29$, $SD = 2.04$; $M_{\text{yellow}} = 4.67$, $SD = 2.02$; $F(1, 54) = 1.87$, $p = .177$), or liking ($M_{\text{white}} = 5.29$, $SD = 1.80$; $M_{\text{yellow}} = 4.76$, $SD = 1.91$; $F(1, 54) = 1.84$, $p = .181$) suggesting that none of these factors could explain the choice pattern we observed.

To sum, the results of the pretest gave us confidence in the effectiveness of the manipulations and the basic main effect of moral violation on consumers' choice of majority-endorsed (vs. minority-endorsed) products.

Pretest of Study 4

Before conducting the main study, we conducted a pretest with 102 participants (61 males; $M_{\text{age}} = 32.98$ years) from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (different participants from those in the main study) to verify our assumption that witnessing moral violations would lead to perceived threat to social order, which would in turn increase consumers' endorsement of conformist attitudes. Five participants did not pass the attention-check question and were therefore excluded from further analyses (final $N = 97$).

Method

We manipulated exposure to moral violation using exactly the same procedure as in the pretest. The average time participants spent reading the article was 132.44 seconds and was similar across conditions ($p > .64$; see Table 1). After reading the assigned CEO story, participants responded to the index of perceived threat to social order ($\alpha = .94$) used in the main Study 4. Participants also responded to the same conformist attitudes scale ($\alpha = .84$) used in Studies 2 and 3. The order of the two scales was counterbalanced. Finally, participants responded to the same manipulation check items as we used in the main Study 4.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Checks. As expected, participants in the two corrupt-CEO conditions perceived the CEO as more immoral than did those in the control condition ($M_{\text{unpunished corrupt}} = 8.02$, $SD = 1.39$; $M_{\text{punished corrupt}} = 7.76$, $SD = 1.62$; $M_{\text{control}} = 2.99$, $SD = 1.24$; $F(2, 94) = 121.11$, $p < .001$). And although participants in the two corrupt-CEO conditions believed that the CEO should be punished to the same extent ($p > .23$), those in the unpunished- (vs. punished-) corrupt-CEO condition reported that the CEO did not receive adequate punishment for his bad deeds ($p < .001$), confirming the success of our punishment manipulation.

Results. Participants in the unpunished-corrupt-CEO condition indeed perceived greater threat to social order ($M = 7.18$, $SD = 1.68$) than did those in the punished-corrupt-CEO ($M = 5.41$, $SD = 1.82$; $F(1, 94) = 17.02$, $p < .001$) or the control condition ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.76$; $F(1, 94) = 44.41$, $p < .001$). A similar pattern emerged for conformist attitudes: Participants in the unpunished-corrupt-CEO condition ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.46$) expressed greater conformist attitudes

than did those in the punished-corrupt-CEO ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.35$; $F(1, 94) = 5.06$, $p = .03$) or the control condition ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.86$; $F(1, 94) = 7.99$, $p = .01$).

To assess the role of perceived threat to social order in driving the effect of exposure to moral violations on conformist attitudes, we conducted a mediation analysis (Hayes and Preacher 2014). The first contrast compared the unpunished-corrupt-CEO condition to the punished-corrupt-CEO condition. The second contrast compared the unpunished-corrupt-CEO condition to the control condition. As hypothesized, perceived threat to social order mediated the effect of the first contrast on conformist attitudes ($b = -0.6459$, $SE = 0.2219$; 95% CI: $[-1.1798, -.2854]$). Moreover, perceived threat to social order also mediated the effect of the second contrast on conformist attitudes ($b = -1.0695$, $SE = 0.2795$; 95% CI: $[-1.6722, -.5790]$). These results suggest that greater perceived threat to social order was indeed a precursor for the heightened conformist attitudes after exposure to a moral violation (omnibus indirect effect: $b = 0.1140$, $SE = 0.0375$; 95% CI: $[.0519, .1999]$). The alternative mediation model (exposure to unpunished corrupt CEO \rightarrow conformist attitudes \rightarrow perceived threat to social order) was not supported (omnibus indirect effect: $b = 0.0314$, $SE = 0.0353$; 95% CI: $[-.0035, .1163]$).

Based on the finding that exposure to a moral violation heightens conformist attitudes because it induces greater perceived threat to social order, we tested the complete mechanisms underlying the effect through a multistage mediation by perceived threat to social order and then conformist attitudes.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES:

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