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Morality as a Foundation of Leadership and a Constraint on Deference to Authority

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## Abstract

Milgram's (1965; 1974) classic experiments led to the widely accepted conclusion that the perceived duty and obligation to obey legitimate authorities overwhelms people's personal moral standards. We argue that this conclusion may be premature; it is impossible to know whether people are willing to compromise their moral convictions to comply with authorities' dictates unless researchers measure or manipulate the extent that people perceive a given situation to have moral relevance. Moreover, recent research supports two basic hypotheses derived from an integrative theory of moral conviction: (a) people are more likely to reject rules, commands, and decisions when they are incompatible with personal moral convictions than their non-moral preferences (the *authority independence hypothesis*), and (b) moral decision making contexts serve as crucial tests of the true legitimacy of authorities and authority systems (the *litmus test hypothesis*). Taken together, this research suggests that authorities' ability to lead rather than simply coerce compliance is tied closely to subordinates' perceptions of whether authorities share their moral vision.

## Morality as a Foundation of Leadership and a Constraint on Deference to Authority

Milgram's (1965;1974) classic experiments often are cited as examples of the potential destructive power of obedience to authority (e.g., Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). In Milgram's studies, an authority figure commanded participants to inflict painful shocks on another person. More often than not, participants complied with the authority's commands and gave what they believed to be increasingly powerful shocks, even when the presumed victim protested that the shocks were not just uncomfortable, but were <sup>1</sup>aggravating a pre-existing heart problem. Milgram (1974) interpreted the results of these studies the following way:

“Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority” (p. 6).

One commonly expounded implication of Milgram's studies is that people are easily exploited puppets in the hands of authorities. People feel compelled to obey authorities, and this compulsion can trump even their normal sense of conscience or morality.

What does it mean to call something “moral” or “immoral,” and how do people distinguish moral from non-moral judgments and beliefs? People who read about the Milgram (1965; 1974) studies, for example, may interpret participants' obedience in the experiments as “immoral” because it violated the commonly accepted rule to “do no harm.” An open question, however, is whether Milgram's participants perceived the choice between defying and complying with the experimenter's requests to have moral implications (Doris, 1998). After all, the experimenter—a scientist—had informed them that although the shocks were painful, they did not cause harm. Therefore, it is unknown whether the pressure to obey the authority caused participants to transgress their moral standards because Milgram did not explicitly test whether the participants perceived the situation as a choice between upholding versus violating a personal moral value. Moreover, this interpretive ambiguity is common in the empirical literature because researchers often assert that a given behavior was or was not moral based on philosophical or theoretical grounds, but they typically do not provide any evidence that people themselves saw the situation, issue, or behavior in moral terms (e.g., Hartshorne & May, 1929; Turillo, Folger, Lavelle, Umphress, & Gee, 2001).

We believe that perceptions of morality and immorality exist as subjective judgments in the minds of perceivers, and that different people will not always see the same situations as relevant to their personal sense of morality. Moreover, whether people have a moral stake in a given situation is not something that can always or even often be accurately identified by third party judges without inquiry into the target's perceptions or state of mind. Therefore, to study morality, one needs to assess whether perceivers see a given situation, dilemma, or issue in moral terms. Moreover, to know whether people feel stronger needs to obey authorities than to live up to their personal moral standards, one first has to know whether people feel their personal moral standards are at stake in that given situation.

The goal of this chapter is to review research that has tested the ability of authorities and institutions to compel people to obey and to accept actions, decisions, or rules that are at odds

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<sup>1</sup> Attitudes are surprisingly weak predictors of behavior (see Wicker, 1969, for a review)

with their personal moral standards. Before turning to a review of this research, we first discuss an integrated theory of moral conviction that explains how moral convictions differ from other kinds of attitudes or preferences, and we present specific propositions associated with the idea that there are moral limits on people's deference to authority.

### *An Integrated Theory of Moral Conviction*

To begin to scientifically address the psychological function and form of morality and moral convictions, we take an empirical approach to studying whether and how moral thoughts, feelings, and behavior differ from otherwise equivalent but non-moral actions and reactions. Our theory of moral conviction begins with one key and important assumption, that is, that people can accurately report on the degree to which a given feeling or belief reflects a moral conviction (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005). Working from this basic assumption, the task of moral research becomes to explore the antecedents and consequences of people's self-reported degree of moral conviction.

Our integrated theory of moral conviction (ITMC) posits a number of ways that attitudes held with strong moral conviction likely differ from equally strong but non-moral attitudes. Our theory is an "integrated theory" because the basic framework is a synthesis of various other theories from the fields of philosophy, moral development, cultural anthropology, and psychology. One central proposition of our theory is that people tend to believe that their personal moral standards ought to apply to everyone. If one has a strong moral conviction that female circumcision is wrong, for instance, one is likely to believe that the practice is wrong not only in one's culture-of-origin, but in other cultures as well (e.g., Dudones, 2007; Turiel, 1983). Therefore, people should be more intolerant of diversity of opinion about attitude objects they associate with strong rather than weak moral conviction. Consistent with this idea, people prefer not to associate with morally dissimilar others, and this preference holds regardless of whether the potential relationship with the other person is intimate (e.g., marry into the family) or distant (e.g., store owner). People even sit further away from an attitudinally dissimilar other when the dissimilarity is related to a moral as compared to a non-moral attitude (Skitka et al., 2005).

Another distinguishing feature of people's self-identified moral convictions is that people treat their moral beliefs as if they were readily observable, objective properties of situations. For example, if you ask third-party observers why Milgram's participants should not have obeyed the experimenter, they might respond by saying something like, "Because it's wrong!" The "fact" that it is wrong is as psychologically self-evident to perceivers as  $2 + 2 = 4$ . Moreover, the perceived objectivity people associate with their personal moral convictions motivates them to defend their moral beliefs and feel justified for doing so, even though recognitions of fact typically do not include a motivational component (a Humean paradox; Mackie, 1977; Smith, 1994). In short, the ITMC predicts and our research finds that strong moral convictions are more motivating and are a more predictive of behavior than equally strong but non-morally convicted attitudes<sup>2</sup> (Skitka & Bauman, 2008; Skitka et al., 2005).

In summary, unlike attitudes rooted in social norms or personal preferences people perceive their personal moral convictions to be self-evident and motivating. As a result, people are likely to believe that others should be easily persuaded to share their moral point of view if only they were exposed to and fully appreciated the "facts" of the matter. Moreover, attitudes high in

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<sup>2</sup> Attitude measures are surprisingly weak predictors of behavior (see Wicker, 1969, for a review)

moral conviction are more likely to be motivating and lead to attitude-behavior correspondence than attitudes low in moral conviction (see Skitka & Bauman, 2008).

The ITMC also predicts that attitudes held with strong moral conviction are likely to differ from non-moral attitudes in the magnitude if not also the type of emotion that people experience in conjunction with them. Although considerable debate exists regarding whether emotion is a cause or an epiphenomenon of moral judgment, there is overwhelming agreement that moral issues are emotionally charged. Of course, non-moral issues can elicit a wide range of emotions, but moral issues always appear to be accompanied by especially intense affect. In particular, judgments of immorality are associated with strong feelings of anger, contempt, and especially disgust (Haidt, 2003a). On the other side of the same coin, positive emotions such as “elevation” and “awe,” are feelings associated with particularly moral actions that may be unique to the moral domain (Haidt, 2003b). Taken together, it is clear that moral affect is a potent experience that differs from feelings associated with non-moral beliefs and events, and affect aroused in conjunction with moral convictions can have a powerful influence on people’s subsequent thoughts, feelings, and behavior (e.g., Mullen & Skitka, 2006a).

Especially important to the goals of the current paper, another distinction between moral and equally strong but non-moral attitudes is that moral convictions are thought to be authority independent (e.g., Nucci, 2001; Nucci & Turiel, 1978). People sometimes behave in ways that might be judged by others as “moral” because they respect and adhere to the rules in a given context. However, obeying the rules may be simply behaving according to normative pressure and not because of any real personal moral commitment to those rules. For example, someone might feel that it is wrong for a twenty-year-old to consume alcohol. This person’s feeling about this issue would be authority dependent if it were based on a desire to adhere to the rules and legal norms of what constitutes underage drinking, or by a desire to avoid authority sanction for breaking these rules. If the rules changed, so too would this person’s view about the behavior at hand. Therefore, this person’s position is authority dependent. Someone whose view about this behavior was based on a sense of personal morality, however, would still think the behavior was wrong even if the rules were changed (e.g., if the legal drinking age changed to eighteen). In summary, attitudes rooted in moral conviction are theoretically more authority independent than otherwise strong, but non-moral attitudes.

### *The Authority Independence and Litmus Test Hypotheses*

The ITMC leads to at least two novel predictions in the context of people’s relationships and interactions with leaders, authorities, and institutional controls: the *authority independence* and the *litmus test* hypotheses. The authority independence hypothesis predicts that people will be more likely to reject and protest decisions made by legitimate authorities if the decisions are at odds with perceivers’ core moral convictions than their equally strong but non-moral preferences. The authority independence hypothesis is consistent with considerable anecdotal evidence in the context of moralized politics. For example, abortion remains a hotly contested issue that is hardly “settled” in the minds of those who oppose it, even though the imprimatur of the state (in the form of its highest legitimate authority) should have firmly settled the question with the 1974 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*. Another example is the public’s reaction to the verdict of the 1992 trial of the White Los Angeles police officers who beat and arrested Rodney King, a Black motorist. An onlooker captured the beating on videotape from his apartment window and released it to the press. Because of the videotape, most Americans

believed that the officers were guilty of using excessive force against King (Cannon, 1999). When the police officers were acquitted of charges, riots broke out in Los Angeles that left 54 people dead, 2,000 injured, and more than 800 buildings burned (Cannon, 1999), all despite President George H. W. Bush's public announcement that, "The jury system has worked. What's needed now is calm respect for the law" (Mydans, 1992). In summary, authority wielded by the court system and even the President appeared unable to do much to contend with people's moral outrage about the verdict.<sup>3</sup>

The litmus test hypothesis predicts that people use leader, authority, and institutional decisions relevant to personal moral convictions to check or verify authorities' legitimacy. People recognize that legitimate authority systems facilitate social cooperation and coordination. Therefore, people are generally willing to sacrifice a certain amount of immediate self-interest and risk exploitation to work within these systems because doing so serves their long-term self-interest (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Due process and other procedures for handling conflict provide a way to make decisions in the absence of perfect information. When one *knows* with certainty, however, what the correct answer is to a given decision, this knowledge provides an opportunity to check how well the system works. Failure to arrive at a correct decision leads to a loss of faith in the system. The litmus test hypothesis therefore proposes that when people have strong moral convictions about the rightness or wrongness of a given decision, the legitimacy of any authority system that decides otherwise becomes suspect.

The Rodney King incident also provides anecdotal support for the litmus test hypothesis. Specifically, in addition to leading to charges against the specific police officers involved in the incident, public outrage about it prompted an independent investigation of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). The independent commission yielded a scathing report on the failures of the LAPD system and its leader, police commissioner Daryl Gates. Gates was ultimately forced to resign his post because of the incident (Cannon, 1999).

#### *Research Support for the Authority Independence and Litmus Test Hypotheses*

In addition to anecdotal support for the authority and litmus test hypotheses, a number of studies have recently found empirical support for these predictions. For example, one study examined people's reactions to the Elián González case as it unfolded over time (Skitka & Mullen, 2002). Five-year-old Elián became the center of a widely publicized custody battle after he was rescued off the Florida coastline in November of 1999. Elián's mother and 10 others died when their small boat sank as they tried to travel from Cuba to the United States. Although Elián's Cuban father petitioned the United States to return Elián to his custody, Elián was put in the temporary care of Miami relatives, who filed a petition to grant him political asylum in the United States. After months of court decisions, appeals, and fruitless negotiations, Federal agents took Elián by force from his Miami relatives' home. Elián finally returned to Cuba with his father in June of 2000. The Elián case aroused incredible public interest, and passions on both sides of the issue. Some felt that Elián should stay in the U.S. to grow up in freedom, whereas others felt strongly that he should be returned to his father, and therefore to Cuba.

Skitka and Mullen (2002) collected data from a nationally representative sample in the U.S. to assess public reactions as the case unfolded overtime. Judgments were collected several weeks before the Federal raid, immediately after the raid, and several weeks later when Elián ultimately

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<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, a content analysis of editorials and letters to the editor of several national newspapers 3 months before and after the verdicts were announced, revealed virtually no mentions of concerns about trial procedures (e.g., the change of venue to Simi Valley, or the racial composition of the jury) until *after* the verdict was announced (Mullen & Skitka, 2006b).

was returned to Cuba. Perceptions that the justice department and other legal authorities were fair and legitimate prior to the raid did not soften the blow of people's anger if they perceived the outcome went the "wrong" way; moreover perceptions that authorities were behaving unfairly did not undermine people's relief and acceptance if they perceived the outcome of the case went the "right" way. Analysis of open-ended comments indicated that 83% percent of people with strong moral convictions about the outcome of the case made at least one critical comment about the U.S. government, compared with only 12% of those without strong moral convictions. The return- Elián-to-Cuba group with strong moral convictions tended to lambast authorities for taking too long to act, whereas the stay-in-the-U.S. group with strong moral convictions either criticized specific authorities (e.g., the INS or U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno) or the decision to use force to remove Elián from his relatives' home.

In summary, the results of the Elián study supported the authority independence and litmus test hypotheses. People's reactions to the case—both their decision acceptance and post-decision levels of trust and faith in the system-- were shaped primarily by their moral convictions about the "correct" decision in the case and not by pre-raid perceptions of the fairness or legitimacy of the authorities and authority systems involved. Moreover, strong moral convictions about the outcome led people to be quite critical of authorities, rather than to blindly accept or reject authorities' decision in this case.

Other evidence that supports the authority independence and litmus test hypotheses comes from another field experiment that explored people's reactions to the U.S. Supreme Court before and after it made a ruling on a case that effectively would decide whether individual states can legalize physician-assisted suicide (PAS; *Gonzales v. the State of Oregon*). Skitka (2006) assessed perceptions of the Supreme Court before and after it ruled in the case, in addition to collecting pre-decision measures of moral conviction about PAS, participants' religiosity, and a host of other variables. Analyses investigated two levels of reaction to the Supreme Court's decision in the case: People's reactions to the specific decision (decision fairness and acceptance) as well as their pre- and post-decision perceptions of the Court's legitimacy (assessed with three measures: trust, procedural fairness, and a direct measure of legitimacy).

Results of the PAS study supported the authority independence and litmus test hypotheses. Pre-decision levels of moral conviction about PAS uniquely predicted people's perceptions of decision fairness and acceptance. People whose support for PAS was held with strong moral conviction thought the decision in the case was fair, and they were quite prepared to accept it as the final word on the issue, whereas those whose opposition to PAS was held with strong moral conviction thought the decision was unfair, and were unwilling to accept the Court's decision on the issue. Moreover, results failed to support the notion that obedience to authority would dominate people's judgment. Pre-decision levels of legitimacy of the Court were unrelated to perceived fairness and decision acceptance of the Court's ruling. All results for moral conviction emerged even when controlling for variables such as individual differences in participants' degree of religiosity.

Perhaps even more interesting than people's reactions to the decision itself was the impact the decision had on people's perceptions of the Supreme Court. As predicted by the litmus test hypothesis, pre-decision strength of moral conviction predicted people's post-decision perceptions of the Court's legitimacy. People who morally supported PAS thought that the Supreme Court was more legitimate, whereas those who morally opposed PAS thought that the Supreme Court was less legitimate after its ruling in the PAS case. Moreover, these results were unique effects of moral conviction that remained robust even when controlling for a number of

alternative explanatory variables, such as strength and direction of political orientation and religiosity. In summary, when the Supreme Court ruling was at odds with people's moral convictions, they rejected the decision and perceived the Court to be less legitimate, trustworthy, and fair.

In an experimental test of the authority independence hypothesis, Bauman and Skitka (2007) assessed student participants' reactions to a decision rendered by university authorities on whether to use student fees to fund abortions at a student health clinic. Results indicated that participants who morally disagreed with the decision were prepared to petition, protest, withhold tuition and fees, and "make trouble" for the university administration, irrespective of whether they perceived the authorities as legitimate or illegitimate. Conversely, participants were fully prepared to accept a decision made by fundamentally illegitimate authorities and processes when the decision was consistent with their moral convictions.

Other studies provide further support for the litmus test hypothesis. When people were exposed to unjust laws or legal decisions, they were more likely to report intentions to flout other unrelated laws in the future (Nadler, 2005). Mullen and Nadler (2008) further tested the flouting hypothesis in an experiment that involved exposing people to legal decisions that supported, opposed, or were unrelated to participants' personal moral convictions. Following exposure to the legal decision, participants received a pen and a questionnaire, and were asked to return both at end of the experimental session. Consistent with the prediction that moral transgressions erode perceptions of authorities, theft of the pens was highest when the legal decision opposed rather than supported or was unrelated to participants' moral convictions.

In summary, a host of evidence indicates that people reject authorities' decisions when they are at odds with their personal moral convictions. Moreover, people use authorities' decisions in morally relevant situations as legitimacy litmus tests: When authorities make decisions, rules, or policies that are consistent with perceivers' moral convictions, perceivers accept the decision and see it as evidence of legitimacy, but when decisions, rules, or policies are inconsistent with perceivers' moral convictions, perceivers reject the decision and see it as evidence that authorities are illegitimate. Importantly, the delegitimizing effects of violating people's moral convictions generalizes: People do not just reject the decision itself, they clearly reject the authority or system that made it, and they are even less likely to comply with other unrelated laws, rules, or standards of behavior as well (Mullen & Nadler, 2007; Nadler, 2005).

### *Morality and Leadership*

Research in support of the authority independence and litmus test hypotheses complements and extends current perspectives on leader effectiveness. The litmus test hypothesis overlaps at least partially with theories that assert that leaders can induce compliance with their requests by linking tasks and values in the minds of followers. For example, transformational leaders access stakeholders' underlying ideals and engage the deeper concerns of the people around them. They move beyond instrumentalism (i.e., brokering exchanges between stakeholders) and attempt to provide a vision that aligns activities with a higher sense of purpose (e.g., Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Somewhat similarly, charismatic leaders successfully link tasks and values in the minds of followers and promote identification with the leader or the group (e.g., Conger, 1999; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Research from both perspectives has demonstrated that leaders who tap into followers' values increase motivation, performance, commitment, satisfaction, trust, and group promoting actions (e.g., Bass, 1985; Lowe, Kroeck, &

Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Rowold & Heinitz, 2007). In sum, dominant approaches to leadership are consistent with the prosocial implications of the litmus test hypothesis, and reveal the benefits of value congruence between leaders and followers. The ability to establish a link between values and behavior is so important that some have identified it as a characteristic that differentiates leaders from authorities and allows leaders to elicit more from their followers than what they could demand based on their power alone (Fairholm, 1998; Heifetz, 1994).

Much more is known about the benefits of value-congruent leadership than about the potential liabilities of value-incongruent leadership (Conger, 1999). Although some researchers consider the deleterious effect caused by leader inauthenticity or disingenuousness (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Cha & Edmondson, 2006; Price, 2003), the ITMC emphasizes that that value incongruence may go beyond limiting leader effectiveness to also affect more extreme reactions, such as outright rebellion or exiting the group (Bauman & Skitka, 2007). In addition, although theories of leadership mention the importance of values, they do not make distinctions as a function of value content (e.g., Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Conger, 1999; Shamir et al., 1993). Differences in the extent that leaders and followers value material gain, power, or status may have very different consequences than differences between leaders' and followers' conceptions of moral right and wrong (Skitka et al., 2005). Moreover, values are abstractions, whereas moral convictions represent concrete attitude positions or stands (Skitka et al., 2005). Two people may share a commitment to the sanctity of life, but may not share positions on physician assisted suicide, capital punishment, or abortion. In short, value congruence between leaders and followers does not ensure moral congruence with respect to specific decisions, policies, or outcomes.

In summary, the ITMC approach complements and extends current conceptions of leadership. Moreover, the ITMC approach suggests that future research on value-driven leadership may benefit by (a) taking value content into account and exploring whether there are important differences between perceivers' and followers' congruence or incongruence of moral as compared to non-moral values, and (b) exploring whether value congruence and incongruence as a construct might be more profitably examined at less abstract levels of analysis.

### *Conclusion*

The goal of this chapter was to revisit the notion that the duty or obligation to obey authority can easily overwhelm people's personal moral standards or beliefs. Although Milgram's (1965, 1974) experiments were powerful demonstrations of the tendency to obey legitimate authorities, they were less persuasive demonstrations of the power of authorities to overwhelm people's personal sense of morality because morality was not directly measured or manipulated. Our review indicates that individual conceptions of morality do appear to work as safeguards against destructive obedience, at least in some situations. Specifically, when authorities or authority systems make rules or decisions that are inconsistent with people's core moral beliefs, people both rejected the decision and used this information to revise their appraisal of the authority or system's legitimacy. Even when we experimentally manipulated a situation so that there were virtually no grounds to question authorities' legitimacy pre-decision, people nonetheless were enraged when authorities made a decision at odds with their moral beliefs. Moreover, they were willing to take a stand against and even leave the group because of it (Bauman & Skitka, 2007). In sum, these results suggest that there may be moral limits on the power of destructive obedience.

When personal moral standards are at stake, individuals are less likely to fall prey to pressures to blindly accept authority dictates. Therefore, it is very important to know whether people perceive a given situation in moral terms. Not everyone, for example, has a moral investment in whether abortion is or is not legal. Some people might support legalized abortion simply because they prefer to have a backstop birth control method, and not because they have any particular moral agenda. Others may oppose abortion for normative or conventional reasons, for example, because it violates the dictates of their religion. If the church reversed its position on the issue, then these people likely would have no problem supporting legalized abortion instead of opposing it. In short, our approach suggests that it is important to determine whether people have a moral investment in a given situation rather than make assumptions, even in situations like abortion that are normatively understood to be moral.

Of course, there are a number of important differences between our approach and Milgram's (1965, 1974). The physical presence of authorities in Milgram's studies may have reinforced the perceived obligation to obey or reduced the extent that people perceived themselves to be responsible for their actions, each of which could have increased levels of obedience and compliance (cf. Bandura, 1999). Although there is still room for additional research to test the generalizability of our findings to situations that more closely parallel Milgram's, our results suggest that enhancing legitimacy by attending only to structural and interactional aspects of decision processes misses an important element in how people judge the legitimacy of these systems, and decide whether to cooperate versus openly rebel. Leaders and authorities should be mindful about the content of their decisions, not just the procedures they use to make them. People are not so blinded by duty and obligations to obey that they do not evaluate whether the substance of decisions and laws meet the standards of personal moral litmus tests, and they will use these tests to decide whether authority systems are legitimate.

Some of our current work has begun to test hypotheses about some of the underlying processes that give rise to the "moral mandate effects" we have identified in our tests of the authority independence and litmus test hypotheses. Specifically, Mullen and Skitka (2006) explored whether due process considerations were less important to people when they had a moral stake in decision outcomes, and tested the role of three processes that may have contributed to the effect. Specifically, they assessed whether people with moral convictions about outcomes (a) were motivated to justify their preferred outcome, and therefore actively distorted the way they processed available information about procedures or authorities in an effort to support their preferred conclusions; (b) identified or disidentified with people who shared or did not share their moral convictions, which in turn led to distributive biases that affected their perceptions of how these people deserved to be treated; or (c) led to so much anger when authorities "got it wrong" that it subsequently biased their judgments of other aspects of the decision, such as whether authorities' acted in procedurally fair ways. Results of two studies were most consistent with the notion that affect aroused by whether authorities got it "right" or "wrong" when perceivers had a moral stake in decision outcomes played a pivotal role in shaping people's other perceptions as well. When authorities "got it wrong," resultant anger explained not only the extent that people rejected the non-preferred outcome, but also rejection of the procedures and the authorities that yielded them (Mullen & Skitka, 2006a; see also Bauman & Skitka, 2007, Skitka, 2006).

Other research suggests that people may become more cognitively rigid when thinking about their moral convictions than when they are thinking about other topics or issues (Lytle & Skitka, 2007), suggesting that cognitive processes may also play a role in the effects reviewed

here. Although we need much more research to fully understand the cognitive and motivational underpinnings of moral mandate effects, these results suggest that emotion and context-specific levels of cognitive rigidity are psychological processes that underlie these effects.

In conclusion, we should point out that it is possible to put different value spins on the conclusion that personal morality influences people's willingness to follow authority dictates. For example, rules and authorities help coordinate behavior and create social order by regulating the distribution of both the benefits and burdens of social cooperation (e.g., French & Raven, 1959; Heifetz, 1994). To be effective, however, authorities and their rules need to influence the behavior of their constituent members; followers must accept and comply with rules and dictates for authorities to have any impact on the coordination problems that are inherent in social and organizational life. Systems in which people feel free to personally decide which rules to follow and which to ignore are less likely to reap the rewards of social coordination and cooperation and may be vulnerable to chaos if not anarchy. Therefore, one spin one could place on our results is that personal moral standards pose a threat to cooperative social systems, order, and basic social cohesion.

A more positive spin on our results is that personal moral standards create a social form of check and balances against potential exploitation on the part of malevolent authorities. People and institutions could create the artful appearance of legitimate and fair procedures without attending to the truth value, justice, or morality of what they produce and the consequences of those products for people's everyday lives. Personal moral standards may therefore act as a canary in the mine of everyday life—an early warning system that protects people from potential exploitation and to similarly protect authority systems from forgetting that authority is always at the mercy of the consent of the governed.

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## Author Notes

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