

The Role of the Moral Identity in Consumption

Argiro Kliamenakis

A Thesis

In the John Molson School of Business

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Business Administration) at

John Molson School of Business

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

October 2020

© Argiro Kliamenakis, 2020

**CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Argiro Kliamenakis

Entitled: The Role of the Moral Identity in Consumption

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor Of Philosophy (Marketing)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair  
Dr. Linda Dyer

\_\_\_\_\_ External Examiner  
Dr. Karen Page Winterich

\_\_\_\_\_ External to Program  
Dr. Kristen Dunfield

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. François Bellavance

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. Bianca Grohman

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis Supervisor  
Dr. H. Onur Bodur

Approved by

\_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Cedric Lesage, Graduate Program Director

December 16, 2020

\_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Anne-Marie Croteau, Dean  
John Molson School of Business

## **Abstract**

### **The Role of the Moral Identity in Consumption**

**Argiro Kliamenakis, Ph.D.**

**Concordia University, 2021**

In this dissertation, theories on self-perception and self-signaling are leveraged in order to examine the relationship between moral self-signals and the moral identity, and by extension the importance of this relationship in ethical and sustainable consumption. In the first essay, the experience of envy and whether it can influence ethical behaviour is examined—a particularly relevant question given the rise of social media and its conducive role in eliciting this emotion. As such, the first essay demonstrates how the metacognitive appraisal of envy unfavorably alters moral self-perceptions, thereby increasing morally relevant consumption and ethical behavior. Findings from six studies provide empirical support for this effect with implications for consumers and marketers. In the second essay, the relationship between the moral identity and application effectiveness of various cause marketing strategies is investigated. To that end, the second essay contrasts effort-based cause marketing that requires the performance of a prescribed behavior by consumers to generate a donation to the non-profit cause, relative to both purchase-based cause marketing that links donations with sales, and direct donation cause marketing that involves a direct donation from the firm to the cause. Five studies demonstrate that when consumers are driven to reinforce their moral identity—either chronically or due to the drive to restore a tarnished self-image—evaluations of cause marketing with effort-based participation are enhanced. This effect occurs because consumers associate higher levels of moral self-signaling utility from effort-based (relative to purchase-based and direct donation) cause marketing. However, this effect only occurs for cause marketing campaigns in which consumer effort is private. Cause marketing campaigns requiring the public performance of effort are not favored by consumers seeking to reinforce their moral identity, because public effort can be confounded with self-interested, reputation seeking motives. Both essays contribute to our understanding of consumer morality and morally relevant consumption by emphasizing the significance of self-signals that facilitate the formation of individuals' sense of their moral self, and the role that this self-perception plays in fostering ethical and sustainable consumer behaviour.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who played a role in my academic accomplishments. First, I would like to thank my research supervisor Dr. Onur Bodur for providing me with invaluable guidance throughout the program. I am especially grateful for his encouragement, support, and understanding. The insightful feedback and advice I received from Dr. Bodur throughout every step of the process played a central role in my development as a researcher, as well as to my academic success. It was a privilege to work and study under his guidance.

I would also like to thank my committee members for their constructive feedback on my research. I would especially like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Bianca Grohmann. Throughout the years, Dr. Grohmann has provided me with invaluable feedback on my research. More importantly however, her guidance and kindness (starting from when I was in the MSc program) greatly influenced my decision to pursue a PhD and helped me achieve my academic goals. I would also like to thank Dr. François Bellavance for his helpful comments and timely feedback, which helped me improve my skills as a researcher.

Thank you to all my friends and colleagues that I have met throughout the program. I especially would like to thank Kamila, Darlene, and Caroline, who were always there for me when I needed advice.

Thank you to my parents and to my brother for all the love and support they have shown me throughout my entire life. Had it not been for their encouragement, I would not be where I am today. Most importantly, I want to express my profound gratitude to my loving and caring husband, Panagiotis, who so strongly believes in me, and provides me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement, always. If it weren't for him believing in me and encouraging me to apply to the PhD program in the first place, none of this would have been possible.

### **Contribution of Authors**

Both essays in the current dissertation are co-authored by Dr. H. Onur Bodur and myself. For the first essay, Dr. Bodur provided extensive, thorough, and detailed feedback that helped shape the experimental designs, data collection, analyses, and final manuscript. For the second essay, the initial idea of studying the moral-self signaling value of effort in cause marketing came from my term paper in Dr. Bodur's "Social Responsibility and Public Policy" course in the Fall 2016 semester. Dr. Bodur contributed extensively to this essay by providing critical feedback throughout the entire project, including the conceptual development, experimental designs, data collection, analyses, and in the preparation of the final manuscript. Furthermore, Dr. Bodur contributed to both essays by providing financial support for the data collection.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	ix
List of Figures .....	x
Introduction.....	1
Essay 1: Going Green with Envy:.....	3
How Envy Impacts Self-Perceptions and Green Product Consumption.....	3
Abstract .....	3
Introduction .....	4
Conceptual Development .....	6
The Two Sides of Envy .....	6
The Moral Self-Signaling Value of Emotion .....	8
Envy and Moral Cleansing .....	11
Overview of Research .....	11
Study 1.....	12
Method.....	12
Results .....	13
Study 2.....	14
Method.....	14
Results .....	15
Study 3.....	18
Method.....	18
Results .....	19
Study 4.....	19
Method.....	20
Results .....	20
Study 5.....	21
Method.....	22
Results .....	23
Study 6.....	24
Method.....	24
Results .....	25

General Discussion.....	25
Theoretical Contributions .....	26
Managerial Implications .....	28
Limitations and Future Research.....	29
Transition from Essay 1 to Essay 2.....	30
Essay 2: Cause Marketing as a Self-Signal: When Anticipated Effort Improves Consumer Response .....	31
Abstract .....	31
Introduction .....	32
Conceptual Development .....	34
Effort in Cause Marketing .....	34
The Moral Value of Effort in Cause Marketing .....	36
Overview of Research .....	38
Pretest .....	38
Pilot Study.....	39
Method.....	39
Results .....	40
Study 1.....	41
Method.....	41
Results .....	42
Study 2.....	44
Method.....	44
Results .....	45
Study 3.....	46
Method.....	46
Results .....	47
Study 4.....	49
Method.....	49
Results .....	50
General Discussion.....	51
Theoretical Contributions .....	51
Managerial Implications .....	52
Limitations and Future Research.....	54

Conclusion .....	56
References.....	59
Appendix A.....	67
Appendix B.....	68
Appendix C.....	69
Appendix D.....	71
Appendix E.....	73
Appendix F.....	74
Appendix G.....	75
Appendix H.....	76
Appendix I.....	77
Appendix J.....	79
Appendix K.....	81
Appendix L.....	83
Appendix M.....	87
Appendix N.....	89



## List of Tables

Table 1. Mediation Analysis (Study 4).....	48
--	----

## List of Figures

Figure 1. The indirect effect of malicious envy on purchase intentions through moral impurity (study 2).....	17
Figure 1. Consumer attitudes toward the CM campaign (effort vs. no effort) at varying levels of MIC.....	41

## Introduction

The topic of consumer morality is rapidly gaining importance at a time where social and sustainability-related issues are increasingly shaping the contemporary marketing landscape. As consumers are expressing increasing concern about the ethical and environmental impact of their consumption (Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell 2014), firms are responding by positioning their brands and their products on morally-based attributes such as environmental protection, support for social issues, and community engagement. Although research has demonstrated that consumers respond more favorably to products that are positioned on their ethical or environmental attributes, firms will often still encounter challenges in improving consumer demand for such products. Indeed, consumers' consumption behavior is not always consistent with their positive attitudes about environmentally and socially responsible products (de Pelsmacker, Driesen, and Rayp 2005). Thus, from a managerial perspective, identifying factors that will drive socially responsible consumption offers considerable value. Because moral behavior is largely driven by the integration of morality into the self-concept (Jennings, Mitchell, and Hannah 2015), understanding the role that the moral identity plays in morally relevant consumption is critical. To that end, the current dissertation investigates how moral cues lead to altered perceptions of the moral identity, and by extension the role that this relationship plays in driving ethical and sustainable consumption.

For most consumers, the moral identity is a central component of their self-concept (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Reed II, Aquino, and Levy 2007; Reed II et al. 2016). Thus, traits that signal morality can play an important role in how consumers view themselves. Broadly, morality is defined as a set of "prescriptive judgements of justice, rights, and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other" (Turiel 1983, 3; Gino, Kouchaki, and Galinsky 2015). The inherent concern for the welfare of others is therefore an essential tenet of morality. Consequently, the moral identity is comprised of traits such as generosity, compassion, and kindness (Reed II et al. 2016), and the motivation to reinforce these traits is therefore an important driver of behavior (Jordan, Mullen, and Murnighan 2011; Monin and Jordan 2009; Reed II et al. 2007, 2016; Sachdeva, Iliev, and Medin 2009).

The conceptualization of the moral identity as a dynamic component of the self-concept (Monin and Jordan 2009) is essential in investigating the moral identity within a self-signaling framework. Although the moral identity drives moral behavior, moral behavior in turn influences the development of the moral identity. Previous research investigating antecedents of the moral identity has therefore largely focused on moral and immoral behavior (Cascio and Plant 2015; Gino et al. 2015; Jordan et al. 2011; Monin and Jordan 2009; Sachdeva et al. 2009). These findings are consistent with a self-signaling framework, wherein individuals rely on overt cues such as behavior to update their self-concept, because, in contrast, internal states are not easily verifiable and can be easily manipulated (Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Bodner and Prelec 2003). In the current dissertation, previous research on the antecedents of the moral identity is extended by demonstrating that metacognitive thoughts about internal states, such as emotions, can effectively alter the moral identity. This occurs because consumers recognize emotional experiences as spontaneous and automatic, and therefore not easily controlled (Briñol, Petty, and Rucker 2006; Crusius and Mussweiler 2012). The first essay, provides empirical evidence demonstrating that experiencing malicious envy is perceived as signaling moral impurity, thereby tarnishing the moral identity. Because of this, consumers experiencing malicious envy are driven to repair their moral self-image by engaging in prosocial behavior and morally

relevant consumption. More specifically, findings from six studies demonstrate that experiencing malicious envy increases the purchase likelihood of ethical products, the desirability of cleansing-related products, and helping behavior. Findings therefore demonstrate that although malicious envy can lead to societal benefits arising from the subsequent morally relevant consumption and behaviour, there is also a detrimental consequence on consumer well-being by inducing individuals to feel morally impure and by lowering their moral self-regard.

Although, consumers may rely on past states to infer information about their moral identity, such as with the experience of malicious envy, they may also anticipate the self-signaling potential of various cues (Bodner and Prelec 2003; Savary and Dhar 2016). For marketers, understanding how consumer preferences may be shaped by this anticipated inference may offer significant practical insights. To that end, the second essay investigates the relationship between the moral identity and application effectiveness of various cause marketing strategies within a self-signaling framework. Cause marketing can take on various forms (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000; Gupta and Pirsch 2006; Liu and Ko 2011). For instance, some executions of cause marketing involve a direct donation from the firm to the cause, such as when Amazon announced it would donate \$10 million to be distributed among various social justice organizations. In other executions, donations are linked to sales—for every product sold, the firm donates a pre-determined amount to the cause. However, a popular form of cause marketing that has recently emerged is cause marketing with consumer effort, wherein the firm requires the performance of a prescribed behavior by consumers to trigger the donation to the charitable cause. The second essay demonstrates that, when consumers are driven to reinforce their moral identity, they anticipate the self-signaling value of the campaign. As such, a cause marketing campaign with consumer effort is favored relative to more conventional forms of cause marketing because it provides a comparatively stronger self-signal about one's moral character. More specifically, supporting a cause by purchasing a product that is linked to a cause marketing campaign is perceived as inherently self-benefitting due to the receipt of a product in exchange for the charitable behavior. Conversely, engaging in consumer effort in a cause marketing context is, on face value, selfless—consumers do not stand to gain any personal benefits from it. Importantly, consumers favor cause marketing that requires the completion of tasks that are private in nature, rather than public, because the public sharing of one's benevolent behavior implies both image and reputational rewards, which are recognized as being driven by self-interest (Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, and Bozok 2006).

Taken together, both essays contribute to our understanding of consumer morality and socially responsible consumption by emphasizing the importance of self-signals that facilitate the development of the moral identity, and the role that this self-perception plays in fostering ethical and sustainable consumer behaviour.

## **Essay 1: Going Green with Envy: How Envy Impacts Self-Perceptions and Green Product Consumption**

### **Abstract**

Envy has long been a morally condemned emotion. To this effect, the present research asks whether experiencing envy can alter individuals' moral self-concept by making them feel morally impure and lowering their moral self-regard, resulting in morally relevant consumption and behavior. Despite envy's notorious reputation, however, previous research has distinguished between two facets of envy—malicious and benign—with only malicious envy associated with destructive feelings toward the envied other. Drawing on self-perception and self-signaling theories, the current research investigates the effects of type of envy on morally relevant consumption and behavior. Specifically, six experiments uncover how experiencing malicious, but not benign, envy drives consumers to morally cleanse, both behaviorally and symbolically. This effect arises because malicious (vs. benign) envy taints self-perceptions of morality, thus triggering the need to restore a moral self-image through the purchase of products that are positioned on their ethical attributes. This effect is also shown to be exacerbated when the relationship with the target of one's malicious envy is perceived as close (vs. distant). However, directing thoughts toward the normalcy of experiencing envy reduces the moral cleansing effect, providing an important boundary condition.

## Introduction

David is scrolling through Facebook on his lunch break at work and sees a recent post by Jennifer, his colleague, wherein she shares news about a successful promotion she just received. Having also applied for the promotion, David might begrudge the news and secretly hope for his colleague's failure. Catching himself in his thoughts, David realizes he is envious of his colleague. How might David's realization that he is experiencing envy influence his self-perception and subsequent behaviors? Although experiencing emotion is largely recognized as being involuntary and natural, the emotion of envy, in particular, has an inherent moral stigma attached to it. For instance, envy is explicitly condemned in the Bible as part of the Ten Commandments, and even declared a sin by Pope Gregory I (Solomon 1999). Thus, despite not actually planning on acting on his feelings triggered by this Facebook post, David is likely to feel immoral merely for experiencing the emotion of envy. As such, research on moral compensation (West and Zhong 2015) would suggest that, if David's self-perception of moral character is tainted by experiencing envy, he would subsequently attempt to restore his moral self-image by engaging in morally relevant behavior.

Despite this prediction, extant theories on self-perception hold that only external cues, such as actions and overt behavior, alter the self-concept (Bem 1972; Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Bodner and Prelec 2003). According to these theories, internal states, such as emotions, are not effective at altering self-perceptions. This is consistent with literature on the moral identity that suggests that individuals monitor their morally relevant *behavior* to ensure they maintain positive beliefs regarding their own moral character. As such, transgressions, which constitute immoral or unethical behavior, lead to compensatory behavior that is intended to restore the moral self-concept (Gino, Kouchaki, and Galinsky 2015; West and Zhong 2015; Zhong and Liljenquist 2006). In our example, theories of self-perception would predict that David would not experience a threatened moral self-concept unless he acted on his feelings, such as by sabotaging his colleague's work. However, research on metacognition (Briñol, Petty, and Rucker 2006), suggests that the primary experience of emotion can be accompanied by a secondary process whereby individuals perceive and evaluate the experienced emotion (Mayer and Gaschke 1988; Briñol et al. 2006; Scheier and Carver 1982). Additionally, individuals often assess their thoughts along various dimensions such as whether their thoughts are right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, helpful or unhelpful (Briñol et al. 2006). This suggests that experiencing the emotion of envy can be evaluated as morally inappropriate, consequently adversely influencing the moral self-concept, and leading to moral cleansing—a coping mechanism whereby individuals engage in behaviors meant to restore moral self-worth (West and Zhong 2015; Zhong and Liljenquist 2006).

In an attempt to resolve these contradictory predictions regarding the impact of envy, the current research investigates a novel consequence of envy—moral cleansing, and whether the process that drives this effect is altered perceptions of the moral self-concept. Emotional experiences are oftentimes spontaneous and automatic, and therefore not easily controlled (Briñol et al. 2006; Crusius and Mussweiler 2012). As such, emotions can be inferred as cues that signal one's true underlying state (Barasch et al. 2014), thereby potentially altering self-perceptions. Experiencing envy, which has long been morally condemned, likely adversely influences the moral self-concept, in turn, leading to moral cleansing. Although envy is thought of as a destructive emotion (Miceli and Castelfranchi 2007), the literature on envy has distinguished between two facets of envy—malicious and benign—with only malicious envy

associated with destructive thoughts toward the envied other. We therefore propose that, when consumers experience malicious, but not benign envy, they will engage in moral cleansing in an effort to restore their moral self-image.

Accordingly, we present six studies that examine the impact of type of envy on consumer responses. Study 1 demonstrates that experiencing malicious, envy (vs. benign envy or control) bolsters consumer intentions to purchase a product with an ethical attribute. Study 2 replicates this effect and further demonstrates that the underlying process relates to perceptions of a tainted moral character. Study 3 demonstrates that this effect also leads individuals to increase the amount of effort they exert when participating in a fundraiser. Study 4 extends the generalizability of the findings by replicating the moral cleansing effect triggered by ecologically valid, social media based manipulations of envy, as well as providing additional evidence to support the proposed mechanism. Building on these findings, study 5 demonstrates that tie strength moderates the relationship between malicious envy and moral cleansing: Feeling malicious envy toward a close (vs. distant) other results in greater moral cleansing. Study 5 provides further evidence of the proposed mechanism of moral cleansing. Malicious envy results in symbolic cleansing, through increased desirability of cleansing-related products. Lastly, study 6 presents a practically and theoretically relevant boundary condition, by demonstrating that the moral cleansing induced by malicious envy can be attenuated through the use of normalizing thoughts.

By highlighting the unique relationship between envy and morally relevant behavior, this research contributes to the literature in four important ways. First, this research contributes to the literature on envy by providing evidence of a novel consequence of envy in consumption. In particular, the rise of social media in recent years has increased the accessibility and frequency of triggers that lead to envy. Whether it's a friend's recent promotion or an acquaintance's new car, consumers find themselves treading through a multitude of envy-inducing social media posts, with one in four social media users reporting experiencing envy after seeing another user's post (AICPA 2016) and 42% of social media users reporting experiencing envy after seeing the reactions to another user's post (Kaspersky Labs 2017). Prior research has focused on the negative downstream consequences of envy, ranging from negative outcomes on consumer well-being such as low self-esteem (Thompson, Glasø, and Martinsen 2016), depression (Tandoc Jr., Ferrucci, and Duffy 2015), and even burnout (Liu and Ma 2018), to socially deviant behaviors such as social loafing, lack of cooperation (Duffy and Shaw 2000), social undermining (Duffy et al. 2012) and even sabotage (Zizzo and Oswald 2001). Although research distinguishing between the two facets of envy, has pointed to the positive outcomes of benign envy (Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, and Pieters 2012; Lange and Crusius 2015), research on malicious envy has continued to highlight its destructive outcomes (Van de Ven et al. 2015). Despite potential detrimental effects of malicious envy, the current research shows that malicious envy can ultimately lead to positive societal outcomes by compelling consumers to engage in prosocial behaviors, such as by purchasing ethical products and participating in fundraisers. This in turn can have important implications for marketers of green and socially responsible brands, when choosing ad campaign placement.

Second, we extend previous theories on self-perception (Bem 1972) and self-signaling (Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Bodner and Prelec 2003), by demonstrating that metacognitive thoughts about internal states, such as emotions, can effectively alter the self-concept. Although internal states have been previously characterized as ineffective self-signals (Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Bodner and Prelec 2003) due to not being overtly observable, the current research provides

empirical evidence demonstrating that an internal state (i.e., the emotional state of malicious envy) can be a potent self-signal that leads to altered self-perceptions. Typically, inner states such as motives may be difficult to ascertain during introspection, particularly because they can be easily manipulated (Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Bodner and Prelec 2003). However, emotions are largely recognized as being difficult to control and manipulate and are arguably perceived as revealing one's true underlying state. Although research on metacognitive thought processes in marketing has been scarce, we demonstrate that metacognitive thoughts about a primary emotional experience can shape consumer preferences and behavior, through altered self-perceptions. In particular, we show that experiencing malicious (vs. benign) envy attenuates the moral self-image, subsequently compelling consumers to increase prosocial behavior and to demonstrate a preference for products that allow them to engage in moral cleansing.

Third, we demonstrate that the impact of malicious envy on moral cleansing varies as a function of tie strength. The current research illustrates that, although tie strength does not influence the extent to which malicious envy is experienced, the moral cleansing effect of malicious envy is heightened for close (vs. distant) relationship ties. This distinction has practical relevance as tie-strength is a variable that also impacts the frequency of exposure to postings from the same source in social media domains. Finally, we show that emphasizing the normalcy of experiencing envy (e.g., as a common and natural emotion) reduces the moral cleansing effect, providing an important boundary condition. Overall, our findings allow for an enhanced theoretical and practical understanding of envy in consumption.

## **Conceptual Development**

### **The Two Sides of Envy**

Extant theories of emotion have described emotions as short-term episodes that are composed of physiological responses, feelings, thoughts, and motivational tendencies (Moors et al. 2013; Scherer and Fontaine 2019; Shuman and Scherer 2014). Emotions are elicited by the cognitive appraisal of external or internal stimuli (Lazarus 1991; Scherer and Fontaine 2019; Shuman and Scherer 2014), and are meant to ready the individual to respond to the appraised stimulus (Roseman, Wiest, and Swartz 1994; Van de Ven 2016).

Envy, in particular, is a negative, frustrating, and often painful self-conscious emotion (Crusius and Lange 2014; Robins and Schriber 2009; Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, and Pieters 2009, 2011a) evoked from the realization that one “lacks another’s superior quality, achievement or possession” (Parrott and Smith 1993, 906; Van de Ven et al. 2011a, 984). Although upward social comparisons are a necessary antecedent to envy (Crusius and Lange 2014; Salovey and Rodin 1991; Van de Ven et al. 2011a; Van de Ven and Zeelenberg 2015), only those that occur within domains that are evaluated as important to the self-view elicit envy (Van de Ven 2016). Because emotion prepares the individual to respond to the perceived opportunity or threat, envy triggers the reparative motivational tendency aimed at resolving the threat by reducing the discrepancy between oneself and the advantaged other (Crusius and Lange 2014; Van de Ven et al. 2009, 2011a; Van de Ven and Zeelenberg 2015).

Typically envy is thought of as a destructive emotion (Schoeck 1969; Van de Ven et al. 2011a), however a growing body of literature distinguishes between two facets of envy: benign and malicious envy (Crusius and Lange 2014; Lange and Crusius 2015; Salerno, Laran, and Janiscewski 2018; Van de Ven et al. 2009, 2011a). Despite generating equivalent levels of pain,



frustration, and negative affect, as well as being characterized by similarly strong feelings of inferiority (Crusius and Lange 2014; Salerno et al. 2018), the two facets of envy are delineated by their experiential content (Van de Ven et al. 2011a). A key distinction lies in the motivational tendency triggered by each facet. Malicious envy generates the motivational tendency to reduce the gap between oneself and the envied individual by damaging the superior other's position (Crusius and Lange 2014; Van de Ven et al. 2009, 2011a). Malicious envy is marked by feelings of hostility and ill will toward the envied other (Cohen-Charash and Mueller 2007; Crusius and Lange 2014; Smith 1991). Maliciously envious individuals are motivated to level the playing field by "pulling down" the envied other (Van de Ven et al. 2009, 2011a). By contrast, benign envy generates the motivational tendency to reduce the gap between oneself and the envied individual by improving one's own inferior position (Crusius and Lange 2014; Van de Ven et al. 2009, 2011a). Thus, benignly envious individuals are compelled to level the playing field by pulling themselves up to the other's position (Van de Ven et al. 2009, 2011a).

A second key distinction between the two facets of envy lies in the cognitive appraisal that triggers the emotion. Specifically, the type of envy that is experienced is largely determined by the circumstances that resulted in the envied individual's advantage (Crusius and Lange 2014; Salerno et al. 2018; Van de Ven et al. 2009, 2011a). In particular, the envied other's perceived deservingness of the advantage (Crusius and Lange 2014; Salerno et al. 2018; Van de Ven et al. 2009, 2011a), as well as the envied other's perceived control over the circumstances that resulted in their advantaged position (Van de Ven, Zeelenberg and Pieters 2012; Van de Ven 2016) determine the type of envy that is elicited. When the envied other is perceived as deserving of the advantage and as having been in control of the outcome, benign envy is experienced (Crusius and Lange 2014; Van de Ven et al. 2009, 2011a). A superior position attained through hard work, perseverance and determination therefore elicits benign envy (Salerno et al. 2018). Conversely, when the envied individual's superior position is achieved through means outside of the individual's control, such as through endowment, luck or nepotism, their position is perceived as undeserved and malicious envy is experienced (Salerno et al. 2018).

The research on the downstream consequences of envy thus far has pointed to the overwhelmingly destructive outcomes of envy. For instance, envy leads to feelings of distress, and adversely influences self-esteem—an effect argued to occur due to the shift of focus on one's personal shortcomings (Thompson et al. 2016). Envy in the workplace relates to a host of negative outcomes including counterproductive behaviors (Cohen-Charash and Mueller 2007), uncooperative behavior, increased social loafing, low organizational commitment, absenteeism, low job satisfaction (Duffy and Shaw 2000), and increased social undermining (Duffy et al. 2012). More generally, envy has been shown to lead individuals to feel pleasure at the misfortune of the envied other (Van Dijk et al. 2006), causing them to be willing to destroy the envied other's earnings, even to their own detriment (Zizzo and Oswald 2001). Although earlier studies had not distinguished between the two facets of envy, Van de Ven and colleagues (2015), in extending these findings, observed that malicious but not benign envy led to the joy at another's misfortune.

Since the conceptual distinction of benign and malicious envy was introduced, researchers have begun investigating possible positive outcomes of envy. Accordingly, benign envy was found to bolster productive behavior such as working longer on tasks, and planning to study more (Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, and Pieters 2011b), as well as being linked to overall better performance (Van de Ven et al. 2011b; Lange and Crusius 2015). For instance, benign envy was demonstrated to lead marathon runners to run faster—an effect that was mediated by

increased goal setting (Lange and Crusius 2015). Consistent with these findings, benign envy has been shown to lead to an attentional bias toward means of self-improvement (Crusius and Lange 2014).

Although research examining the consumption-related outcomes of envy has been scarce, initial evidence suggests that malicious and benign envy differentially influence consumer outcomes. For instance, Van de Ven and colleagues (2011a) observed that consumers experiencing benign (but not malicious) envy would be willing to pay more for the superior product owned by the envied other, or for the service that led to the other's desirable outcome—an effect elicited by the motivational tendency to decrease the self-other discrepancy. In contrast, malicious envy was not found to increase the willingness to pay for an envy-inducing product, given that it is not associated with a motivational tendency toward self-improvement (Van de Ven et al. 2011a). Instead, malicious envy was shown to increase consumers' willingness-to-pay for a different product within the same category, as an attempt to socially differentiate themselves from the envied other (Van de Ven et al. 2011a). Consistent with this finding, Salerno and colleagues (2018) observed that both malicious and benign envy can encourage self-improvement outside of the envy-eliciting domains, although they do so through different pathways. Benign envy increases the accessibility of the belief that effort determines outcome, and therefore increases the appeal of products that facilitate the process toward self-improvement (rather than the outcome). Conversely, malicious envy increases the accessibility of the belief that effort does not determine outcome, and therefore increases the appeal of products that emphasize the outcome (rather than the process).

Importantly, research investigating the downstream consequences of envy, whether related to self-improvement (Lange and Crusius 2015; Salerno et al. 2018; Van de Ven et al. 2011a; Van de Ven et al. 2012) or destructive behaviors (Cohen-Charash and Mueller 2007; Duffy et al. 2012; Duffy and Shaw 2000; Thompson et al. 2016; Zizzo and Oswald 2001), has focused on behavior related to the resolution of self-other discrepancies. To our knowledge, no prior research has examined how the mere emotional experience of envy alters self-perceptions, beyond perceived self-other discrepancies. What does experiencing envy say about oneself, aside from one's inferior position relative to another? The outward expression of envy is typically thought of as violating social norms (Crusius and Mussweiler 2012), and has been historically condemned as sinful (e.g., envy is listed as one of the seven deadly sins). Nevertheless, not all experiences of envy lead to an external manifestation (Crusius and Mussweiler 2012; Van de Ven 2016). A relevant question is therefore whether merely experiencing envy can be perceived as a moral norm violation, despite no outward emotional or behavioral expression. Although the historical characterization of envy as sinful has not distinguished between the types of envy, it is likely that malicious envy, which involves harboring wishes of ill will towards others, to be particularly morally condemned. The current research introduces a third downstream consequence of envy—its ability to trigger moral cleansing by threatening the moral self-concept. In particular, we propose that the metacognitive awareness that one is experiencing malicious (but not benign) envy evokes a self-signal of moral impurity, thereby activating the need to morally cleanse oneself.

### **The Moral Self-Signaling Value of Emotion**

Broadly, morality is defined as a set of “prescriptive judgements of justice, rights, and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other” (Turiel 1983, 3; Gino et al. 2015).

The inherent concern for the welfare of others has traditionally been a central tenet of morality. As such, traits such as kindness, generosity and considerateness are highly valued (Reed II et al. 2016) and contribute to self-perceptions of one's moral character. The moral identity, which is defined as one's mental representation of moral character (Aquino and Reed II 2002), has been conceptualized as a self-regulatory mechanism that motivates individuals to closely monitor and regulate their morally relevant behavior in order to maintain a reasonable degree of moral self-regard (Monin and Jordan 2009). As such, substantial previous research has established that *external* states (i.e., moral and immoral behavior) alter self-perceptions of moral character (Cascio and Plant 2015; Jordan, Mullen, and Murnighan 2011; Reed II et al. 2016; Sachdeva, Iliev, and Medin 2009). A critical question relevant to the present investigation is whether a similar process can occur with *internal* states (i.e., emotions).

More generally, the self-concept is a set of beliefs about oneself, which include aspects such as attributes, traits, competences, and social roles (Baumeister 1999). However, individuals have imperfect knowledge about their attitudes and beliefs, including those that pertain to the self (Bem 1972; Bénabou and Tirole 2010). According to self-perception theory, beliefs about oneself are altered by observing one's own overt actions (Bem 1972), and judgements about one's own self-concept are formed in a similar inferentially-based process used to make judgements about others (Bem 1972). Consistent with this view, self-signaling theory holds that any overt behavior that allows consumers to convey information to themselves about who they are provides incremental utility (Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Bodner and Prelec 2003). Because information about one's motives are not easily verifiable or remembered, and can be easily manipulated, self-signaling theory holds that individuals seek out concrete evidence to update their self-view (Bénabou and Tirole 2010).

Taken together, both self-perception theory and self-signaling theory suggest that only external cues such as behavior can serve to inform the self-concept because behavior is overt and therefore easy to interpret. This is consistent with literature on the moral identity that suggests that individuals monitor their morally relevant *behavior* to ensure they maintain positive beliefs regarding their own moral character. Nevertheless, in the current work we suggest that emotions, despite being internal states, can also serve as effective signals that alter perceptions of the self-concept. Because emotional experiences are oftentimes spontaneous and automatic, and therefore not easily controlled (Briñol et al. 2006; Crusius and Mussweiler 2012), individuals are likely to recognize emotions as true, untainted signals of their underlying states (Barasch et al. 2014).

Previous research on the meta-cognitive processes of emotional intelligence (Briñol et al. 2006) lends credence to our hypothesis that experiencing malicious envy activates moral cleansing, via altered perceptions of moral self-regard. According to the concept of emotional intelligence, individuals have the varying ability to recognize, understand and regulate their own emotions. Thus, the primary experience of emotion can be accompanied by a secondary process whereby individuals perceive and evaluate the experienced emotion (Mayer and Gaschke 1988; Briñol et al. 2006; Scheier and Carver 1982). These secondary thoughts about the initial emotional experience are referred to as metacognitions (Jost, Kruglanski, and Nelson 1998; Briñol et al. 2006). Research on metacognition suggests that metacognitive thoughts can be classified along various dimensions, such as the target (i.e., what is the thought actually about), the source, the valence, and the number of thoughts generated (Briñol et al. 2006; Petty et al. 2007). An additional aspect of metacognition that is theoretically relevant to the current research is the evaluative dimension of metacognitive thoughts, whereby individuals may assess their

thoughts along various dimensions such as whether their thoughts are right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, helpful or unhelpful, and so on (Briñol et al. 2006).

Earlier research suggests that metacognitive processes are activated by the emotional experience of envy. Specifically, Crusius and Mussweiler (2012) found that upward social comparisons meant to elicit envy only resulted in an increase in willingness to pay for the envied other's product, when self-control resources were depleted. The authors argued that this effect was observed due to consumers' awareness of the undesirable nature of envy (Crusius and Mussweiler 2012). Given that consumers are aware that experiencing envy is unpleasant, an attempt is made to suppress this emotion (Crusius and Mussweiler 2012). More generally, prior research suggests that when thoughts are evaluated as undesirable, an attempt to restrain these thoughts may be made (Wegner 1994; Briñol et al. 2006). An emotion such as envy, if indeed evaluated as morally inappropriate, may adversely alter the moral self-concept. However there is a lack of empirical research on the role of emotion in influencing self-perceptions.

Although there is no direct evidence linking emotion to self-perceptions, prior research on the role of emotion in interpersonal signaling supports our theoretical framework. In particular, Barasch and colleagues (2014) observed that prosocial actors who reported feeling "emotional" when thinking about the cause to which they contributed, as well as those who reported feeling warm glow after donating, were judged by others as having a higher moral character. Similarly, prosocial actors characterized as feeling high (vs. low) distress when witnessing the misfortune of others, were judged by observers as being more moral. These findings are consistent with a larger body of research that demonstrates that overt displays of emotions by others shapes perceivers' impressions of them. For instance, prior research has shown that individuals evaluate other's overt emotional expressions (e.g., facial expressions) in order to make inferences about their personalities (Harker and Keltner 2001; Van Kleef et al. 2006) and motivations (Ames and Johar 2009). Admittedly, information pertaining to other's internal states is oftentimes ambiguous, making the use of cues, such as emotional expressions, necessary in judgement formation. However, because individuals also have imperfect knowledge about their own internal states (Bem 1972; Bénabou and Tirole 2010), and because judgements about one's own self-concept are formed in a similar inferentially-based process used to make judgements about others (Bem 1972), one's own emotions are likely to influence beliefs about the self-concept.

Building on these findings, the current research proposes that experiencing malicious envy, which is characterized by feelings of ill will toward an individual perceived as superior, will lead individuals to infer a lower moral self-image, subsequently triggering moral cleansing. In particular, because hostile and destructive feelings toward the envied other only occur when malicious envy is experienced (Crusius and Lange 2014), we posit that only the manifestation of malicious (and not benign) envy will threaten the moral self-concept. By contrast, benign envy, although eliciting equivalent levels of frustration and negative affect (Crusius and Lange 2014; Salerno et al. 2018), results in positive feelings toward the envied other, and generates thoughts about self-improvement (Salerno et al. 2018), and is therefore not expected to threaten the moral self-concept. Envy has long been thought of as a destructive emotion that induces the motivation to harm the envied other (Miceli and Castelfranchi 2007; Van de Ven et al. 2011a). Indeed, most religions morally condemn envy (Van de Ven et al. 2011a). For instance, it is not only prohibited by the Ten Commandments (i.e., "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife"), it is also listed as one of the seven deadly sins (Solomon 1999; Van de Ven et al. 2011a). It is therefore reasonable to expect a strong associative link between the concepts of envy and immorality.

## Envy and Moral Cleansing

Moral cleansing refers to compensatory behavior that is intended to restore the moral self-regard following a transgression (Gino et al. 2015; West and Zhong 2015; Zhong and Liljenquist 2006). Because individuals typically hold a strong desire to perceive themselves moral (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Reed II, Aquino and Levy 2007; Reed II et al. 2016), they closely monitor and regulate morally relevant behavior (Monin and Jordan 2009). As such, any threats to their moral self-concept triggers moral cleansing (Gino et al. 2015). Moral cleansing behaviors can be broadly organized into three categories: restitution, behavioral, and symbolic cleansing (West and Zhong 2015). Each of these pathways allows for the restoration of one's moral self-regard.

Restitution moral cleansing refers to the direct resolution of past transgressions (West and Zhong 2015). For instance, if an individual engaged in theft, restitution would involve returning the stolen item. Behavioral moral cleansing involves engaging in favorable morally relevant behavior within the same or different domain than the previous misdeed, without righting the initial misdeed (West and Zhong 2015). For instance, if an individual engaged in theft, behavioral moral cleansing would involve a prosocial act such as volunteering at a local non-profit. Indeed, previous research has shown that recalling prior unrelated immoral behavior results in greater prosocial intentions (Jordan et al. 2011), increased ethical behavior (Sachdeva et al. 2009) and increased purchase intentions of ethical products (Peloza, White, and Shang 2013). Symbolic moral cleansing involves the use of conceptual metaphors to restore the moral self-regard. In particular, previous research has suggested that threats to the moral self-concept increases accessibility of cleansing concepts, such as washing and bathing, due to the close associative link between physical cleanliness and moral purity in most major religions (e.g., baptisms as a purification ritual; Gino et al. 2015; Zhong and Liljenquist 2006). Prior research has shown that restoration of the moral self can be achieved through physical cleansing (Gino et al. 2015; Zhong and Liljenquist 2006). As such, an individual seeking to restore their moral self-regard after engaging in theft, for instance, may do so by washing his or her hands.

Because experiencing the emotional state of malicious envy does not involve an overt behavior, we propose that moral cleansing can be achieved either through behavioral or symbolic moral cleansing. More specifically, we expect that the manifestation of malicious envy (vs. benign envy or control) will increase prosocial behavior. In a consumption context, we propose that malicious envy (vs. benign envy or control) will increase intentions to purchase ethical products. The purchase of products positioned on their ethical attributes has previously been demonstrated to provide consumers a route of moral self-restoration because they are viewed as morally superior to conventional products (Peloza et al. 2013). Ethical products are not positioned on self-benefits, but rather on other-benefits, and as such, expressing an interest in ethical products allows oneself to morally self-signal. Our theoretical framework also predicts, that the manifestation of malicious (vs. benign) envy will lead to symbolic moral cleansing, by increasing the desirability of cleansing-related products, due to the increased accessibility of cleansing-related concepts. We test these predictions across six studies.

### Overview of Research

Across six studies, the current research empirically investigates whether malicious (vs. benign) envy leads to altered self-perceptions of morality, subsequently resulting in preferences

for products that allow consumers to engage in moral cleansing. Study 1 tests whether experiencing malicious envy (compared to benign envy or control conditions), resulting from differential appraisals of deservingness, bolsters consumer intentions to purchase a product with an ethical attribute. Study 2 replicates the effect and investigates whether perceptions of moral self-concept explains the process. Study 3 provides further evidence of our proposed effect by demonstrating that malicious (vs. benign) envy increases helping behavior in a fundraiser. Study 4 enhances the generalizability of our findings by illustrating that malicious envy induced by social media posts can increase purchase intentions of products positioned on their ethical attributes. Additionally, study 4 provides further evidence of process through moral self-concept. Building on these findings, study 5 demonstrates that feeling malicious envy toward a close (vs. distant) other results in greater symbolic moral cleansing, through the increased desirability of cleansing-related products. Finally, study 6 finds that secondary metacognitive thoughts about the initial emotional experience of envy that help normalize the emotion leading to a reduction of moral cleansing.

## Study 1

Study 1 sought to investigate the influence of type of envy on moral cleansing. Because the purchase of products positioned on their ethical attributes provides consumers a route of moral self-restoration (Peloza et al. 2013), our theoretical framework proposes that feelings of malicious envy will increase purchase intentions (relative to benign envy or control conditions) toward products positioned on their ethical attributes. Previous research has demonstrated that the type of envy that is experienced is largely determined by the appraisal of deservingness (Crusius and Lange 2014; Salerno et al. 2018; Van de Ven et al. 2012). Malicious envy is elicited when the envied other is perceived as undeserving of their superior position or possession, such as in instances of luck or endowment (Crusius and Lange 2014; Salerno et al. 2018; Van de Ven et al. 2012). Conversely, benign envy occurs when the envied other is deemed deserving, such as in instances of exerted effort or perseverance (Crusius and Lange 2014; Salerno et al. 2018; Van de Ven et al. 2012). Accordingly, in study 1, we examine type of envy arising from appraisals of deservingness and its subsequent impact on ethical consumption.

## Method

*Design, Procedure, and Measures.* One hundred and forty-nine participants<sup>1</sup> (49.3% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 36.0$ ,  $SD = 11.75$ ) were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) for a compensation of \$1.00. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (benign envy, malicious envy, and control).

Participants were first informed that they would be participating in various unrelated studies, and that they would be proceeding to the first study relating to memory. Participants then proceeded to the envy manipulation task, which was adapted from prior literature validating that the type of envy experienced is determined by the appraisal of perceived deservingness (Crusius and Lange 2014; Lange and Crusius 2015; Salerno et al. 2018; Van de Ven et al. 2012). In the malicious envy condition, participants were asked to write about an experience in their life in which they felt envy toward another person who they evaluated as having an undeserved superior

---

<sup>1</sup> Two participants whose responses represented extreme outliers, and four participants who self-reported poor English language proficiency were excluded prior to analyses.

quality, achievement or possession. In the benign envy condition, participants were asked to describe an experience in their life in which they felt envy toward another person who they evaluated as having a deserved superior quality, achievement or possession. Because writing about daily activities is emotionally neutral (Salerno et al. 2018), participants in the control condition were asked to write about what they do in a regular weekday. To avoid participants guessing that the various aspects of the study were related, participants then completed a filler task pertaining to the ease of recalling the events they described to keep the cover that the first study was related to memory.

Participants were thanked for their participation in “Survey 1” and informed that they would be proceeding to a second survey in which they would be providing feedback for a popular consumer product. Participants then viewed a juice advertisement campaign positioned on its ethical attribute (i.e., environmental benefits; Pelozo et al. 2013; see appendix A). The advertisement campaign was previously validated as being positioned on the ethical attributes of the product rather than on self-benefits (Pelozo et al. 2013). After viewing the advertisement, participants responded to a measure related to their purchase intentions of the juice (7-point scale; very unlikely/very likely, highly improbable/highly probable;  $\alpha = .97$ ). Participants then completed measures relating to manipulation checks, demographics, and hypothesis guessing. Manipulation checks included 3 items relating to perceived undeservingness of the envied other (The person did not deserve the object of my envy; It felt unfair that the person had what I envied, and I did not; It felt unfair that the person was in that position; Crusius and Lange 2014; Lange and Crusius 2015; Van de Ven et al. 2009;  $\alpha = .90$ ); and one item relating to the intensity of envy (not at all intense/very intense; Van de Ven et al. 2009). Negative affect was also assessed using three items (It hurt not to have what I envied; To see the other person have what I wanted elicited intense negative feelings in me; It was frustrating that I did not have what I envied; Crusius and Lange 2014;  $\alpha = .92$ ). All measures used 7-point scales.

Across all studies, participants whose responses presented extreme outliers were removed. Meyvis and Van Osselaer (2018) recommend removing participants whose data deviates 2.5 standard deviations from condition means. Being conservative with data exclusions, in the current research, only those participants whose responses were 3 standard deviations from cell means were excluded. Additionally, participants who self-reported poor English language proficiency (i.e., very little or no ability at all) were also excluded prior to analyses.

## Results

*Manipulation checks.* Four participants correctly guessed the purpose of the study and were excluded from further analyses. The envy manipulation was successful. Perceived undeservingness of the envied other was significantly higher in the malicious envy versus benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 5.11$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ;  $M_{\text{benign}} = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 2.08$ ;  $F(1, 143) = 5.71$ ,  $p = .02$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .038$ ; 95% CI [.15, 1.58]). Envy intensity was significantly higher for the malicious envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 5.40$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ;  $F(1, 143) = 87.29$ ;  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .379$ ; 95% CI [2.31, 3.55]) and benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{benign}} = 5.39$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ;  $F(1, 143) = 78.94$ ;  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .356$ ; 95% CI [2.27, 3.57]) relative to the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = 2.47$ ,  $SD = 1.89$ ). However envy intensity did not differ between benign and malicious envy conditions ( $F(1, 143) = .01$ ,  $p = .98$ ; 95% CI [-.63, .65]). Lastly, negative affect was significantly lower in the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ ) compared to the malicious envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}}$

= 4.86,  $SD = 1.54$ ;  $F(1, 143) = 40.24$ ;  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .220$ ; 95% CI [-2.87, -1.51]) and benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{benign}} = 4.58$ ,  $SD = 1.92$ ;  $F(1, 143) = 27.69$ ;  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .162$ ; 95% CI [-2.62, -1.19]), however there was no significant difference between benign and malicious envy conditions ( $F(1, 143) = .65$ ,  $p = .42$ ; 95% CI [-.42, .99]).

*Purchase intentions.* An ANOVA with purchase intentions as the dependent variable and envy as the independent variable was conducted. The main effect of envy was significant ( $F(2, 143) = 3.34$ ,  $p = .04$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .045$ ). Importantly, planned contrasts revealed that experiencing malicious envy ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 5.65$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) led to greater purchase intentions toward an ethical product than benign envy ( $M_{\text{benign}} = 4.97$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ;  $F(1, 143) = 4.49$ ,  $p = .04$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .030$ ; 95% CI [.05, 1.32]), and greater purchase intentions than the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = 4.93$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ ;  $F(1, 143) = 5.29$ ,  $p = .02$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .036$ ; 95% CI [.10, 1.34]). There was no difference in purchase intentions between the benign and control conditions ( $F(1, 143) = .01$ ,  $p = .91$ ; 95% CI [-.61, .69]).

*Discussion.* Study 1 provides initial evidence to support our theoretical framework proposing that experiencing malicious envy compels individuals to engage in moral cleansing. In particular, findings suggest that, compared to experiencing the emotion of benign envy (or control), experiencing malicious envy leads consumers to exhibit higher purchase intentions toward a product with an ethical attribute. In the next study, we provide additional evidence by elucidating the underlying process driving the observed effect.

## Study 2

Study 2 was designed with two goals in mind. First, we sought to replicate the finding that malicious envy (vs. benign envy or control conditions) bolsters purchase intentions of products positioned on their ethical attributes using an alternate manipulation of envy. Second, we sought to investigate the process underlying the effect of envy on purchase intentions toward products positioned on their ethical attributes. Our theoretical framework proposes that experiencing malicious envy leads to a tainted moral self-concept, which subsequently compels individuals to restore their moral self-image through the purchase of morally relevant products.

### Method

*Design, Procedure, and Measures.* One hundred and fifty-four participants<sup>2</sup> (46.1% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 35.5$ ,  $SD = 11.25$ ) were recruited through MTurk for a compensation of \$1.00. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (benign envy, malicious envy, or control).

The procedure to study 2 was identical to the first study with two exceptions. First, an alternate manipulation of malicious and benign envy was used (adapted from Crusius and Lange 2014; Lange and Cusius 2015; Van de Ven et al. 2009). Second, study 2 investigated the role of moral self-concept in the process, and, to that end, included measures of moral impurity, as an indicator of moral self-concept (Gino et al. 2015).

In the malicious envy condition, participants were asked to write in detail about an experience in their life in which they felt they lacked another person's superior quality,

---

<sup>2</sup> Two participants were excluded prior to analyses because their responses represented extreme outliers.



achievement or possession, and wished some misfortune on that person. In the benign envy condition, participants wrote about an experience in which they felt they lacked another person's superior quality, achievement or possession, and it motivated them to take action to achieve that superior other's position.

A separate pretest ( $n = 136$ ) was conducted to ensure that validity of this manipulation in inducing malicious versus benign envy using measures of malicious envy ( $\alpha = .94$ ), benign envy ( $\alpha = .85$ ), and perceived undeservingness of the envied other ( $\alpha = .85$ ) from past research (Crusius and Lange 2014; Lange and Crusius 2015; Van de Ven et al. 2009; see appendix H). ANOVA analyses revealed that the malicious envy condition led to greater feelings of malicious envy relative to the benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.78, SD = 1.21; M_{\text{benign}} = 3.22, SD = 1.91; F(1, 134) = 32.84; p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .197; 95\% \text{ CI } [1.02, 2.10]$ ), lower feelings of benign envy ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.46, SD = 1.25; M_{\text{benign}} = 5.10, SD = 1.32; F(1, 134) = 8.38, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .059; 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.07, -.20]$ ), and a greater perception of undeservingness ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 5.20, SD = 1.54; M_{\text{benign}} = 3.70, SD = 1.96; F(1, 134) = 24.81; p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .156; 95\% \text{ CI } [.90, 2.09]$ ).

Following the same procedure as study 1, participants then completed a filler task related to the cover story, and proceeded to evaluate the same fruit juice product positioned on its ethical attribute (Peloza et al. 2013).

Study 2 also introduced measures of moral impurity, as an indicator of the moral self-concept. After being thanked for their feedback on the ad campaign, participants were instructed that they would be proceeding to a final study that was ostensibly interested in various aspects of consumer personality. Participants then responded to a question relating to the extent to which they perceived themselves as morally impure (impure, dirty, tainted; 7-point scale; Gino et al. 2015). Lastly, participants responded to manipulation checks (Crusius and Lange 2014; Lange and Crusius 2015; Van de Ven et al. 2009), demographics and hypothesis guessing. All measures used 7-point scales.

## Results

*Manipulation checks.* The envy manipulation was successful and none of the participants correctly guessed the purpose of the study. Feelings of malicious envy were significantly higher for the malicious envy relative to the benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.78, SD = 1.40; M_{\text{benign}} = 3.16, SD = 2.01; F(1, 151) = 24.83; p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .141; 95\% \text{ CI } [.15, 1.58]$ ); while feelings of benign envy were significantly higher for the benign envy relative to the malicious envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.31, SD = 1.55; M_{\text{benign}} = 5.60, SD = 1.02; F(1, 151) = 13.51; p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .082; 95\% \text{ CI } [.60, 1.98]$ ). Perceived undeservingness of the envied other was significantly higher in the malicious envy versus benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.84, SD = 1.79; M_{\text{benign}} = 3.79, SD = 1.94; F(1, 151) = 5.94, p = .02, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .038; 95\% \text{ CI } [.20, 1.91]$ ). Additionally, envy intensity was significantly higher for the malicious envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 5.11, SD = 1.95; F(1, 151) = 15.52; p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .093; 95\% \text{ CI } [.78, 2.35]$ ) and benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{benign}} = 5.27, SD = 1.78; F(1, 151) = 18.76; p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .110; 95\% \text{ CI } [.94, 2.50]$ ) relative to the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = 3.55, SD = 2.27$ ). However, envy intensity did not differ between benign and malicious envy conditions ( $F(1, 151) = .13, p = .72; 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.01, .70]$ ). Lastly, negative affect was significantly lower in the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = 3.31, SD = 2.24$ ) compared to the malicious envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.77, SD = 1.73; F(1,$

151) = 14.05;  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .085$ ; 95% CI [-2.23, -.69]) and benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{benign}} = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ;  $F(1, 151) = 5.12$ ;  $p < .03$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .033$ ; 95% CI [-1.65, -.11]), however there was no significant difference between benign and malicious envy conditions ( $F(1, 151) = 1.88$ ,  $p = .17$ ; 95% CI [-.26, 1.41]).

*Purchase intentions.* An ANOVA with purchase intentions as the dependent variable, and envy as the independent variable was conducted. The main effect of envy was significant ( $F(2, 151) = 3.89$ ,  $p = .02$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .050$ ). Importantly, planned contrasts revealed that experiencing malicious envy ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 6.00$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) led to greater purchase intentions toward an ethical product than benign envy ( $M_{\text{benign}} = 5.18$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ;  $F(1, 151) = 5.76$ ,  $p = .02$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .037$ ; 95% CI [.15, 1.50]) and the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = 5.21$ ;  $SD = 1.77$ ;  $F(1, 151) = 6.23$ ,  $p = .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .040$ ; 95% CI [.17, 1.41]). There was no difference in purchase intentions between the benign and control conditions ( $F(1, 151) = .01$ ,  $p = .92$ ; 95% CI [-.59, .66]).

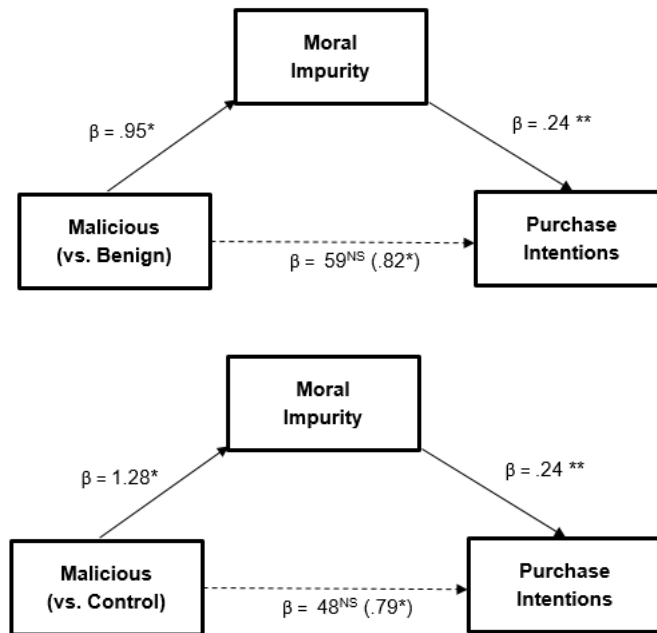
*Self-Perceived Moral Impurity.* An ANOVA with self-perceived moral impurity as the dependent variable, and envy as the independent variable, was conducted. The main effect of envy was significant ( $F(2, 151) = 4.76$ ,  $p = .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .059$ ). Planned contrasts revealed that experiencing malicious envy ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.01$ ;  $SD = 1.92$ ) led to greater self-perceptions of moral impurity than experiencing benign envy ( $M_{\text{benign}} = 3.07$ ;  $SD = 2.17$ ;  $F(1, 151) = 4.35$ ,  $p = .04$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .028$ ; 95% CI [.05, 1.85]), and the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = 2.74$ ;  $SD = 2.30$ ,  $F(1, 151) = 9.24$ ,  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .058$ ; 95% CI [.45, 2.10]). There was no difference in moral impurity between the benign and control conditions ( $F(1, 151) = .61$ ,  $p = .44$ ; 95% CI [-1.16, .50]).

*Mediation Analysis.* To examine the mediating role of self-perceived moral impurity, we conducted a mediation analysis (Model 4, Hayes 2018), with type of envy as the independent categorical variable (0 = control, 1 = benign, 2 = malicious), impurity as the mediator, and purchase intentions as the dependent variable. Bootstrapping results (10,000 resamples) supported a conditional indirect effect of envy through moral impurity on purchase intentions (malicious vs. benign: indirect effect = .23, SE = .12, 95% CI [.02, .48]; malicious vs. control: indirect effect = .31, SE = .12, 95% CI [.10, .57]; see figure 1).

*Discussion.* Study 2 provides further evidence for the proposition that malicious envy leads to a heightened desire to purchase products positioned on their ethical appeal. Findings suggest that, compared to benign envy or control conditions, experiencing malicious envy leads consumers to exhibit higher purchase intentions toward a product with an ethical attribute.

Further, results from our mediation analysis suggest that the process underlying this effect is moral cleansing. In particular, because consumers are driven by the desire to restore a morally tainted self-view evoked by experiencing malicious envy, their intentions to engage in morally superior behavior (i.e., purchase ethical products) increases. In study 2, we used moral impurity, as an indicator of the moral self-concept for parsimony. In a follow up study ( $n = 143$ , 25.2% female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 37.55$ ,  $SD = 13.43$ ) with envy as the independent variable (malicious vs. benign envy) and moral impurity and moral self-regard as indicators of moral self-concept (randomized order; Gino et al. 2015), malicious envy led to similar effects on both moral impurity ( $F(1, 141) = 8.99$ ,  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .060$ ; 95% CI [.32, 1.56]) and moral self-regard

( $F(1, 141) = 8.68, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .058; 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.49, -.29]$ ). See appendix G for further details.



**Figure 1. The indirect effect of malicious envy on purchase intentions through moral impurity (study 2).**

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

It may be argued that an alternative explanation to the observed effect is that participants in the malicious envy condition are exhibiting a higher preference for the self-improvement aspect of the product (i.e., the health benefit of apple juice). To investigate this alternative explanation, we conducted an additional study replicating the procedure of study 2 except that participants were shown ads that emphasized self-benefits rather than the ethical appeal (see appendix B; advertisement developed and validated by Pelozo et al. 2013), while keeping the same product and informational content. One hundred and fifty-three participants (36.6% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 36.9, SD = 11.57$ ) were recruited through MTurk. An ANOVA with purchase intentions as the dependent variable, and envy as the independent variable, was conducted. The main effect of envy was not significant ( $p = .35$ ). In particular, purchase intentions for the juice did not vary between the two conditions of envy ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.98, SD = 1.77; M_{\text{benign}} = 4.56; SD = 2.05; F(1, 150) = 1.16, p = .28; 95\% \text{ CI } [-.35, 1.20]$ ). Further, the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = 5.06; SD = 1.78$ ) was not significantly different than neither the malicious condition ( $F(1, 150) = .06, p = .81; 95\% \text{ CI } [-.63, .80]$ ) nor the benign condition ( $F(1, 150) = 1.96, p = .16; 95\% \text{ CI } [-.21, 1.23]$ ). These findings, combined with the findings in study 2, suggest that the ethical appeal of the campaign, and not the self-improvement aspect of the apple juice, drives the observed effect and that the process underlying the observed effect is the tainted moral self-concept arising from the experience of malicious envy.

### Study 3

Study 3 sought to provide evidence that experiencing malicious (versus benign) envy increases actual morally relevant behavior. Our theoretical framework suggests that, broadly, malicious envy will increase all morally relevant behavior, including prosocial acts. In studies 1 and 2, we observed the effect of malicious envy on morally relevant behavioral intentions. In examining the effect of malicious envy in a consumption context, the route to moral self-restoration is arguably an easy one—consumers recognize that they receive a product in return for their prosocial behavior, and therefore personal cost is low. In study 3, we extend the test of the proposed effect to actual behavioral outcomes. By examining the effect of envy on prosocial behavior in a fundraiser context, wherein the path to moral self-restoration is comparatively more costly, study 3 seeks to offer a more rigorous empirical test of the proposed effect.

#### Method

*Design, Procedure, and Measures.* One hundred and three participants<sup>3</sup> (51.5% female;  $M_{age} = 36.5$ ,  $SD = 13.17$ ) were recruited through MTurk for a compensation of \$1.00. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (benign envy or malicious envy).

Similarly to the previous studies, participants read that they would be participating in a series of unrelated studies. In the first study, participants were asked to complete the same writing task as in Study 2, which served as the manipulation of envy. They then completed the same filler questions related to the ease of recalling their memories and were thanked for their participation in the first study. Participants were then asked to read a message from one of our partners before proceeding to the following study. Next, participants were presented with a Click-to-Give fundraiser campaign (adapted from Herziger, Donnelly, and Reczek 2020), in which they were offered the opportunity to earn donations for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA; see appendix C). Specifically, participants viewed an image with the ASPCA logo, and read that each click on the center of the image would generate a donation of 1 cent. They also read that there was no limit to the amount of times they could click. The image was designed to turn green in the center every time it was clicked.

After being thanked for their efforts, participants were instructed to complete the final study. Participants then responded to manipulation checks relating to malicious and benign envy, perceived undeservingness (Crusius and Lange 2014; Lange and Crusius 2015; Van de Ven et al. 2009), envy intensity (Van de Ven et al. 2009) and negative affect (Salerno et al. 2018), using 7-point scales. Participants were also asked to rate the extent to which they found the Click-to-Give fundraiser campaign beneficial to the cause (helpful to the ASPCA; made a real difference; helped the ASPCA achieve its goals; was an effective means of helping; was beneficial to the ASPCA;  $\alpha = .90$ ), and how easy it was to understand, using 7-point scales. Lastly, participants completed questions related to demographics and hypothesis guessing. After data collection, we sent a donation representing the total number of clicks made by the participant to the ASPCA.

---

<sup>3</sup> Two participants whose responses represented extreme outliers, and four participants who self-reported poor English language proficiency were excluded prior to analyses.

## Results

*Manipulation checks.* Seven participants correctly guessed the purpose of the study and were excluded from further analyses. The envy manipulation was successful. Feelings of malicious envy were significantly higher for the malicious envy relative to the benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.46, SD = 1.40; M_{\text{benign}} = 2.60, SD = 1.55; F(1, 94) = 38.43; p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .290; 95\% \text{ CI } [1.27, 2.46]$ ); while feelings of benign envy were significantly higher for the benign envy relative to the malicious envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.25, SD = 1.36; M_{\text{benign}} = 5.09, SD = 1.25; F(1, 94) = 10.01; p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .096; 95\% \text{ CI } [.31, 1.37]$ ). Perceived undeservingness of the envied other was significantly higher in the malicious envy versus benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.88, SD = 1.85; M_{\text{benign}} = 3.26, SD = 1.87; F(1, 94) = 18.21, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .162; 95\% \text{ CI } [.87, 2.37]$ ). The benign and malicious envy conditions did not differ on intensity ( $F(1, 94) = 1.92, p = .17; 95\% \text{ CI } [-.22, 1.22]$ ) or negative affect ( $F(1, 94) = 2.41, p = .12; 95\% \text{ CI } [-.86, .11]$ ).

Additionally, participants across both conditions rated the Click-to-Give fundraiser campaign as an effective means of helping the ASPCA ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 5.20, SD = 1.38; M_{\text{benign}} = 5.31, SD = .97$ ; comparison to scale mid-point (4),  $ps < .01$ ), and easy to understand ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 6.45, SD = 1.28; M_{\text{benign}} = 6.17, SD = 1.55$ ; comparison to scale mid-point (4),  $ps < .01$ ).

*Fundraiser clicks.* An ANOVA with fundraiser clicks as the dependent variable, and envy as the independent variable was conducted. The main effect of envy was significant ( $F(1, 94) = 4.54, p = .04, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .046; 95\% \text{ CI } [3.71, 104.42]$ ). Participants in the malicious envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 152.25, SD = 135.83$ ) clicked more in the Click-to-Give fundraiser campaign than participants in the benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{benign}} = 98.19, SD = 111.46$ ). Indeed, experiencing malicious envy led to 55.1% more clicks than experiencing benign envy.

*Discussion.* Study 3 provides behavioral evidence of our proposed effect. More specifically, findings demonstrate that experiencing malicious (vs. benign) envy leads to moral cleansing behavior, such that more effort is exerted in a fundraiser supporting a non-profit cause.

## Study 4

Study 4 was designed to achieve two objectives. First, we sought to manipulate envy in a way that was naturally experienced in everyday life. In particular, social media has a near ubiquitous presence in most consumers' lives, with a combined 248 million active users in the United States and Canada on Facebook alone (Statistica 2019). Consumers are therefore inundated with news and images of other's desirable circumstances, often on a daily basis. Previous studies have demonstrated that social media use can lead consumers to feel envy (Liu and Ma 2018; Tandoc Jr. et al. 2015), which in turn, can have numerous detrimental effects on psychological well-being, such as depression (Tandoc Jr. et al. 2015), anxiety (Liu and Ma 2018), and even burnout (Liu and Ma 2018). In the current study we propose that, despite the negative outcomes of envy arising from social media use on individual consumer well-being, there is a silver-lining. In particular, if consumers are compelled to morally cleanse after experiencing (malicious) envy, there may be societal benefits in the form of increased morally relevant behavior, such as purchase of ethical products. In study 4, we therefore sought to investigate whether, outside of recalling a past experience of envy, if directly experiencing

malicious envy by viewing an envy-inducing social media post would increase the desirability of ethical products. The second objective of study 4 was to provide additional evidence to support the proposed mechanism underlying this effect, using an alternate indicator of the moral self-concept. More specifically, previous research has demonstrated that a threatened moral self-concept produces feelings of moral impurity (Gino et al. 2015), as well as a lowered moral self-regard (Gino et al. 2015). Consistent with our conceptual model, it is expected that malicious envy will lead to increased purchase intentions of an ethical product, by lowering the moral self-regard.

## Method

*Design, Procedure, and Measures.* One hundred and thirty three participants<sup>4</sup> (39.1% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 36.3$ ,  $SD = 10.61$ ) were recruited through MTurk for a compensation of \$1.00. Given the nature of our envy manipulation—work related posting, only participants within the age limits of the labor force (18-65 years old, inclusively) were recruited. Furthermore, to ensure that all participants were exposed to a consistent image used in the manipulation (e.g., size, no mobile browser errors during loading) and to eliminate further steps of scrolling down or zooming, participants were instructed to complete the study using a desktop PC or laptop, and not a cellphone. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two envy conditions (benign, malicious).

Participants were informed that they would be participating in various ostensibly unrelated studies. The first study, participants were told, related to social media use. Across both envy conditions, participants read a scenario in which a colleague received a desirable promotion at work (adapted from Lee, Baumgartner, and Winterich 2017). In the benign envy condition, participants read that their colleague had been deserving of the promotion due to experience and having attained performance goals, while in the malicious envy condition, participants read their colleague did not deserve the promotion due to a lack of experience and not having attained all performance goals (see appendix D). Participants across both conditions read that while browsing Facebook, they noticed their colleague's most recent status update. Participants then viewed their colleague's Facebook post, wherein she announced her promotion along with an image of the new office space (see appendix D).

Following the same procedure as study 1, participants then completed a filler task related to the cover story, and proceeded to evaluate the same fruit juice product positioned on its ethical attribute (7-point scale; Pelozo et al. 2013).

Study 4 also introduced measures of moral self-regard, as an alternative indicator of moral self-concept. Following the same procedure in study 2, after being thanked for their feedback on the ad campaign, participants were instructed that they would be proceeding to a final study that was interested in various aspects of consumer personality. Participants then responded to a question relating to their moral self-regard (immoral, selfish, uncaring, mean, inconsiderate; 7-point scale; adapted from Gino et al. 2015;  $\alpha = .93$ ). Lastly, participants answered manipulation checks and questions relating to demographics and hypothesis-guessing.

## Results

---

<sup>4</sup> Three participants whose responses represented extreme outliers, and two participants who self-reported poor English language proficiency were excluded prior to analyses.

*Manipulation checks.* Two participants correctly guessed the purpose of the study and were excluded from further analyses. The envy manipulation was successful. Perceived undeservingness of the envied other was significantly higher in the malicious envy versus benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.79$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ;  $M_{\text{benign}} = 3.28$ ,  $SD = 1.97$ ;  $F(1, 129) = 23.51$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .154$ ). Additionally, participants in the malicious envy condition felt higher levels of malicious envy than those in the benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ;  $M_{\text{benign}} = 2.97$ ,  $SD = 1.92$ ;  $F(1, 129) = 12.45$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .088$ ). Lastly, negative affect did not vary as a function of type of envy ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 2.55$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ;  $M_{\text{benign}} = 2.46$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ;  $F(1, 129) = .14$ ;  $p = .71$ ).

*Purchase intentions.* An ANOVA with purchase intentions as the dependent variable, and type of envy as the independent variable, was conducted. The main effect of envy was significant ( $F(1, 129) = 5.64$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .042$ ; 95% CI [.09, 1.01]): Participants in the malicious envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 5.77$ ;  $SD = .90$ ) had greater purchase intentions toward a product positioned on its ethical attribute than participants in the benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{benign}} = 5.23$ ;  $SD = 1.61$ ).

*Moral self-regard.* An ANOVA with moral self-regard as the dependent variable (reverse coded), and type of envy as the independent variable, was conducted. The main effect of envy was significant ( $F(1, 129) = 3.99$ ,  $p = .05$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .030$ ; 95% CI [-1.26, -.01]): Participants in the malicious envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.31$ ;  $SD = 1.63$ ) reported a lower moral self-regard than participants in the benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{benign}} = 4.95$ ;  $SD = 1.96$ ).

*Mediation Analysis.* To examine the mediating role of the moral self-regard, we conducted a mediation analysis (Model 4, Hayes 2018), with type of envy as the independent variable, moral self-regard (reverse coded) as the mediator, and purchase intention as the dependent variable. Bootstrapping results (10,000 resamples) supported a conditional indirect effect of envy through moral self-regard on purchase intentions (indirect effect = .12,  $SE = .07$ , 95% CI [.02, .31]). Results indicate that malicious envy (dummy coded as benign = 0, malicious = 1) had a significant and negative effect on moral self-regard ( $b = -.63$ ,  $t(129) = 2.00$ ,  $p = .05$ , 95% CI [-1.26, -.01]), and that moral self-regard had a significant and negative influence on purchase intentions ( $b = -.18$ ,  $t(128) = -2.93$ ,  $p < .01$ , 95% CI [-.31, -.06]). Thus, the comparatively lower perceptions of moral self-regard generated by malicious envy, increased purchase intentions of the ethical product. When moral self-regard was accounted for, the impact of malicious envy was only marginally significant ( $b = .43$ ,  $t(88) = 1.90$ ,  $p = .06$ , 90% CI [.06, .81]).

*Discussion.* Study 4 replicates findings from studies 1 and 2 by using an ecologically valid manipulation of envy. Findings support the prediction that experiencing malicious envy in a social media setting lead to a moral cleansing effect, thereby bolstering purchase intentions of an ethically-positioned product. Study 4 provides further evidence in support of moral self-concept as the underlying process.

## Study 5

Study 5 had two main objectives. In a social media setting, consumers are exposed to online posts from a variety of different sources across the social media platforms. Study 5 investigates whether tie strength with the social media poster influences the extent of moral

cleansing occurring as a result of (malicious) envy. Tie strength is defined as “relationship closeness” between two individuals (Lin and Utz 2015, 30). Previous research has demonstrated that tie strength heightens feelings of benign envy, such that, the motivation to level up increases, the closer individuals feel to the envied other (Lin and Utz 2015). Tie strength, however, has not been found to have any relationship with malicious envy (Lin and Utz 2015).

In the current study, we propose that although tie strength will not influence the intensity of malicious envy, it will bolster the moral cleansing effect. Specifically, intimate relationships, such as those with family and friends, carry with them the expectation that one should be able to share other’s emotions (Lin and Utz 2015; Norscia and Palagi 2011). For instance, there is an expectation to feel happy if someone who one considers a friend shares positive news. Furthermore, individuals’ moral concern for others is bolstered by tie strength, such that the closer an individual feels to someone, the more care and moral consideration will be extended to that person (Crimston et al. 2016). Thus, experiencing destructive feelings toward close others runs counter to what is typically expected in such relationships. We therefore predict that malicious envy will lead to greater moral cleansing, when it is directed toward a close (vs. distant) other.

The second objective of study 5 was to provide additional evidence supporting the claim that the observed effect of malicious envy is driven by moral cleansing. Previous research has suggested that any threat to an individual’s moral self-concept leads to compensatory behavior (Peloza et al. 2013; Sachdeva et al. 2009), including symbolic moral cleansing, wherein the accessibility of cleansing concepts is heightened (Gino et al. 2015; Zhong and Liljenquist 2006). Thus, a threat to one’s moral self-concept increases the desire to physically cleanse oneself (Zhong and Liljenquist 2006). We therefore predict that, malicious envy felt for a close (vs. distant) other will result in symbolic moral cleansing, which in a consumption context, will be manifested by the increased desirability of cleansing-related products.

## Method

*Design, Procedure, and Measures.* Ninety-eight participants<sup>5</sup> between the ages of 18 and 65 (52.0% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 35.7$ ,  $SD = 9.80$ ) were recruited through MTurk for a compensation of \$1.00. As in study 3, participants were instructed to use a desktop PC or laptop to complete the study, and not a cellphone. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two tie strength conditions (close vs. distant). In both conditions, the social media posting was designed to trigger malicious envy.

Participants were first informed that they would be participating in various unrelated studies, and that they would be proceeding to the first study relating to social media use. Accordingly, participants were presented with the manipulation task, in which they were asked to imagine that while scrolling through Instagram one evening, they came upon a recent post by an old high school friend (complete stranger). Participants across both conditions then viewed the Instagram post, which consisted of the poster showcasing a new luxury car he had received from his parents as a gift (adapted from Lee et al. 2017; see appendix E). A separate pretest ( $n = 98$ ) ensured that malicious envy ( $M_{\text{close}} = 2.84$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ;  $M_{\text{distant}} = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ,  $F(1, 96) = .70$ ;  $p = .40$ ; 95% CI [-.38, .94]), undeservingness ( $M_{\text{close}} = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ;  $M_{\text{distant}} = 4.10$ ,  $SD =$

---

<sup>5</sup> One participant whose responses represented an extreme outlier, and three participants who self-reported poor English language proficiency were excluded prior to analyses.



1.63,  $F(1, 96) = .06$ ;  $p = .81$ ; 95% CI [-.64, .82]), intensity ( $M_{\text{close}} = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 1.85$ ;  $M_{\text{distant}} = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.95$ ,  $F(1, 96) = .05$ ;  $p = .82$ ; 95% CI [-.68, .85]) and negative affect ( $M_{\text{close}} = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 1.86$ ;  $M_{\text{distant}} = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 1.85$ ,  $F(1, 96) = .82$ ;  $p = .37$ ; 95% CI [-.41, 1.08]) did not vary across conditions. Participants then answered manipulation checks, completed an unrelated filler task, and were thanked for their participation in “Survey 1.” In the second study, participants were informed that they would be evaluating various consumer brands. They were asked to rate the desirability of eight products on a 7-point scale (1 = completely undesirable, 7 = completely desirable; adapted from Gino et al. 2015). Of the eight products, five included cleansing-related products (i.e., Dove shower soap, Crest toothpaste, Windex cleaner, Tide detergent, Lysol disinfectant) while the rest were neutral (i.e., Quaker oatmeal bar, Energizer batteries, Snickers chocolate bars; Gino et al. 2015). The responses to the five cleansing products were averaged to create an aggregate “cleansing” measure (Gino et al. 2015;  $\alpha = .71$ ). Lastly participants completed questions related to demographics and hypothesis-guessing.

## Results

Malicious envy across both conditions was not statistically different ( $M_{\text{close}} = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.81$ ;  $M_{\text{distant}} = 2.78$ ,  $SD = 1.74$ ;  $F(1, 96) = 1.82$ ,  $p = .18$ ; 95% CI [-.23, 1.20]), nor was perceived undeservingness ( $M_{\text{close}} = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ;  $M_{\text{distant}} = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 1.94$ ;  $F(1, 96) = .08$ ,  $p = .79$ ; 95% CI [-.86, .65]), envy intensity ( $M_{\text{close}} = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 2.07$ ;  $M_{\text{distant}} = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 2.17$ ;  $F(1, 96) = 1.44$ ,  $p = .23$ ; 95% CI [-.34, 1.37]), and negative affect ( $M_{\text{close}} = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 1.94$ ;  $M_{\text{distant}} = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 1.91$ ;  $F(1, 96) = 1.45$ ,  $p = .23$ ; 95% CI [-.31, 1.24]). Additionally, none of the participants correctly guessed the purpose of the study.

*Cleansing product desirability.* An ANOVA with cleansing product desirability as the dependent variable, and source of envy as the independent variable, was conducted. The main effect of tie strength was significant ( $F(1, 96) = 4.04$ ,  $p = .047$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .040$ ; 95% CI [.01, .82]). Results revealed that experiencing malicious envy toward a close other ( $M_{\text{close}} = 5.10$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) increased desirability of cleansing-related products relative to experiencing malicious envy toward a distant other ( $M_{\text{distant}} = 4.69$ ,  $SD = .85$ ). There was no difference in the desirability of non-cleansing products between the two sources of envy ( $M_{\text{close}} = 5.18$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ,  $M_{\text{distant}} = 4.92$ ,  $SD = .98$ ;  $F(1, 96) = 1.53$ ,  $p = .22$ ; 95% CI [-.22, .60]).

*Discussion.* Study 5 elucidates the role of tie strength in the relationship between malicious envy and moral cleansing. Specifically, we show that experiencing malicious envy toward a close (vs. distant) other increases moral cleansing. This finding supports the proposition that close relationships, in which individuals are expected to harbor shared emotions, as well as extend moral care and consideration, are more likely to induce maliciously envious individuals to restore their moral character, than distant relationships in which there is no such expectations. Importantly, study 5 also provides support for our theoretical framework, by demonstrating that beyond increasing morally relevant behavior, experiencing malicious envy also leads to symbolic moral cleansing. This finding is consistent with previous research that demonstrates that threatening the moral self-concept increases the accessibility of cleansing-related concepts (Gino et al. 2015; Zhong and Liljenquist 2006).

## Study 6

The primary objective of study 6 was to build on findings from our previous studies by identifying a theoretically relevant boundary condition that would reduce the moral cleansing effect induced by malicious envy. We propose that because the primary experience of emotion can be accompanied by a secondary process whereby individuals perceive and evaluate the experienced emotion (Mayer and Gaschke 1988; Briñol et al. 2006; Scheier and Carver 1982), on various dimensions (Briñol et al. 2006), that modifying the metacognitive beliefs about envy will influence moral cleansing. In particular, if moral cleansing arises due to the assessment of (malicious) envy as morally inappropriate, then thoughts that normalize the emotion are expected to attenuate moral cleansing.

### Method

*Design, Procedure, and Measures.* One hundred and eighty-four participants<sup>6</sup> between the ages of 18 and 65 (42.9% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 35.3$ ,  $SD = 10.47$ ) were recruited through MTurk for a compensation of \$1.00. Participants were instructed to not make use of cellphones for the purposes of study completion. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (envy type: malicious, benign) x 2 (envy norm belief: elevated, control) between-participants experimental design. Following a similar procedure to study 4, participants were informed that they would be participating in various ostensibly unrelated studies. The first study, participants were told, related to social media use. Across both envy conditions, participants read a scenario in which a colleague received a desirable promotion at work (adapted from Lee et al. 2017). In the benign envy condition, participants read that their colleague had been successful in recent projects (i.e., and therefore more deserving), while in the malicious envy condition, participants read that they had been the more successful individual in recent work-related projects (see appendix F). Participants across both conditions read that while browsing Facebook, they noticed their colleague's most recent status update. Participants then viewed the same Facebook post as in study 4, wherein their colleague announced his promotion along with an image of the new office. A pretest ( $n = 79$ ) demonstrated that perceived undeservingness (Crusius and Lange 2014) of the envied other was indeed significantly higher in the malicious envy condition than the benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.73$ ,  $SD = 1.82$ ;  $M_{\text{benign}} = 2.47$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ;  $F(1, 77) = 36.91$ ,  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .324$ ; 95% CI [1.52, 3.00]).

After completing the envy manipulation participants across both belief conditions read that after viewing the post they realize they are experiencing feelings of envy. In the elevated envy norm belief condition, participants additionally read that they remind themselves that envy is a common and natural emotion, with research having demonstrated that most individuals experience envy at least some of the time, especially when browsing social media. In the control condition, no such information was presented. After completing the identical filler task used in study 3, participants proceeded to the second survey in which they rated the desirability of the eight products (7-point scale). As in Study 5, of the eight products, five included cleansing-related products, while the rest were neutral (Gino et al. 2015). After completing measures

---

<sup>6</sup> Three participants whose responses represented extreme outliers, and six participants who self-reported poor English language proficiency were excluded prior to analyses.

related to the dependent variable, participants answered questions relating to manipulation checks, demographics and hypothesis-guessing.

## Results

*Manipulation checks.* The manipulation was successful and none of the participants correctly guessed the purpose of the study. Participants in the malicious envy condition experienced higher levels of malicious envy than those in the benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ;  $M_{\text{benign}} = 3.08$ ,  $SD = 1.90$ ;  $F(1, 182) = 12.42$ ,  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .064$ ; 95% CI [.41, 1.46]). Perceived undeservingness of the envied other was significantly higher in the malicious envy versus benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 5.05$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ;  $M_{\text{benign}} = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ;  $F(1, 182) = 41.16$ ;  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .184$ ; 95% CI [1.10, 2.07]).

*Cleansing product desirability.* An ANOVA with cleansing product desirability as the dependent variable, and type of envy and envy norm beliefs as the independent variables, was conducted. The main effects of envy norm beliefs and type of envy were not significant ( $ps \geq .64$ ). Importantly however, the interaction was significant ( $F(1, 180) = 6.95$ ,  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .037$ ). Planned contrasts revealed that across malicious envy conditions, normalizing beliefs about the emotional experience led to a significant reduction in the perceived desirability of cleansing products ( $M_{\text{none}} = 5.31$ ,  $SD = .99$ ,  $M_{\text{elevated}} = 4.78$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ;  $F(1, 180) = 4.90$ ,  $p = .03$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .027$ ; 95% CI [-1.01, -.06]). Conversely, envy norm beliefs did not influence desirability of cleansing products across benign envy conditions ( $M_{\text{none}} = 4.81$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ,  $M_{\text{elevated}} = 5.18$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ;  $F(1, 180) = 2.31$ ,  $p = .13$ ; 95% CI [-.11, .88]). When envy norm beliefs were not elevated, malicious envy ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 5.31$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) led to significantly greater desirability of cleansing products than benign envy ( $M_{\text{benign}} = 4.81$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ;  $F(1, 180) = 4.29$ ,  $p = .04$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .023$ ; 95% CI [.02, .99]). Results from the ANOVA with desirability of non-cleansing products as the dependent variable, and type of envy and envy norm beliefs as the independent variables, did not reveal any significant main and interaction effects ( $Fs \leq 1.70$ ,  $ps \geq .33$ ).

*Discussion.* Findings from study 6 elucidate our understanding of the effect of type of envy on moral cleansing by identifying an important boundary condition. In particular, we show that although experiencing malicious envy compels individuals to engage in moral cleansing, secondary thoughts that help normalize the experience of envy reduces this effect.

## General Discussion

Findings from the current research indicate that experiencing malicious envy compels individuals to engage in moral cleansing. Across six studies, participants who were either directly induced to experience malicious envy through social media postings or indirectly through recall tasks, subsequently demonstrated increased preferences for morally relevant products as compared to participants who experienced benign envy or did not experience envy (control). Compared to benign envy or control conditions, experiencing malicious envy increased purchase intentions toward a product positioned on its ethical attributes (studies 1 and 2). The process underlying this effect is the threatened moral self-concept induced by the experience of malicious—not benign—envy (studies 2 and 4). Malicious (vs. benign) envy also bolsters helping behavior in a fundraiser campaign (study 3). Social media posts may lead to malicious

envy and subsequent moral cleansing behaviors (studies 4 and 5) and the envy-induced moral cleansing effect is intensified when social media posts are from a close vs. distant other (study 5). Consistent with the proposed conceptual model, malicious envy also leads to symbolic moral cleansing, whereby the desirability of cleansing-related products is heightened. Lastly, the moral cleansing effect of malicious envy can be attenuated by modifying the metacognitive beliefs about the primary experience of envy through the use of normalizing thoughts (study 6), a practically and theoretically relevant boundary condition.

## **Theoretical Contributions**

The findings of the current research make several theoretical contributions. First, we contribute to the literature on envy by demonstrating a unique downstream consequence of envy—moral cleansing. More specifically, we show that experiencing malicious envy increases morally relevant consumption and behavior. Because experiencing threats to one's sense of moral purity activates the accessibility of cleansing-related concepts (Gino et al. 2015; West and Zhong 2015; Zhong and Liljenquist 2006), we also show that experiencing malicious envy increases the desirability of cleansing-related products. Furthermore, we demonstrate the robustness of our proposed effect by using four distinct manipulations of envy.

Previous research on envy has largely focused on identifying its antecedents (Crusius and Lange 2014; Van de Ven et al. 2009; Van de Ven et al. 2012), associated affective states (Thompson et al. 2016; Van de Ven et al. 2009), or the negative outcomes of envy, both towards others (Duffy et al. 2012; Duffy and Shaw 2000; Zizzo and Oswald 2001), as well as to oneself (Liu and Ma 2018; Tandoc Jr. et al. 2015; Thompson et al. 2016). Research that has conceptually distinguished between malicious and benign envy has identified some positive outcomes arising from benign envy due to its motivational tendency toward self-improvement (Crusius and Lange 2014; Van de Ven et al. 2011a; Van de Ven et al. 2012; Lange and Crusius 2015). With the exception of recent research demonstrating that malicious envy can encourage the pursuit of outcome-focused goals (Salerno et al. 2018), outcomes associated with malicious envy have overwhelmingly been identified as destructive in nature (Van de Ven et al. 2015). Further, prior research illustrating the positive outcomes of envy has solely examined self-serving positive consequences (Salerno et al. 2018), whereas current research is the first to identify a positive other-focused outcome of envy. More specifically, we show that although malicious envy can have an additional detrimental consequence on consumer well-being by inducing individuals to feel morally impure and lowering their moral self-regard, there are societal benefits arising from the subsequent moral cleansing. Until now, prior research on the social impact of envy has exclusively identified its negative consequences (Duffy et al. 2012; Duffy and Shaw 2000; Zizzo and Oswald 2001).

Furthermore, research to date has exclusively examined envy-induced outcomes related to the motivational tendency to reduce self-other discrepancies. By identifying moral cleansing as a consequence of envy—an effect whose underlying process is not driven by the motivation to reduce a self-other discrepancy, but by the altered moral self-concept, the current research documents a novel mechanism through which envy influences consumer behavior. Previous research has illustrated that individuals may engage in fluid compensation—a coping mechanism whereby domains outside of the experienced threat are bolstered, such that experiencing a threat to one's sense of competence may lead to a spontaneous reinforcement of one's moral identity. In contrast, the current research provided empirical evidence supporting a process whereby

malicious envy triggered the desire to restore one's moral character. More specifically, we provide process evidence demonstrating that experiencing malicious envy lowers one's sense of morality. Furthermore, the accessibility of cleansing-related concepts is only activated as a response to a moral identity threat (Gino et al. 2015; Zhong and Liljenquist 2006), and not any other type of self-threat, providing further evidence for our proposed mechanism.

Secondly, we illustrate that the effect of malicious envy on moral cleansing varies as a function of tie strength. Although previous research has observed that tie strength amplifies feelings of benign envy, such that the motivational tendency toward self-improvement is heightened (Lin and Utz 2015), tie strength has not previously been found to have any relationship with malicious envy (Lin and Utz 2015). In the current research, we did not find that tie strength influenced the intensity of malicious envy. We did illustrate however, that the moral cleansing effect was amplified when malicious envy was directed toward a close other, relative to a distant other—an effect arguably driven by the expectation that one should share close others' positive emotions (Lin and Utz 2015; Norscia and Palagi 2011), as well as extend care and moral consideration to them (Crimston et al. 2016).

Third, we also contribute to the literature on envy by identifying a theoretically relevant boundary condition of our proposed effect. In particular, because the primary experience of emotion can be accompanied by a secondary process whereby individuals perceive and evaluate the experienced emotion (Mayer and Gaschke 1988; Briñol et al. 2006; Scheier and Carver 1982), we observed that modifying the metacognitive beliefs about the experience of envy influences moral cleansing. More specifically, we observed that the moral cleansing effect of malicious envy can be reduced by emphasizing that envy is a common and natural emotion.

The importance of this boundary condition is twofold. First, the finding that normalizing secondary thoughts about the experience of envy reduces the moral cleansing effect of malicious envy is consistent with our conceptual framework. In particular, because we propose that moral cleansing occurs as a result of metacognitive beliefs related to the morally inappropriate nature of envy, directly modifying this belief further lends support to our theorizing. This boundary condition is expected to be unique to our proposed mechanism and lends further support to our self-perception account of envy. That is, the modification of metacognitive beliefs of envy as 'normal' would not have been expected to influence a motivationally-based response of envy, such as self-improvement goal striving, because, once a goal has been made accessible via activation, motivational striving toward the goal escalates, either until goal fulfillment (Atkinson and Birch 1970; Sela and Shiv 2009), or until progress toward the goal has been made (Fishbach and Dhar 2005).

Although we observed that experiencing malicious envy can have positive societal outcomes by heightening morally relevant behavior, we also observed that the process underlying this effect can be detrimental to consumer well-being. Therefore, by illustrating that moral-cleansing can be attenuated by reflecting on the normalcy of envy, we offer an effective yet simple route through which consumers can avoid one of the negative outcomes of malicious envy.

Fourth, the current research extends the literature on self-perception (Bem 1972; Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Bodner and Prelec 2003) and moral cleansing (Cascio and Plant 2015; Gino et al. 2015; Jordan et al. 2011; Monin and Jordan 2009; Sachdeva et al. 2009; West and Zhong 2015; Zhong and Liljenquist 2006) by illustrating that an emotional state can influence the self-concept. In particular, both self-perception theory and self-signaling theory suggest that, because individuals have imperfect knowledge about themselves, they rely on external and overt cues

such as behavior to update their self-concept because such cues are easy to interpret (Bem 1972; Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Bodner and Prelec 2003). Conversely, internal states are not easily verifiable and therefore cannot serve to effectively inform the self-concept (Bem 1972; Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Bodner and Prelec 2003). This is consistent with literature on the moral identity that suggests that the moral identity is a self-regulatory mechanism, whereby individuals monitor their morally relevant *behavior* in order to maintain a reasonable degree of moral self-regard (Monin and Jordan 2009). Thus, although morally relevant behavior has been demonstrated to lead to altered self-perceptions of morality (Cascio and Plant 2015; Jordan et al. 2011; Reed II et al. 2016; Sachdeva et al. 2009), internal states had not been previously demonstrated to result in such an outcome. In the current research, we provide evidence that an emotional state can effectively alter the self-concept, which in turn can lead to self-regulatory behavior, such as moral cleansing.

### **Managerial Implications**

The current research provides important managerial implications. Social media has greatly improved consumers' quality of life by improving the means by which people communicate with each other (Liu and Ma 2018). At the same time, social media has been heavily criticized for fueling envy amongst users who are continuously exposed to news and images of others' desirable circumstances. Although findings highlight an additional negative effect of (malicious) envy on well-being—self-perceptions of moral impurity and a lowered moral self-regard, current research shows that this effect can be harnessed for good. Because social media use has been shown to lead to envy (Liu and Ma 2018), findings from the current research suggest that consumers are more likely to respond favorably to morally relevant content while on these platforms. With the rapid expansion of social media, sites such as Facebook and Instagram have accordingly become important platforms through which brands connect with consumers in order to build their image, drive sales, and generate traffic to their websites. Findings from the current research suggest that marketers of products or brands positioned on their ethical attributes, or socially responsible appeals might especially consider such platforms for communicating with consumers. Findings also suggest that social media sites would likely be effective mediums through which to promote charitable campaigns and fundraisers.

Because threats to one's moral self-concept increase the accessibility of cleansing-related concepts, the aim of using cleansing-product desirability as an outcome variable was to provide further evidence of the proposed moral cleansing account of envy. This finding has implications for marketers of hygiene-related personal care products and house cleaning products, who might consider social media as an effective promotion medium. Although, at face value, this finding may seem to only have implications for marketers within product domains that are related to cleansing, the fact that this occurs due to the increased accessibility of cleansing-related concepts suggests broader marketing implications. More specifically, findings suggest that marketers of products in other (non-cleansing) domains may consider using cleansing-related concepts in promotions placed on social media platforms. For instance, Expedia, an online travel shopping company, recently promoted its services by running an ad in which a woman plans her vacation while taking a relaxing bath in a bubble-filled tub. Because a threat to one's moral self-concept increases the accessibility of cleansing-related concepts, such imagery would likely be especially appealing to individuals experiencing malicious envy. The current research may also offer important implications for branding. In recent years, natural brands in the personal care industry

offering products that are free of chemicals, have begun positioning themselves as “clean” brands. Although there is no evidence to support this positioning, findings from the current research suggest that, given the increasing envy-triggering events that consumers are faced with, often on a daily basis, a “clean” brand positioning may likely provide an edge over the more traditional “natural” positioning.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

Several limitations of the current research give way to opportunities for future research. The current research employed an experimental approach to investigate the influence of envy on moral cleansing, therefore limiting the generalizability of our findings. More specifically, we used fictional social media posts to manipulate envy, and therefore the extent to which our effect occurs in real-life contexts necessitates empirical investigation. Nevertheless, the social media manipulations used in this study are likely a conservative test for our proposition. The intensity of envy would be expected to be experienced to a greater extent in real life scenarios, where consumers have strong ties with real connections and are aware that the self-other discrepancy is non-fictional.

In the current research, we examined the role of tie strength in the relationship between malicious envy and moral cleansing. Tie strength was identified as a relevant and practical factor to investigate given the variety of different sources of online posts to which consumers are exposed to on social media platforms. A related question is whether other social media elements also influence this relationship. For instance, although consumers may be exposed to envy-inducing posts, social media sites are interactive platforms whereby consumers actively engage with the content they view. Consumers may view a post that causes them to experience malicious envy, but they have the choice to either passively scroll past it, or actively respond to it, in the form of a “like” or a comment. Interactions on social media may lead to different effects. Responding positively to a post that induces malicious envy may be a form of restitution moral cleansing (West and Zhong 2015), whereby the emotional transgression is directly countered. On the other hand, expressing oneself in a way that does not reflect underlying internal states may lead to feelings of inauthenticity, further amplifying the moral cleansing effect (Gino et al. 2015). Future research is therefore needed in order to improve our understanding of this topic.

In the current research, we identified the modification of metacognitive beliefs about the experience of envy as a relevant boundary condition that diminishes the moral cleansing effect. However, the ability to spontaneously generate metacognitive thoughts about one’s emotional experience is determined by the degree of emotional intelligence and varies greatly amongst individuals (Mayer and Salovey 1993). More specifically, emotional intelligence pertains to individuals’ ability to identify and distinguish between the emotions being experienced, and to subsequently apply that information to guide future thoughts and behavior (Mayer and Salovey 1993). One avenue for future research would therefore be to investigate whether individuals with a high emotional intelligence are more likely to correctly identify the feelings of moral impurity arising from experiencing malicious envy, and correct for them by engaging in normalizing thoughts. In highlighting future avenues of research, it is hoped that the current research can serve as a starting point in understanding the moral nature of envy, at a time where issues related to social media, as well as sustainability are increasingly shaping the consumer landscape.

## **Transition from Essay 1 to Essay 2**

The first essay investigated an important antecedent of the moral identity by demonstrating that an emotional state can serve to inform the self-concept. Specifically, the manifestation of malicious (but not benign) envy was shown to threaten the moral self-concept by increasing the sense of moral impurity and decreasing the moral self-regard. This, in turn led to moral cleansing in the form of increased purchase likelihood of ethical products, desirability of cleansing-related products, and helping behavior. This essay extended previous research on the moral identity by demonstrating that consumers do not solely rely on external, overt cues such as morally relevant behavior to update their moral self-concept. Instead, internal states, such as the experience of an emotion, can effectively signal information about the moral identity, thereby influencing consumers' sense of their moral self, which by extension, drives their preferences for morally relevant consumption.

Although, the first essay demonstrates that the manifestation of an emotion can serve to signal information to oneself about one's moral self, it is also essential to examine how anticipated inferences about moral self-signaling utility can further shape consumer responses. To that end, the following section consists of the second essay, titled "Cause Marketing as a Self-Signal: When Anticipated Effort Improves Consumer Response," which investigates the relationship between the moral identity and application effectiveness of various cause marketing strategies. More specifically, this essay examines the extent to which consumers anticipate moral self-signaling utility across various forms of cause marketing when they are driven to reinforce their moral identity, and how this in turn drives effectiveness of the campaign.



## **Essay 2: Cause Marketing as a Self-Signal: When Anticipated Effort Improves Consumer Response**

### **Abstract**

A popular form of cause marketing (CM) that has recently emerged is CM that requires the performance of a prescribed behavior by the consumer—such as texting a product code—in order to trigger the donation to a charitable cause. But can CM with consumer effort be effective at eliciting positive consumer responses? Previous research is equivocal, suggesting that CM with effort is either no better, or worse, than conventional CM at achieving CM effectiveness. The current research highlights factors that enhance the effectiveness of CM with effort by examining the role of effort in CM on consumer responses within a moral self-signaling framework. Five studies uncover that when consumers are driven to reinforce their moral identity—either chronically or due to the drive to restore a tarnished self-image—consumer evaluations of cause marketing with effort-based participation are enhanced. This effect arises because consumers anticipate greater moral self-signaling utility from CM with effort than from conventional CM. However, this effect only occurs for CM campaigns in which consumer effort is private. CM campaigns requiring the public performance of effort are not favored by consumers seeking to reinforce their moral identity, providing an important boundary condition.

## Introduction

Cause marketing (CM) represents a specific category of corporate social responsibility (Kotler and Lee 2005), wherein firms link their brands with causes in order to achieve marketing objectives (Lafferty, Goldsmith, and Hult 2004; Samu and Wymer 2009). While advertising expenditures by North American firms grew at a rate of 35% between 2002 and 2018 (Statistica 2020), CM expenditures by comparison increased at nearly double the rate, up from US\$816 million in 2002 to \$2.14 billion in 2018 (IEG 2018, 2019), reflecting its strategic and wide use in marketing. A substantial body of research demonstrates the effectiveness of CM at eliciting positive consumer responses, such as favorable consumer attitudes (Grau and Folse 2007; Lafferty et al. 2004), increased purchase intentions (Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran 2012), and boosted product sales (Andrews et al. 2014; Arora and Henderson 2007)—effects that also carry over to adjacent product categories not engaged in CM under a corporate brand (Henderson and Arora 2010; Krishna and Rajan 2009). CM effectiveness—defined as the extent to which CM elicits positive consumer responses towards the associated product or service—can partly be attributed to the positive feelings and sense of moral satisfaction that such campaigns stir up for consumers (Andrews et al. 2014; Strahilevitz and Myers 1998; Winterich and Barone 2011). In general, consumers have a strong desire to perceive themselves as good and moral people (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Reed II, Aquino, and Levy 2007; Reed II et al. 2016), and are therefore attracted to opportunities that allow them to feel good about themselves by contributing to a good cause (Andrews et al. 2014). For firms, CM therefore represents a means of supporting charitable causes, while simultaneously pursuing marketing objectives, both in the short and long term.

CM can take on various forms (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000; Gupta and Pirsch 2006; Liu and Ko 2011). Although in some executions of CM, the relationship between sales and donations is not evident (Barone et al. 2000), such as when Amazon announced it would donate \$10 million to be distributed among various social justice organizations, one of the most common forms links donations with sales. In a popular form of CM that has recently emerged, the firm requires the performance of a prescribed behavior by consumers to trigger the donation to the charitable cause. For instance, Yoplait's Save Lids to Save Lives campaign required consumers to mail in special pink lids from their yogurt cups in order to generate a donation of ten cents to the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure foundation. Similarly, Coca Cola asked consumers to send a text message of a Coke product package code in order for \$1 to be donated to the WWF's polar bear habitat conservation efforts. Moreover, an emerging trend within CM with consumer effort is the "selfie" campaign, in which firms pledge a donation for each "selfie"—a picture taken of oneself—posted by consumers on social media platforms. Disney, for example, pledged 5\$ to the Make-A-Wish Foundation for each "selfie" consumers posted wearing their Mickey Mouse ears alongside the hashtag #ShareYourEars.

From a managerial perspective, effort-based CM campaigns can be attractive because not all consumers who purchase the CM-linked product will undertake the secondary activity, and therefore donations will be comparatively lower than in a no effort CM campaign (Polonsky and Speed 2001). Furthermore, the consumer effort linked to the CM campaign can be leveraged to collect meaningful consumer data (e.g., requiring consumers to fill in a survey), thereby increasing effectiveness of future marketing activities (Polonsky and Speed 2001). Despite its popularity however, the impact of CM with consumer effort on consumer responses remains unclear. Firms engaging in CM with consumer effort undoubtedly expect such campaigns to be

effective at eliciting positive consumer responses, however, the limited body of literature regarding the role of effort in CM is equivocal, suggesting that, at best, effortful CM campaigns are not better received than non-effortful campaigns (Folse, Niedrich, and Landreth-Grau 2010; Howie et al. 2015), and that, at worst, effort has an adverse effect on CM effectiveness (Arora and Henderson 2007; Folse et al. 2010; Howie et al. 2015). Given firms' continued use of such campaigns, it is not only imperative to understand the source of these contradictory findings, but it is also important to identify whether there are factors that may contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of CM with consumer effort. Furthermore, despite the popularity of effortful CM campaigns involving consumer selfies, such campaigns fundamentally differ from the conventional effort-based campaigns given the public nature of the task. As such, there is a lack of empirical research examining consumer responses to the launch of such campaigns.

Although effort is generally perceived as aversive (Hull 1943; Zipf 1949), an important underlying driver of CM effectiveness is consumers' desire to feel good about themselves for having contributed to a good cause (Andrews et al. 2014; Strahilevitz and Myers 1998; Winterich and Barone 2011). More generally, the desire to maintain a positive moral self-image compels individuals to seek out evidence that reinforces their moral identity (Jordan, Mullen, and Murnighan 2011; Reed II et al. 2016; Sachdeva, Iliev, and Medin 2009), such as by engaging in a selfless act. Thus, a relevant question is whether consumer effort in CM can serve to signal a moral identity to the self. Supporting CM-linked brands through the purchase of a product may provide some evidence of one's moral character, however, because the receipt of a product in exchange for the charitable behavior is inherently self-benefitting, the self-signaling evidence is mixed. Conversely, engaging in consumer effort in a CM context is, on face value, selfless—consumers do not stand to gain any personal benefits from it. Effort in CM is therefore expected to provide a comparatively stronger, unconfounded self-signal about one's moral character. The current research therefore proposes that, when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, effort in CM will provide a stronger anticipated self-signal of one's moral identity, consequently increasing CM effectiveness relative to non-effortful CM.

Accordingly, we present five studies that examine the impact of effort on CM effectiveness. The pilot study provides initial evidence demonstrating that the aversiveness of effort in CM decreases as a function of the extent to which the moral identity is central to the self-concept. Study 1 directly manipulates the moral identity thereby establishing its causal role within the proposed framework, and demonstrating that when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral self-image, they exhibit more favorable attitudes toward both the CM campaign and the brand when effort is required to trigger the donation (*vs.* no effort). Study 2 provides further evidence of our proposed effect by illustrating that consumers respond more favorably to an effortful CM campaign that is linked to a purchase, than to both a purchase-only CM campaign and a direct donation CM campaign. Findings point to an explanation of the effect based on the unique self-signaling value of effort associated with CM, rather than simply based on the opportunity to engage in a higher quantity of selfless acts relative to a purchase-only campaign. Study 3 demonstrates that when consumers are driven to reinforce their moral identity, effort in CM allows them to anticipate higher levels of moral self-signaling utility than non-effortful CM, which consequently enhances both consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Lastly, building on these general findings, study 4 identifies public nature of the effort as an important boundary condition. Notably, when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, effort in CM can increase CM effectiveness, with the caveat that the effort is

private and not public. Public effort, such as selfie posts, implies reputational benefits to the self, undermining the effort's moral self-signaling value.

This research contributes to the literature in three important ways. First, it addresses an issue of considerable practical relevance. Although CM with consumer effort is a prevalent marketing practice, extant research has suggested that effortful CM is either no better, or, less effective at garnering a positive consumer response than conventional CM. Despite these past findings, firms continue to launch CM campaigns requiring consumer effort. The current research therefore highlights factors that contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of CM with effort. In particular, we identify the motivation to reinforce one's moral identity after it has been tarnished as an important driver of CM effectiveness of effort-based campaigns (relative to non-effortful campaigns). We further demonstrate that the aversiveness of an effortful campaign decreases as a function of the importance of one's moral identity to the self-concept. Only consumer effort that represents a selfless act, with no ostensible self-benefits leads to this effect—consumer effort that benefits the consumer alongside the cause is not well-received. However, the effect persists when the selfless act benefits the firm, pointing to other practical benefits of CM with effort.

Second, from a theoretical perspective, we provide evidence on the interaction between the moral identity and consumer effort in CM on CM effectiveness within a self-signaling framework, and further delineate the process underlying this effect. More specifically, we show that, when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, effort in CM is perceived as offering a greater opportunity to self-signal one's moral character relative to non-effortful CM, consequently leading to more favorable consumer responses. Extending earlier research that demonstrates the positive impact of self-benefiting effort in the context of loyalty programs (Kivetz and Simonson 2002, 2003) and self-assembled products (Franke, Schreier, and Kaiser 2010; Mochon, Norton, and Ariely 2012; Norton, Mochon, and Ariely 2012), we contribute to the literature on consumer effort by demonstrating circumstances under which consumer effort exerted for the benefit of others is also favored by consumers.

Third, we identify an important boundary condition of this effect, which has both theoretical and practical significance. More specifically, we illustrate that despite the popularity of CM campaigns with public effort (i.e., selfies), when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral self-identity such campaigns are less effective than CM campaigns requiring the execution of a private effort. Because public sharing of one's good deeds can lead to reputation enhancement, public effort arguably robs consumers of the evidence they seek, when motivated to self-signal a moral identity. Although the use of CM campaigns with public effort is widespread, there is no other research, to our knowledge, that has examined the effect of this implementation-related factor on CM effectiveness. Overall, our findings allow for an enhanced theoretical and practical understanding of effort in CM.

## **Conceptual Development**

### **Effort in Cause Marketing**

Effortful CM campaigns require the performance of a prescribed behavior by consumers to generate a donation to the non-profit cause. Formally, consumer effort in CM is defined as any additional expenditure of energy or time that the firm requires of the consumer, beyond a purchase, in order to complete the donation to the cause (Folse et al. 2010). For instance,

consumers may be asked to mail in a proof-of-purchase or complete an online survey in order to activate the donation (Folse et al. 2010). For firms, such campaigns represent an appealing strategy because they may allow firms to achieve marketing objectives, such as enhancing perceptions of their brand, while simultaneously limiting marketing expenditures on the cause (Polonsky and Speed 2001). A particularly meaningful question to therefore address is how consumers respond to effortful CM campaigns, relative to more conventional CM campaigns (e.g., direct donation CM and purchase-only CM), given the varying financial expenditures associated with each campaign. Can CM with consumer effort allow the firm to benefit from the image and positioning advantages that it would earn from launching a conventional CM campaign wherein no secondary effort is required?

Despite its appeal, prior research examining the role of consumer effort in a CM context has been scarce, and the findings have been equivocal. Arora and Henderson (2007) found that an effort requirement (i.e., mailing in the lid of their water bottle), reduced CM effectiveness relative to a no-effort campaign, but still led to more favorable consumer attitudes and higher purchase intentions relative to no-promotion, or price-promotion contexts. Folse and colleagues (2010) found that consumer effort in CM (i.e., mailing in a proof-of-purchase) did not influence purchase intentions, perceptions of firm motives, and corporate social responsibility beliefs. Consumer effort did however amplify negative responses to other implementation-level factors (Folse et al. 2010). In particular, the adverse impact of purchase quantity required to trigger the donation on purchase intentions was exacerbated by the addition of an effort contingency (Folse et al. 2010). Howie and colleagues (2015) found that, relative to a purchase-only CM campaign, an effortful CM campaign (i.e., survey completion) did not influence participation intentions. However, increasing the amount of effort required attenuated participation intentions, such that moderate and high levels of effort lead to significantly lower participation intentions than low levels of effort—an effect driven by consumer devaluation of the cause. Taken together, the limited body of literature regarding the role of effort in CM suggests that effort either has no influence (Folse et al. 2010; Howie et al. 2015), or has an adverse effect (Arora and Henderson 2007; Folse et al. 2010; Howie et al. 2015) on CM effectiveness. What may explain these contradictory findings?

Despite ample literature on human motivation and behavior indicating that, effort is aversive (Hull 1943; Zipf 1949), empirical research has also demonstrated that, under certain circumstances, consumers may prefer higher levels of effort. Consumer effort has received much attention in the literature as it pertains to consumer loyalty programs (Kivetz and Simonson 2002, 2003; Henderson, Beck, and Palmatier 2011). For instance, Kivetz and Simonson (2003) find that under certain circumstances, higher levels of required effort can increase participation in loyalty programs (Kivetz and Simonson 2003) and increase the appeal of program rewards (Kivetz and Simonson 2002). Anticipated effort (i.e., in the form of perceived task difficulty) has also been shown to increase the attractiveness of a pursued goal (Axsom and Cooper 1985; Brehm et al. 1983; Wright and Brehm 1984; Zentall 2010; Zhang et al. 2011). Consistent with these findings, literature in dissonance demonstrates that the more effort individuals invest, the more favorably they perceive the product of that effort (Aronson and Mills 1959; Bem 1972; Festinger 1957; Gerard and Mathewson 1966; Wicklund and Brehm 1976). In yet another example of effort being desirable, previous research has documented the “Ikea effect,” an effect whereby individuals value self-assembled products more highly than pre-assembled ones (Franke, Schreier, and Kaiser 2010; Mochon, Norton, and Ariely 2012; Norton, Mochon, and Ariely 2012). This effect occurs because product assembly allows consumers to signal

competence and efficacy both to themselves and to others (Franke, Schreier, and Kaiser 2010; Mochon, Norton, and Ariely 2012; Norton, Mochon, and Ariely 2012). Empirical evidence therefore suggests that, despite the aversiveness of effort (Hull 1943; Zipf 1949), consumers are sometimes attracted to opportunities that allow them to exert more effort because, in certain contexts, it can signal positive value of an outcome, as well as serve as a cue that conveys positive information about oneself. These findings may therefore suggest that, under certain circumstances, effort in CM also signals positive value, potentially shedding light on previous contradictory findings on the role of effort in CM. Admittedly, previous research establishing the attractiveness of effort has examined effort in the context of self-benefitting rewards (i.e., the beneficiary of the effort is the self), while effort in the context of CM benefits others. It is therefore meaningful to identify whether there are circumstances in which effort expended for the benefit of others signals positive value.

In addressing this question, it is important to note that because consumers generally have a strong desire to perceive themselves as good and moral people (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Reed II et al. 2007; Reed II et al. 2016), the need to maintain and affirm their moral identity is often an important driver of their behavior (Reed II et al. 2016). As such, an important process underlying the positive consumer responses to CM is the positive feelings and sense of moral satisfaction that such campaigns stir up (Strahilevitz and Myers 1998; Winterich and Barone 2011), which have been demonstrated to favorably influence important consumer outcomes such as evaluations of the consumption experience (Giebelhausen et al. 2016), willingness-to-pay (Koschate-Fischer, Stefan, and Hoyer 2012) and product sales (Andrews et al. 2014). Indeed, helping others and engaging in prosocial behavior is a vehicle of moral self-expression (Reed II et al. 2016). Unlike engaging in prosocial behavior however, participating in CM is recognized by consumers as being largely driven by self-interest (i.e., acquiring a coveted product or service) and is considered as less empathetic than direct donations due to its low personal cost (Krishna 2011). Because the presence of self-interest has an adverse impact on perceptions of prosocial motives (Newman and Cain 2014), the extent to which CM can allow consumers to morally self-affirm is therefore likely limited. Effort in CM, however, represents an additional personal cost that is ostensibly not self-benefitting. Because of this, the current research argues that, when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral character, the meaning ascribed to effort in CM provides incremental self-signaling utility relative to non-effortful CM, thereby enhancing CM effectiveness. In the following section, we further delineate the process underlying the influence of effort in CM on consumer responses.

### **The Moral Value of Effort in Cause Marketing**

Previous research on self-identity has established that consumers are motivated to engage in behavior that is consistent with existing self-views (Sirgy 1982), as well as to engage in behavior that can be used to prove to themselves that they possess desired identities (Bénabou and Tirole 2011; Bodner and Prelec 2003). More specifically, self-signaling theory holds that any behavior that allows consumers to convey positive information to themselves about who they are provides incremental utility (Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Bodner and Prelec 2003). The inherent assumption underlying this theory is that individuals have imperfect knowledge about themselves and therefore value information that implies a positive self-image (Bénabou and Tirole 2010). Because information about one's motives are not easily verifiable or remembered, and can be easily manipulated, individuals seek out concrete evidence to update their self-view

(Bénabou and Tirole 2010). Furthermore, individuals can anticipate the self-signaling potential of the different alternatives available to them and therefore their responses are partly based on this anticipated inference (Bodner and Prelec 2003; Savary and Dhar 2016).

For many people, the moral identity is central to their self-concept—that is, it is important for them to define themselves with traits that signal morality (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Reed II et al. 2007; Reed II et al. 2016). Morality can be broadly defined as a set of “prescriptive judgements of justice, rights, and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other” (Turiel 1983, 3; Gino, Kouchaki and Galinsky 2015). Charitable actions and motives, and the inherent concern for the welfare of others, have traditionally occupied a central place in morality. Consequently, traits such as generosity, compassion and helpfulness are highly valued (Reed II et al. 2016) and can contribute to overall perceptions of self-worth (Sivanathan and Petit 2010). The need to self-affirm these traits can therefore be an important driver of behavior. For instance, consumers whose moral character is central to their identity demonstrate a preference for volunteering their time relative to donating money—an effect driven by the self-expressive benefits that result from engaging in prosocial behavior (Reed II et al. 2007). Similarly, when consumers are motivated to morally self-express they demonstrate enhanced preferences for volunteering time over money for a moral cause, particularly when the task involved is perceived as being highly unpleasant, and time is perceived as scarce (Reed II et al. 2016). Previous research has also shown that recalling prior unrelated immoral behavior results in greater prosocial intentions (Jordan et al. 2011) and increased ethical behavior (Sachdeva et al. 2009) due to the motivation to reinforce and restore a positive moral self-image. Taken together, these findings suggest that effort exerted for others is particularly attractive when there is an underlying motivation to reinforce one’s moral identity.

Although engaging in CM may be an effective signal of moral identity, not all forms of CM likely offer the same level of moral self-signaling utility. Non-effortful CM campaigns in particular limit consumer participation in the prosocial behavior and are likely an imperfect means of signaling one’s moral identity given their inherent self-interest (Krishna 2011). Because information about one’s motives are not easily verifiable (Bénabou and Tirole 2010), consumers likely recognize that the self-interest present in CM adversely affects their ability to interpret their motives during introspection. Thus, in contrast to the weak signal offered by CM without effort, effort in CM is expected to be construed as a more definitive self-signal of moral character. However, effort in CM, unlike volunteering time to help a charitable cause (Reed et al. 2016), is not intrinsically benevolent. Oftentimes, in fact, the task itself is intrinsically meaningless (e.g., sending a text message), and in some cases even beneficial to the firm (e.g., providing a product review). Nevertheless, inherent in effort in CM is the freewill to act selfishly post-purchase (i.e., not engage in the additional effort). On face value, there are no additional self-benefits derived from engaging in the effort post-purchase, regardless of the actual task, and therefore the effort cannot be confounded with self-interest. We therefore propose that, when consumers are motivated to self-signal their moral identity, CM with effort will increase CM effectiveness. In particular, we propose that CM with effort will lead to more positive consumer evaluations of the campaign and the brand, as well as increased purchase intentions relative to CM without effort. Furthermore, the mechanism underlying this effect is proposed to be the anticipated moral self-signaling value of effort in CM. Specifically, because consumer evaluations are based in part on anticipated inferences (Bodner and Prelec 2003; Savary and Dhar 2016), it is expected that effort in CM will provide moral self-signaling utility through its anticipated exertion, which will subsequently bolster CM effectiveness.

We further propose that because the effort in CM is construed as a self-signal of moral identity, when consumers are motivated to morally self-signal, CM with consumer effort producing no personal gains alongside the charitable benefit will be favored over CM with effort that leads to both personal and charitable benefits. Bénabou and Tirole (2006, 1654) term the influence of personal gains on moral self-signaling a signal extraction problem, and argue that “[r]ewards act like an increase in the noise-to-signal ratio, or even reverse the sign of the signal.” In other words, incentives cast a doubt over the true motivation of a moral act (Bénabou and Tirole 2006). Indeed, previous research has shown that, when evaluating others’ charitable efforts, behavior that results in personal gains alongside charitable benefits is judged as worse than behavior that results in no charitable benefit (Newman and Cain 2014). Because individuals have imperfect knowledge about their own internal states (Bem 1972; Bénabou and Tirole 2010) judgements about one’s own self-identity are formed in a similar inferentially-based process used to make judgements about others (Bem 1972). It is therefore expected that consumers driven to reinforce their moral identity will favor CM that involves effort that offers no apparent personal benefit. Because “selfie” campaigns involve public sharing of one’s benevolent behavior, they imply both image and reputational rewards, which are recognized as being driven by self-interest (Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, and Bozok 2006). We therefore propose that, when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, they will favor private consumer effort relative to public effort.

### **Overview of Research**

Across five studies, the current research empirically investigates whether consumer effort in CM (vs. non-effortful CM) allows consumers who are motivated to reinforce their moral identity to morally self-signal, thus bolstering CM effectiveness. The pilot study provides initial evidence for our proposition that the motivation to reinforce one’s moral identity enhances consumer attitudes toward effortful CM by measuring moral identity self-importance and examining its role in the relationship between effort in CM and CM effectiveness. Study 1 establishes the causal role of the moral identity within the proposed framework by directly manipulating it. Study 2 provides further evidence of our proposed effect by illustrating that consumers respond more favorably to an effortful CM campaign that is linked to a purchase, than to both a purchase only CM campaign and a direct donation CM campaign. Study 2 also serves to enhance the generalizability of our findings by replicating the effect using an effortful task that directly benefits the firm. Study 3 provides evidence of the proposed mechanism of moral self-signaling underlying the effect of effort in CM on CM effectiveness. Finally, study 4 demonstrates that when consumers’ are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, they respond more favorably to CM campaigns that require private consumer effort rather than public effort.

### **Pretest**

A pretest was conducted in order to identify appropriate effortful CM campaigns. Fifty-two participants (48.1% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 38.2$ ,  $SD = 13.84$ ) were recruited through MTurk and randomly assigned to one of three conditions (text message, picture upload, no effort). Participants read about a CM campaign between a fictional coffee brand and non-profit cause (Feeding America), in which a donation of \$1 would be made to the cause either automatically upon purchase (no effort CM), when the customer texted the product code of their purchased



product to the number provided (text message CM), or when the customer uploaded a picture of their product along with the product code on the provided webpage (picture upload CM). Participants then rated the extent to which they found the campaign to be effortful, on a 7-point scale.

An ANOVA with perceived effort as the dependent variable and CM campaign as the independent variable was conducted. The main effect of CM campaign was significant ( $F(2, 49) = 9.19, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .273$ ). Planned contrasts revealed that a text message CM campaign ( $M = 2.93, SD = 1.39$ ) was perceived as more effortful than a no effort campaign ( $M = 1.61, SD = 1.20; F(1, 49) = 6.21, p = .02, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .112; 95\% \text{ CI } [.26, 2.39]$ ). Similarly, a picture upload CM campaign ( $M = 3.74, SD = 1.85$ ) was also perceived as more effortful than the no effort campaign ( $F(1, 49) = 18.13, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .270; 95\% \text{ CI } [1.12, 3.13]$ ).

### Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to gather initial evidence for our proposition that the motivation to reinforce one's moral identity will enhance consumer perceptions of effort in CM. The pilot study therefore sought to investigate whether the impact of effort in CM on CM effectiveness changes as a function of moral identity self-importance. The moral identity is defined as one's mental representation of moral character (Aquino and Reed II 2002). Previous research has demonstrated that, for individuals with a highly self-important moral identity, traits such as kindness, helpfulness, compassion, and generosity are central to their self-concept (Aquino and Reed II 2002). As such, these individuals are particularly driven to self-signal morality by engaging in behavior that is reflective of their self-image (Reed II et al. 2016). It is proposed that effort in CM offers a stronger anticipated self-signal of moral identity (relative to a non-effortful campaign) because, on face value, it is inherently lacking in self-interest. We therefore predict that the impact of type of CM campaign (effort vs. no effort) on consumer responses will vary as a function of moral identity centrality, such that consumers whose moral identity is highly important to their self-concept will have relatively more favorable attitudes toward an effortful CM campaign than consumers with a less central moral identity.

### Method

*Design, Procedure, and Measures.* One hundred and twenty one undergraduate students (68.6% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 21.1, SD = 2.91$ ) participated in this study in exchange for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to either a no effort or effortful CM condition. Participants first read about a new fictional cereal brand that had announced its partnership with Feed the Hungry, a hunger-relief charity. In the no effort condition, participants read that for every cereal box sold, a donation of \$3 would be made to Feed the Hungry's "Share a Meal" campaign. In the effort condition, participants read that in order to prompt the donation of \$3 to Feed the Hungry, customers would have to text "I want to feed the hungry" along with a unique code found inside their cereal box, to the provided number. Participants across both conditions read that, at the end of the campaign, Feed the Hungry expected to receive \$175,000 in donations (see appendix I). Participants then were asked to report their attitudes toward the campaign (bad/good, unfavorable/favorable, negative/positive; 7-point scale;  $\alpha = .97$ ). Moral identity was subsequently measured using the internalization dimension of the Moral Identity Centrality scale

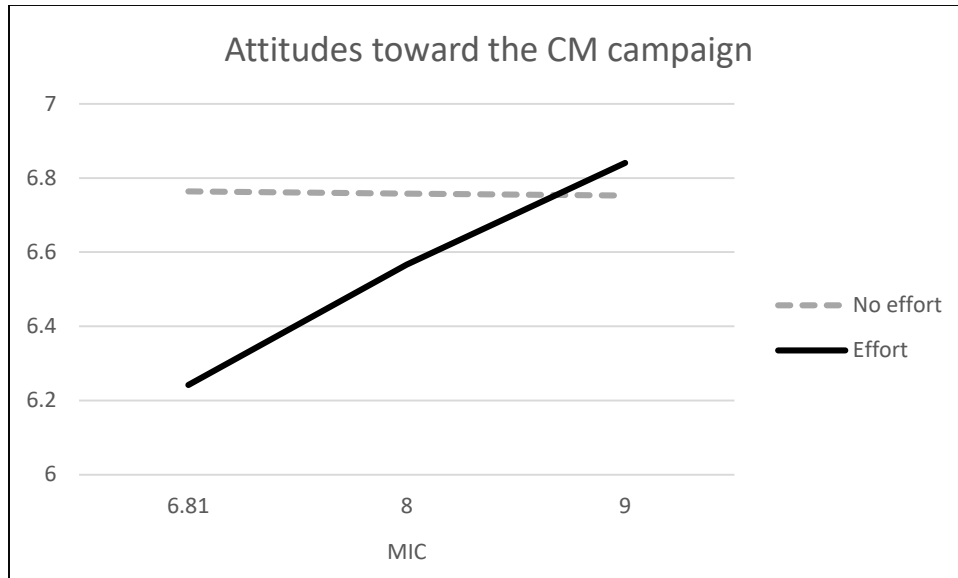
(MIC; Reed II et al. 2007; 9-point scale;  $\alpha = .89$ ). Lastly, demographic information was collected.

As all studies were conducted only in English, we recruited participants who self-reported English language proficiency across all studies, excluding those who reported “very little” or “no ability at all”.

## Results

*Attitudes toward the campaign.* To examine the interactive role of MIC and type of CM campaign on consumer attitudes, a moderation analysis was conducted (Model 1, Hayes 2018), with effort as the independent variable (0 = no effort, 1 = effort), MIC (mean centered) as the moderator, and attitudes as the dependent variable. The analysis revealed that both the main effects of effort ( $b = -.19$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $t(117) = -1.48$ ,  $p = .14$ , 95% CI [-.45, .06]), and MIC ( $b = -.01$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $t(117) = -.06$ ,  $p = .95$ , 95% CI [-.16, .16]) were not significant. More germane to our prediction however, the interaction effect was significant ( $b = .28$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $t(117) = 2.54$ ,  $p = .01$ , 95% CI [.06, .50]). The Johnson–Neyman (JN) technique was used to estimate the exact values of MIC for which the conditional effect of CM with effort (vs. no effort) on consumer attitude transitioned between significant and non-significant, using a 95% confidence interval. One area of significance emerged: Between MIC values of 4.80 ( $effect = -1.08$ ,  $SE = .37$ ,  $t(117) = -2.90$ ,  $p = .01$ , 95% CI [-1.82, -.34]) and 7.75 ( $effect = -.26$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $t(117) = -1.98$ ,  $p = .05$ , 95% CI [-.52, .00]) the effortful CM campaign was evaluated as significantly more unfavorably than the non-effort campaign. Interestingly however, at high levels of MIC, between 7.95 ( $effect = -.21$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $t(117) = -1.58$ ,  $p = .12$ ; 95% CI [-.46, .05]) and 9.00 ( $effect = .09$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $t(117) = .52$ ,  $p = .61$ ; 95% CI [-.25, .42]), consumers attitudes toward the effortful CM campaign were not significantly different than those toward the non-effortful campaign, suggesting that the perceived aversiveness of effort in CM decreases with rising levels of MIC (see figure 2).

*Discussion.* Results from the pilot study support the prediction that consumer evaluations of effort in CM vary as a function of moral identity self-importance. For those participants with relatively lower MIC, effort in CM adversely influenced consumer attitudes. Conversely, for participants whose MIC scores were high, the effortful campaign was evaluated just as favorably as the non-effortful campaign. These findings suggest that when the moral identity is important, effort in CM is not aversive. It is also important to note that for approximately two thirds of the sample, moral identity was very important (i.e., 64% of the sample scored an MIC value of above 8.07). This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that for most people a moral identity is central to their self-concept (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Reed II et al. 2007; Reed II et al. 2016). Taken together, the findings from the current study therefore suggest that for most consumers, an effortful CM campaign can be just as appealing as a no-effort campaign. It is also interesting to note that although not significant, the effect of effort in CM on consumer attitudes at very high levels of MIC was positive. This suggests that although a chronic motivation to reinforce one’s moral identity may lead consumers to equally favor both types of campaigns, an increased motivation to reinforce the moral identity may result in consumers favoring effort in CM over non-effortful CM. In study 1, we directly manipulate moral identity to further probe this proposition.



**Figure 2.** Consumer attitudes toward the CM campaign (effort vs. no effort) varying levels of MIC

### Study 1

In investigating the effect of effort in CM on CM effectiveness, study 1 sought to establish the causal role of the moral identity within this framework by directly manipulating it. The moral identity has been conceptualized as a self-regulatory mechanism that motivates individuals to closely monitor and regulate their morally relevant behavior in order to maintain a reasonable degree of moral self-regard (Monin and Jordan 2009). Thus, any negative information about one’s moral character motivates individuals to seek out positive signals in order to reinforce their moral self-image. Because our conceptual framework proposes that effort in CM is a positive signal of moral identity, we predict that when the moral identity is threatened, an effortful campaign (relative to a no-effort campaign) will lead to more positive attitudes toward both the campaign and the brand. However, because of previous contradictory findings demonstrating effort in CM may either have no bearing (Folse et al. 2010; Howie et al. 2015), or have an adverse influence on consumer responses (Arora and Henderson 2007; Folse et al. 2010; Howie et al. 2015), we do not make a prediction about consumer responses when the moral identity is not threatened, particularly because consumers may be simultaneously driven by both self-signaling motives, as well as effort avoidance. A secondary objective of study 1 was to increase the generalizability of our findings through the use of a different type of effort task within the CM context, as well as a different product category.

### Method

*Design, Procedure, and Measures.* One hundred and eighty-one participants (62.4% female;  $M_{age} = 35.8$ ,  $SD = 12.28$ ) were recruited through MTurk for a compensation of \$0.60. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (moral identity: threatened, control)  $\times$  2 (CM: effort, no effort) between-participants experimental design.

Participants were first informed that they would be participating in various ostensibly unrelated studies. The first study served as our manipulation of the moral identity. Participants were either asked to write about a time in their adult life when they hurt someone by doing something selfish, uncaring, or mean (moral identity threatened) or about what they do in a regular weekday (control). A separate pretest ( $n = 58$ ) was conducted to ensure the validity of this manipulation in manipulating the moral identity (adapted from Jordan et al. 2011). In the pretest, participants were asked to report their feelings of guilt<sup>7</sup> (not guilt-ridden/guilt-ridden, not remorseful/remorseful;  $\alpha = .93$ ) after completing the writing task. Results from the pretest revealed that the moral identity threat condition ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ) led to greater feelings of guilt (7-point scale;  $\alpha = .93$ ) than the control condition ( $M = 1.89$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ;  $F(1, 56) = 39.95$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .416$ ; 95% CI [1.82, 3.50]). Participants then completed manipulation checks, relating to feelings of guilt ( $\alpha = .97$ ) and self-perceived morality (caring/uncaring, compassionate/uncompassionate, generous/ungenerous, helpful/unhelpful, kind/unkind, fair/unfair;  $\alpha = .97$ ), using 7-point scales. Participants were then thanked for their participation in “Survey 1” and informed that they would be proceeding to a second survey in which they would be providing feedback on a new consumer brand.

Participants then read about a new fictional chocolate bar brand that had announced its partnership with Food for the Hungry, a hunger-relief charity. In the effort condition, participants read that in order to prompt the donation of \$1 to Food for the Hungry, customers would be required to upload a picture of one of their meals on the provided link, while in the no effort condition participants read that the firm would directly donate funds to the cause. Participants across both conditions read that, Food for the Hungry expected to receive \$175,000 in donations (see appendix J). Participants then completed measures relating to their attitudes toward the CM campaign (bad/good, unfavorable/favorable, negative/positive;  $\alpha = .93$ ) and their attitudes toward the brand ( $\alpha = .97$ ), using 7-point scales. Lastly, participants completed demographic questions.

## Results

*Manipulation checks.* The moral identity threat manipulation was successful. Participants in the threatened moral identity condition felt more immoral ( $M_{\text{threatened}} = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 1.73$ ;  $M_{\text{control}} = 2.18$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ;  $F(1, 179) = 18.70$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .095$ ; 95% CI [.52, 1.40]) and more guilty ( $M_{\text{threatened}} = 4.73$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ;  $M_{\text{control}} = 2.07$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ;  $F(1, 179) = 118.73$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .399$ ; 95% CI [2.18, 3.14]) than those in the control condition.

*Attitude toward the CM campaign.* An ANOVA with attitude toward the CM campaign as the dependent variable, and effort and moral identity as the independent variables, was conducted. The main effects of effort and moral identity were not significant ( $ps \geq .51$ ). The interaction between effort and moral identity, however, was significant ( $F(1, 177) = 8.31$ ,  $p = .004$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .045$ ). Planned contrasts revealed that when no moral identity threat was present, the no effort CM campaign ( $M = 6.58$ ,  $SD = .63$ ) led to more favorable attitudes toward the CM campaign than the effortful CM campaign ( $M = 6.22$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ,  $F(1, 177) = 4.58$ ,  $p = .03$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .025$ ; 95% CI [.03, .67]). Conversely, when the moral identity was threatened,

---

<sup>7</sup> A measure of guilt was used to assess the validity of the manipulation because previous research has demonstrated that failure to meet up to moral standards results in feelings of guilt (Giebelhausen et al. 2016).

the effortful CM campaign ( $M = 6.49$ ,  $SD = .63$ ) led to more favorable attitudes toward the CM campaign than the no effort CM campaign ( $M = 6.15$ ,  $SD = .84$ ,  $F(1, 177) = 3.79$ ,  $p = .053$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .021$ ; 90% CI [.05, .63]).

*Attitude toward the brand.* An ANOVA with attitude toward the brand as the dependent variable, and effort and moral identity as the independent variables, was conducted. The main effects of effort and moral identity were not significant ( $ps \geq .68$ ). More importantly, the interaction between effort and moral identity was significant ( $F(1, 177) = 8.03$ ,  $p = .005$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .043$ ). Planned contrasts revealed that when no moral identity threat was present, the no effort CM campaign ( $M = 6.40$ ,  $SD = .85$ ) led to more positive attitudes toward the brand relative to an effortful CM campaign ( $M = 6.02$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ;  $F(1, 177) = 4.17$ ,  $p = .04$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .023$ ; 95% CI [.01, .76]). When the moral identity was threatened however, the effortful CM campaign ( $M = 6.35$ ,  $SD = .81$ ) led to more positive attitudes toward the brand than the no effort CM campaign ( $M = 5.95$ ,  $SD = .97$ ,  $F(1, 177) = 3.88$ ,  $p = .050$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .021$ ; 90% CI [.06, .73]).

*Discussion.* Study 1 provides support for the interactive effects of moral identity and effort in CM on CM effectiveness. Findings suggest that consumers driven to morally self-signal exhibit more favorable attitudes toward both the CM campaign and the brand when consumer effort is required to trigger the donation (vs. no effort). Taken together, studies 1 and 2 provide initial evidence to support our theoretical framework proposing that, when consumers are motivated to morally self-signal, effort in CM will lead to more positive consumer responses, relative to a non-effortful campaign.

In study 1, the effortful CM campaign required that consumers upload one picture to trigger the donation. It is unclear however whether increasing the level of effort required would have a similar effect. In previous work, it has been demonstrated that increasing the effort required in a CM campaign decreases CM effectiveness (Howie et al. 2015). However, how do consumers respond to increased effort when they are motivated to reinforce their moral identity? We examined this question in a follow-up study in which the moral identity was threatened, effort level was the independent variable (no effort, low effort, high effort) and purchase intentions was the dependent variable. One hundred and nine participants (49.5% female,  $M_{age} = 39.1$ ,  $SD = 12.97$ ) completed the study. The procedure replicated study 1, with the addition of a high effort condition in which the CM campaign required the upload of 5 pictures in order to prompt the donation of \$1 to the cause (see appendix K). In order to help with observed variance, we used a 9-point scale to measure purchase intentions (highly unlikely/highly likely, highly improbable/highly probable;  $\alpha = .97$ ). An ANOVA revealed a marginally significant effect of effort level ( $F(2, 106) = 2.66$ ,  $p = .07$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .048$ ). Planned contrasts revealed that, relative to no effort ( $M = 6.26$ ,  $SD = 2.43$ ), low effort ( $M = 7.22$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ) significantly increased purchase intentions ( $F(1, 106) = 4.62$ ,  $p = .03$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .042$ ; 95% CI [-1.85, -.08]), while high effort ( $M = 7.09$ ,  $SD = 1.84$ ) marginally increased purchase intentions ( $F(1, 106) = 3.20$ ,  $p = .08$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .029$ ; 90% CI [-1.61, -.06]). There was no significant difference between low and high effort ( $F(1, 106) = .08$ ,  $p = .78$ ; 95% CI [-.77, 1.04]). These findings therefore suggest that, when motivated to reinforce their moral identity, consumers are insensitive to the level of effort required. Interestingly, in the follow up study, the effort requirement was increased, while holding the donation amount constant. Thus, despite the fact that the increased effort would not result in an equivalent increased contribution to the beneficiary, purchase intentions were not attenuated.

## Study 2

There are two objectives of study 2. First, it tests whether the effort effect observed in study 2 replicates in a context wherein the consumer effort is contingent on a purchase. In the previous study, the CM campaign involved a donation (either automatic or triggered by consumer effort) that was not directly linked to a consumer purchase. Not all executions of CM involve a direct link between sales and firm donations (Barone et al. 2000). Popular examples of effort-based CM campaigns that did not require a purchase include Cheerios' Save the Bees campaign and Toyota's #selfLESSie campaign. However, in practice, the most common form of CM requires a purchase as a prerequisite to the donation.

An alternative explanation for the proposed effect is that an effort-based campaign, which requires both a purchase and the completion of a task to trigger the donation, leads to more favorable responses when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, because it represents a higher quantity of selfless acts relative to a purchase-only campaign. This is because, when consumers are motivated to self-signal, such as in the context of a tarnished moral identity, they will respond most favorably to the option that maximizes the costliness of the prosocial behavior (Gneezy et al. 2012). However, in the current research, we argue that the observed effect occurs because *only* the effortful task represents a selfless act, whereas the purchase of a CM-linked product does not represent a selfless act. Thus, an effort-based campaign leads to more favorable responses than a no-effort campaign, not because it offers an opportunity to engage in *more* selfless acts in order to reinforce the moral identity, but because only the effortful task provides moral self-signaling value. To investigate this alternative explanation, in study 2, we compare both effortful CM and purchase-only CM to CM in which no purchase is required. Because we propose that a purchase of a CM-linked product does not offer any self-signaling value, we do not expect it to lead to more favorable consumer responses relative to a CM campaign in which no purchase and no effort is required to trigger the donation.

The second purpose of study 2 is to test whether the impact of effort is still operational when the effort type directly benefits the firm. Although sometimes the effortful tasks required from consumers in CM are seemingly pointless in and of themselves (e.g., sending a text message or uploading a picture), oftentimes the effort requirement is leveraged to collect meaningful consumer data (Polonsky and Speed 2001). However, because previous research has suggested that consumers respond unfavorably to firms if they perceive them as behaving insincerely (Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006), it is important to investigate whether the previously observed effect also generalizes to a CM campaign involving an effortful task that directly benefits the firm.

## Method

*Design, Procedure, and Measures.* One hundred and sixty-eight pet-owning participants (41.1% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 33.4$ ,  $SD = 10.39$ ) were recruited through MTurk for a compensation of \$1.<sup>8</sup> Pet ownership was used as a participation requirement in order to match values of the participants with the charitable cause used within the study (i.e., the ASPCA). Participants were

---

<sup>8</sup> Seventeen participants who failed to follow instructions and 8 participants who self-reported low English language proficiency were eliminated prior to analyses.

randomly assigned one of three CM campaign conditions (direct donation, purchase with no effort, purchase with effort).

Participants were first informed that they would be participating in various unrelated studies, and they would be proceeding to the first study titled “Everyday Activities” which served as our moral identity manipulation. Participants were then presented with twenty-five questions related to prosocial behavior and asked to indicate how often they have performed each of the activities in the previous year (1 = Never, 2 = Once, 3 = 2-4 times, 3 = 5-7 times, 5 = 8 or more times). Items included questions relating to volunteering time (e.g., volunteer at a non-profit charity organization) and donating goods (e.g., donating non-perishable food to a food bank). After answering these questions, participants proceeded to the next screen in which they were presented with a message indicating that their prosocial score was 35 out of 80, and that, compared to the average person, they were 72% less involved in helping others in need (see appendix L). A separate pretest ( $n = 117$ ) was conducted to ensure the validity of this moral identity manipulation. The moral identity threat condition was contrasted to a control condition in which participants were presented with twenty-five questions related to everyday activities (e.g., going to the post office, watching a movie at home, etc...), and in which no message indicating a prosocial score was presented. ANOVA results revealed that the moral identity threat condition led to feeling more immoral than the control condition ( $M_{\text{threat}} = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ;  $M_{\text{control}} = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ;  $F(1, 115) = 4.48$ ;  $p = .036$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .038$ ; 95% CI [.04, 1.08]).

Participants were then thanked for their participation in study 1. The second study, participants were told, related to a new consumer brand. Participants were then presented with the same cereal brand as in the previous study. They also read that the brand was partnering with the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). In the direct donation condition, participants read that the firm would donate \$175,000 to the ASPCA. In the purchase with no effort condition, participants read that \$3 would be donated for every purchased cereal box. In the purchase with effort condition, participants read that in order to prompt the donation of \$3, consumers would have to visit the provided link, upload the code found inside their purchased cereal box and submit feedback about the new cereal product. In both the purchase conditions, participants also read that the ASPCA expected to receive \$175,000 in donations from the firm (see appendix L).

Participants were then asked to rate their purchase intentions of the cereal (very unlikely/likely; highly improbable/highly probable; 7-point scale;  $\alpha = .85$ ). Lastly, participants completed questions related to demographics and hypothesis guessing.

## Results

Five participants correctly guessed the purpose of the study and were excluded from further analyses, resulting in a final sample of one hundred and sixty-three participants.

*Purchase intentions.* An ANOVA with purchase intentions as the dependent variable, and CM campaign as the independent variable was conducted. The main effect of CM campaign was significant ( $F(2, 160) = 3.33$ ,  $p = .04$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .040$ ). Importantly, planned contrasts revealed that a CM campaign which required both a purchase and an effort ( $M = 6.09$ ,  $SD = .78$ ) led to greater purchase intentions than a CM campaign requiring only a purchase ( $M = 5.57$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ;  $F(1, 160) = 5.95$ ,  $p = .02$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .036$ ; 95% CI [-0.95, -1.10]), and a CM campaign in which a

direct donation was made to the cause ( $M = 5.67$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ;  $F(1, 160) = 3.37$ ,  $p = .057$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .022$ ; 90% CI [-.77, -.01]). There was no difference in purchase intentions between a direct donation CM campaign and a CM campaign requiring a purchase only ( $F(1, 160) = .24$ ,  $p = .62$ ; 95% CI [-.33, .54]).

*Discussion.* Study 2 provides additional evidence to support the prediction that when consumers are motivated to morally self-signal, they will respond more favorably to an effortful CM campaign that is linked to a purchase, than to both a purchase-only CM campaign and a direct donation CM campaign. This finding suggests that consumers derive self-signaling value from the effortful task requirement in CM. Study 2 also served to rule out the alternative explanation that, when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, they respond most favorably to an effortful CM campaign simply because it represents a higher quantity of selfless acts relative to a purchase-only campaign. There was no difference in consumer responses between the direct donation and purchase-only CM campaigns, suggesting that a purchase alone does not provide incremental self-signaling utility relative to a CM campaign that requires neither a purchase, nor consumer effort. These results therefore suggest that, when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, CM with effort leads to greater CM effectiveness because solely the effort component of the campaign represents a selfless act, therefore providing self signaling value.

Secondly, study 2 findings confirmed that the effect observed in study 1 can be generalized to an effort type that directly benefits the firm, therefore demonstrating that the effort in CM can be leveraged to collect meaningful data and still lead to increased purchase intentions relative to non-effortful CM.

### Study 3

The goal of study 3 was to investigate the process underlying the effect of effort in CM on CM effectiveness. Our conceptual framework proposes that effort in CM is construed as a moral self-signal, that when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral self-image, leads them to respond more favorably to effortful CM (relative to non-effortful CM).

#### Method

*Design, Procedure, and Measures.* Two hundred and forty-seven pet-owning participants<sup>9</sup> (51.8% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 34.5$ ,  $SD = 11.06$ ) were recruited through MTurk for a compensation of \$1. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (moral identity: threatened, control)  $\times$  2 (CM: effort, no effort) between-participants experimental design.

The procedure of study 3 was identical to the one used in study 1, with two exceptions. Before proceeding to the moral identity manipulation, participants were informed that the first study they would be participating in pertained to recalling memories. After completing the moral identity manipulation, they were asked to complete a filler task (six questions relating to the ease with which they could retrieve the events they described from their memory). They were then thanked for their participation and informed that the following study related to new brand evaluations. Participants in the effort condition read that in order to prompt a donation of \$3 to

---

<sup>9</sup> Eleven participants who failed to follow instructions and 7 participants who self-reported low English language proficiency were eliminated prior to analyses.



the ASPCA, they would be required to visit the link provided, enter the product code found inside their cereal box, and provide a star rating along with a written review of the cereal product. Participants in the no effort condition read that, for every cereal box sold, \$3 would be donated to the cause (see appendix M). Participants then completed measures relating to their attitudes toward the brand ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and purchase intentions ( $\alpha = .89$ ), using 7-point measures. Study 3 also introduced a measure of moral self-signaling. Specifically, participants responded to a question relating to the extent to which participating in the CM campaign would make them feel moral (caring, generous, helpful, considerate; 7-point scale; adapted from Aquino and Reed II 2002;  $\alpha = .90$ ). Lastly, participants completed questions relating to manipulation checks, demographics, and hypothesis guessing.

## Results

*Manipulation checks.* Ten participants correctly guessed the purpose of the study and were excluded from further analyses, resulting in a final sample of two hundred and thirty-seven participants. The moral identity manipulation was successful. Participants in the threatened moral identity condition felt more guilty ( $M = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 1.86$ ) than those in the control condition ( $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = 2.04$ ;  $F(1, 235) = 10.70$ ,  $p = .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .044$ ; 95% CI [.33, 1.34]).

*Purchase intentions.* An ANOVA with purchase intentions as the dependent variable, and CM campaign and moral identity as the independent variables, was conducted. The main effects of CM campaign and moral identity were not significant ( $ps \geq .42$ ). Importantly, the interaction between CM campaign and moral identity was marginally significant ( $F(1, 233) = 2.82$ ,  $p = .095$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .012$ ). Planned contrasts revealed that, as predicted, when the moral identity was threatened, CM with effort ( $M = 5.75$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ) marginally bolstered purchase intentions relative to CM without effort ( $M = 5.29$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ;  $F(1, 233) = 2.79$ ,  $p = .096$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .012$ , 90% CI [.01, .91]). When the moral identity was not threatened however, effort type did not influence purchase intentions ( $M_{\text{effort}} = 5.41$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ;  $M_{\text{no effort}} = 5.58$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ;  $F(1, 233) = 1.26$ ,  $p = .26$ ; 90% CI [-.57, .25]).

*Attitude toward the brand.* An ANOVA with attitude toward the brand as the dependent variable, and CM campaign and moral identity as the independent variables, was conducted. The main effects of CM campaign and moral identity were not significant ( $ps \geq .50$ ). Importantly, the interaction between CM campaign and moral identity was marginally significant ( $F(1, 233) = 3.17$ ,  $p = .077$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .013$ ). Planned contrasts revealed that, as predicted, when the moral identity was threatened, CM with effort ( $M = 6.07$ ,  $SD = .91$ ) led to a marginally more favorable brand attitude relative to CM without effort ( $M = 5.72$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ;  $F(1, 233) = 2.75$ ,  $p = .099$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .012$ ; 90% CI [.01, .70]). When the moral identity was not threatened however, effort type did not influence brand attitudes ( $M_{\text{effort}} = 5.86$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ;  $M_{\text{no effort}} = 6.02$ ,  $SD = .95$ ;  $F(1, 233) = .67$ ,  $p = .41$ ; 90% CI [-.48, .16]).

*Moral self-signaling.* An ANOVA with moral self-signaling as the dependent variable, and CM campaign and moral identity as the independent variables, was conducted. The main effect of CM campaign was marginally significant ( $F(1, 233) = 3.15$ ,  $p = .077$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .013$ ), however the main effect of moral identity was not significant ( $p = .57$ ). Importantly, the

interaction between CM campaign and moral identity was marginally significant ( $F(1, 233) = 2.82, p = .095, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .012$ ). Planned contrasts revealed that when the moral identity was threatened, CM with effort ( $M = 5.84, SD = 1.12$ ) offered greater moral self-signal value than CM without effort ( $M = 5.33, SD = 1.20; F(1, 233) = 5.44, p = .02, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .023; 95\% \text{ CI } [-.08, .95]$ ). When the moral identity was not threatened however, effort type did not influence moral self-signaling ( $M_{\text{effort}} = 5.68, SD = 1.08; M_{\text{no effort}} = 5.66, SD = 1.15; F(1, 233) = .01, p = .94; 95\% \text{ CI } [-.38, .41]$ ).

*Mediation analysis.* To examine the mediating role of moral self-signaling, we conducted a moderated mediation analysis (Model 7, Hayes 2020), with CM campaign as the independent variable (0 = no effort, 1 = effort), moral identity as the moderator (0 = control, 1 = threatened), moral self-signaling as the mediator, and purchase intentions as the dependent variable. Our conceptual model predicts that mediation through self-signaling would only occur when the moral identity was threatened. Bootstrapping results (10,000 resamples) supported a conditional indirect effect of effort on purchase intentions when the moral identity was threatened (conditional indirect effect = .31,  $SE = .13, 95\% \text{ CI } [.05, .58]$ ). However, for the control group, the indirect effect of CM campaign was not significant (effect = .01,  $SE = .12, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.22, .25]$ ). A similar pattern emerged for attitudes toward the brand (see table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Mediation Analysis (Study 3)**

	Indirect Effect of CM Campaign					
	CM x Moral Identity Interaction (a)	Moral Self- signaling (b)	Total Effect (c)	95% CI: Moral Identity Threatened	95% CI: Control	Direct Effect (c')
Purchase intentions	.50*	.60**	.62*	[.05, .58]	[-.22, .25]	.32
Attitude toward the brand	.50*	.48**	.51*	[.04, .48]	[-.18, .20]	.27

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$

*Discussion.* Study 3 provides further evidence that effort in CM (relative to non-effortful CM) increases CM effectiveness when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral self-image, and this effect also occurs when the consumer task benefits the firm (i.e., product reviews). Further, results from our mediation analysis suggest that the process underlying this effect is moral self-signaling. In particular, when consumers are driven by the desire to reinforce their moral identity, they respond most favorably toward a CM campaign that affords them the opportunity to morally self-signal. Arguably, an effortful CM campaign is an appealing moral self-signal because it is (on face value) inherently selfless—consumers do not expect to gain any additional benefits from engaging in the effort and therefore their motives during introspection

cannot be confounded with self-interest. To further investigate this proposition, in the following study we examine the effect of effort in CM when it is linked to a personal gain.

#### Study 4

Thus far, our findings demonstrate that when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral self-image, an effortful CM campaign (vs. no effort campaign) increases CM effectiveness. Recently, there has been an increasing trend toward effortful CM campaigns requiring consumers to upload pictures of themselves (i.e., “selfies”) on social media platforms in order to trigger a donation to a cause, such as Toyota’s #selfLESSie campaign and Disney’s #ShareYourEars campaign. Although such campaigns require consumer effort, they also involve a public component, wherein consumers socially signal their benevolence. Besides being driven by self-signaling motives, consumers are also driven by reputational and social signaling motives (Bromley 1993; Leary and Kowalski 1990), and therefore such campaigns can be appealing. Nonetheless, it is likely that, because impression motivation is recognized as being driven by self-interest (Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, and Bozok 2006), it will attenuate the moral self-signaling utility of effort in CM. In the context of social effort in CM, reputational benefits to be incurred by publically posting a “selfie” are expected to be perceived as a self-benefitting incentive, thereby decreasing the appeal of the CM campaign. The objective of study 4 is to therefore investigate the prediction that, when consumers are motivated to morally self-signal, pairing effort in CM with a social signaling component will decrease CM effectiveness. Because consumers may be simultaneously driven by both self and social signaling motives, we do not make a prediction about consumer evaluations of the CM campaign when the moral identity is not salient.

#### Method

*Design, Procedure, and Measures.* One hundred and eighty-two participants<sup>10</sup> (45.6% female;  $M_{age} = 35.3$ ,  $SD = 11.48$ ) were recruited through MTurk for a compensation of \$0.60. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (moral identity: threatened, control)  $\times$  2 (CM: private effort, public effort) between-participants experimental design.

The procedure of study 4 was identical to the one used in study 1, with two exceptions. Before proceeding to the moral identity manipulation, participants were informed that the first study they would be participating in dealt with recalling memories. After completing the moral identity manipulation, they were asked to complete a filler task (nine questions relating to the difficulty of recalling the events they described). They were then thanked for their participation and were informed that they would be proceeding to a second study related to new brand evaluations. Participants in the effort condition read that in order to prompt a donation, they would be required to upload a picture of their breakfast to an anonymous link, along with the product code found inside their cereal box. Participants in the public effort condition read that they would be required to upload a selfie with their breakfast and share it on Facebook along with the hashtag #shareyourmealtoendhunger, as well as the product code found inside their cereal box (see appendix N).

---

<sup>10</sup> Sixteen participants who self-reported low English language proficiency were eliminated prior to analyses.

A separate pretest ( $n = 75$ ) was conducted to ensure that participants perceived the public effort task as leading to more reputational benefits than the private effort task. After being presented with either the public or private effort campaign, participants were asked to rate the extent to which participating in the campaign would improve their reputation (make others see me in a positive light, improve my reputation as a caring person, make others like me more;  $\alpha = .91$ ), using a 7-point scale. Results indicated that the public effort campaign ( $M = 5.09$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) was perceived as offering significantly more reputational benefits than the private effort campaign ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ;  $F(1, 73) = 11.43$ ,  $p = .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .135$ ; 95% CI [.49, 1.19]).

Participants then completed measures relating to their attitudes toward the brand ( $\alpha = .95$ ), using a 7-point scale. Lastly, participants completed manipulation checks, including questions relating to the perceived privacy of the campaign (anonymous, visible to others [reverse coded]; 7-point scale;  $\alpha = .72$ ), as well as questions relating to demographics and hypothesis guessing.

## Results

*Manipulation checks.* Five participants correctly guessed the purpose of the study and were excluded from further analyses, resulting in a final sample of one hundred and seventy-seven. The moral identity manipulation was successful. An ANOVA with guilt as the dependent variable, and effort and moral identity as the independent variables, revealed a significant main effect of moral identity ( $F(1, 173) = 6.39$ ,  $p = .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .036$ ; 95% CI [.17, 1.34]), and a non-significant main effect of effort type and interaction ( $p \geq .56$ ). Participants in the threatened moral identity condition felt more guilty ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 2.06$ ) than those in the control condition ( $M = 2.35$ ,  $SD = 1.86$ ). The CM type manipulation was also successful. An ANOVA with perceived privacy as the dependent variable, and CM type and moral identity as the independent variables, revealed a significant main effect of CM type ( $F(1, 173) = 65.23$ ,  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .274$ ; 95% CI [1.56, 2.56]), and a non-significant main effect of moral identity and interaction ( $p \geq .52$ ). Participants in the private effort condition perceived participating in the CM campaign as more private ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 1.91$ ) than those in the public effort condition ( $M = 2.35$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ).

*Attitude toward the brand.* An ANOVA with attitude toward the brand as the dependent variable, and effort and moral identity as the independent variables, was conducted. The main effects of effort type and moral identity were not significant ( $ps \geq .27$ ). Importantly, the interaction between effort type and moral identity was marginally significant ( $F(1, 173) = 3.10$ ,  $p = .08$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .018$ ). Planned contrasts revealed that, as predicted, when the moral identity was threatened, the private effort CM campaign ( $M_{\text{private}} = 6.03$ ,  $SD = .94$ ) bolstered brand attitudes relative to the public effort CM campaign ( $M_{\text{public}} = 5.52$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ;  $F(1, 173) = 4.29$ ,  $p = .04$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .024$ ; 95% CI [.02, .99]). When the moral identity was not threatened however, effort type did not influence brand attitudes ( $M_{\text{private}} = 5.91$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ;  $M_{\text{public}} = 6.02$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ,  $p = .65$ ; 95% CI [-.62, .39]).

*Discussion.* Findings from study 4 demonstrate when consumers' are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, they respond more favorably to CM campaigns that require private

consumer effort rather than public effort. These findings suggest that reputational benefits offered by a public CM campaign attenuate the moral self-signaling value of CM with effort.

## **General Discussion**

Across five studies, we provide converging evidence that, when driven to reinforce their moral identity, consumer evaluations of cause marketing with effort-based participation are enhanced. When consumers are chronically motivated to reinforce their moral identity due to a moral identity that is highly central to the self-concept, they favor effortful CM to the same extent as non-effortful CM, while consumers with relatively less central moral identities favor non-effortful CM (pilot study). When consumers are driven to restore a previously tarnished moral identity they favor effort-based CM (relative to non-effortful; studies 1, 2, 3, and 4). The motivation to reinforce the moral self drives consumers to favor effort in CM relative to both purchase only CM (pilot study and studies 2, 3, and 4) and no-purchase CM campaigns wherein firms directly donate to the cause (studies 1 and 2). Furthermore, when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, leveraging the consumer effort in order to collect meaningful consumer data, such as customer feedback and product reviews, does not compromise CM effectiveness (studies 2 and 3). The process underlying this effect is moral self-signaling (study 3). Specifically, when consumers are driven by the desire to reinforce their moral identity, they construe effort-based CM as affording them the opportunity to feel more moral than non-effortful CM. However, only consumer effort that represents a selfless act, with no ostensible self-benefit leads to this effect. Therefore, when consumers are motivated to morally self-signal, pairing effort in CM with a social signaling component wherein reputational benefits are implied, decreases CM effectiveness (study 4).

## **Theoretical Contributions**

The findings of the current research make several theoretical contributions. First, the current research contributes to the literature on consumer effort by building on and extending previous research showing that consumers are sometimes attracted to opportunities that allow them to exert more effort. By providing evidence for the interplay between the moral identity and consumer effort in CM on CM effectiveness, our findings demonstrate that under certain circumstances, effort in CM signals positive value, and is therefore perceived as desirable. Previous research suggests that, despite the aversive nature of effort (Hull 1943; Zipf 1949), consumers are sometimes attracted to opportunities that allow them to exert more effort because, it can signal positive value of an outcome (Axson and Cooper 1985; Brehm et al. 1983; Wright and Brehm 1984; Zentall 2010; Zhang et al. 2011), such as in consumer loyalty programs (Kivetz and Simonson 2002, 2003) as well as serve as a cue that conveys positive information about oneself (Franke, Schreier, and Kaiser 2010; Mochon, Norton, and Ariely 2012; Norton, Mochon, and Ariely 2012). Therefore, consumers are drawn to opportunities to exert effort when they infer incremental personal benefits as an outcome of that effort. By demonstrating that when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, they favour effort-based CM (relative to no-effort CM), the current research demonstrates that this effect also extends to contexts wherein the outcome of the effort does not result in any tangible personal gains, but instead benefits others.

Second, we illustrate the underlying process of this effect by showing that when consumers are driven to reinforce their moral identity, effort in CM is construed as offering a stronger signal of moral identity than non-effortful CM. More specifically, consumers infer that participating in an effortful campaign after purchasing the CM-linked product will allow them to feel good and moral to a greater extent than a purchase-only CM campaign. Past research has suggested that effort can be perceived as desirable because it can sometimes signal positive value of an outcome (Axson and Cooper 1985; Brehm et al. 1983; Wright and Brehm 1984; Zentall 2010; Zhang et al. 2011). In contrast, in the current research, the benefit to the beneficiary was held constant. Thus, expending effort could not be construed as resulting in a superior outcome.

Third, the findings presented in the current work extend previous research in CM that focuses on implementation-level factors and their effectiveness (Andrews et al. 2014; Koschate-Fischer et al. 2012; Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran 2012). More specifically, we identify consumer effort as a factor that, under certain contexts, can drive CM effectiveness. To that end, our findings shed light on previous contradictory findings regarding the impact of effort in CM on consumer responses. Previous research has suggested that, effortful CM campaigns are either equally effective (Folse, Niedrich, and Landreth-Grau 2010; Howie et al. 2015) or less effective (Arora and Henderson 2007; Folse et al. 2010; Howie et al. 2015) than non-effortful campaigns. The finding that the motivation to reinforce one's moral identity (either chronically or situationally) is an important driver of CM effectiveness of effort-based campaigns (relative to non-effortful campaigns) therefore elucidates the seemingly inconsistent effects of effort in CM on CM effectiveness demonstrated in previous research. In the current research, consumer responses in the moral identity control conditions were inconsistent across studies (studies 1 and 3), either demonstrating adverse consumer responses to effort in CM (study 1) or no significant differences in preferences across the two campaigns (study 3)—a finding consistent with findings from prior studies. Furthermore, we observed that when the moral identity is considered unimportant to one's self-concept, a no-effort CM campaign was favored over an effortful campaign, while for relatively higher levels of moral identity centrality, effort did not influence consumer attitudes. Taken together, the current work suggests that previous divergent findings stem from differences in moral identity centrality across individuals, as well as consumers' simultaneous motivation to morally self-signal, as well as avoid expending effort.

Lastly, we also contribute to the literature in CM by identifying a theoretically relevant boundary condition of our proposed effect. Consistent with our conceptual framework, consumers favor effort in CM only when it can be construed as a selfless act. To that end, when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, they favor effort-based CM that requires private consumer effort that cannot be misattributed to reputation-seeking motives, rather than public effort. Although the use of CM campaigns with public effort is prevalent in the marketplace, there is no other research, to our knowledge, that has examined the effect of this implementation-related factor on CM effectiveness.

## **Managerial Implications**

In recent years, effort-based CM has become increasingly popular. Despite its popularity however, previous research has suggested that effort in CM either has no bearing (Folse et al. 2010; Howie et al. 2015), or adversely influences consumer responses (Arora and Henderson 2007; Folse et al. 2010; Howie et al. 2015). Such lukewarm responses can be partly attributed to consumers' aversion to effort expenditure (Howie et al. 2015). The current research highlights an

important factor that can enhance the effectiveness of effort-based CM campaigns, despite consumer's aversion to effort. Specifically, when consumers are driven to reinforce their moral identity, they favor effort-based CM relative to non-effortful CM. Because consumers closely track their morally relevant behavior in order to maintain a reasonable degree of moral self-regard (Monin and Jordan 2009), effort-based CM should be used as part of an overall promotional campaign wherein the message subtly reminds consumers of falling short of their own internal moral standards. Importantly, our findings indicate that when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, they prefer effort-based CM relative to both purchase-only CM and CM wherein the firm directly donates a lump sum to the cause. Given the varying costs associated with each form of CM campaign, this finding suggests that CM with effort can offer a greater return on investment if correctly implemented. Interestingly, a secondary finding of the current work suggests that when consumers are driven to reinforce their moral identity, they equally favor purchase-only CM relative to direct firm donation CM—a finding that also has implications for return on investment.

In addition, the current work offers insights into an important consumer characteristic that enhances the effectiveness of effort-based CM campaigns. More specifically, our results suggest that for those consumers whose moral identity is highly central to their self-concept, effortful campaigns are just as appealing as non-effortful campaigns. This finding has implications for marketers implementing CM in product categories that attract consumers who place a high level of importance on their own morality, such as green and sustainability-related products (Spielman 2020; Wu and Yang 2018), and other ethically-positioned products. Our research suggests that for such product categories, the implementation of effort-based CM may be more cost-effective.

Our research also suggests that this effect generalizes to CM wherein the consumer effort is leveraged to collect meaningful consumer data, such as customer feedback or product reviews. Although consumers tend to respond unfavorably to firms if they perceive them as behaving insincerely (Ellen et al. 2006), findings from the current research suggest that when consumers are driven by the need to reinforce their moral identity, they favor effort-based campaigns, even when the effort required to prompt the donation directly benefits the firm. From a managerial perspective, effort-based campaigns can therefore be particularly attractive because they can increase the effectiveness of future marketing activities (Polonsky and Speed 2001).

Lastly, our findings point to an important campaign characteristic that can influence CM effectiveness. Importantly, when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, they favor effort-based tasks that are private in nature, rather than public. Although in recent years, selfie campaigns have risen in popularity, the current work suggests that such campaigns are ineffective at eliciting positive consumer responses, especially when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity. Although the appeal of such campaign lies in their ability to propagate word-of-mouth through online postings, companies must weigh the benefit of using this approach against the associated cost of adverse consumer attitudes. Selfie campaigns in the context of CM should especially avoid the use of marketing cues that trigger thoughts related to the moral identity, because the pairing of a social signaling component with thoughts about one's moral identity lead to unfavorable consumer responses.

## Limitations and Future Research

In the current research, we employed an experimental approach with fictional brand names, fictional CM campaigns, and limited product categories to increase experimental control. Future studies using actual brands, actual CM campaigns, and other product categories would help improve the generalizability of the findings. Although product categories used (i.e., chocolate bars and cereal) were selected to reflect the common practice of CM with food product categories, the extent to which the findings are generalizable to non-food and high involvement product categories needs to be explored further.

In the current research, we did not focus on consumers' perceptions of firm motives when CM requires consumer effort. Intuitively, it may be expected that consumers recognize the firm's attempt to limit donation expenditures by imposing an additional effort contingency on the CM campaign, while simultaneously benefitting from reputational benefits, which may be viewed as self-serving. The attribution of self-serving motives may be further aggravated when the effort required by CM is firm benefiting in nature. The attribution of insincere, profit-driven motives to a firm's socially responsible initiatives adversely influences consumer responses (Ellen et al. 2006). Although we do not have direct measures of perceptions of firm motives, the findings that effort in CM improved consumer attitudes toward the brand when consumers were motivated to reinforce their moral identity may suggest that perceptions of firm motives were not adversely influenced. One possibility is that self-image and self-identity concerns supersede concerns about firm motives, particularly because when attention is focused inwardly, such as when one is driven to seek out positive self-signals to reinforce the self-image, one's central thoughts are on the self, and, as such, attention directed to others is attenuated (Duval and Wicklund 1972). Further research is needed to help elucidate this effect.

It is also interesting to note that, for firms, an effortful CM campaign can be beneficial because not all consumers who purchase the CM-linked product will undertake the secondary activity, and therefore donations will be comparatively lower than in a no-effort CM campaign (Polonsky and Speed 2001). For the non-profit beneficiary, such effortful CM campaigns are therefore less advantageous. It may have been expected that consumers would recognize that effort-based CM is less beneficial to the cause, and they would therefore not favor CM with effort under any circumstances. However, our findings were not consistent with this proposition. Indeed, in study 2, when participants were motivated to morally self-signal, the effortful campaign which indicated that the cause *expected* to receive \$175,000 still lead to greater purchase intentions than a pre-established direct donation of the same amount. This finding suggests that moral self-identity concerns drive consumers to disregard actual benefits received by the beneficiary. This is consistent with prior research that has demonstrated that, when judging other's charitable behavior, the most morally expressive option leads to more positive evaluations, despite sometimes being the least advantageous for the beneficiary (Newman and Cain 2014). Consistent with this finding, prior research has demonstrated that when consumers are motivated to engage in guilt-reduction, they are insensitive to the nature of the cause (Zemack-Rugar et al. 2016). Thus, it is likely that, when motivated by moral self-image concerns, consumers favor engaging in behavior that affords them the most favorable self-signal of moral identity, regardless of its actual impact on the beneficiary. Further research is therefore needed to improve our understanding of how consumers balance benefits to the self relative to benefits to others, within a moral self-signaling framework.



Future research could also seek to improve our understanding of how consumers respond to varying levels of effort when they are motivated to morally self-signal. An initial probing of this effect in the follow-up to study 1 indicates that when consumers are motivated to morally self-signal they are relatively insensitive to increases in effort demands. However, prior research has also observed that consumers engage in defensive justification (e.g., devaluing the cause) when contribution requirements are deemed too costly in order to reduce feelings of guilt (Howie et al. 2015; Tyler, Orwin, and Schurer 1982). In our follow-up study, we only used three levels of effort, and therefore it is possible that even the relatively high level of effort was not sufficient enough to trigger defensive justification. Future research could further explore the interactive effects of moral identity and levels of effort requirement on consumer responses, and the extent to which a curvilinear effect emerges, by employing multiple levels of effort.

In conclusion, the current research shows that, under certain circumstances, imposing an effort requirement in CM can serve to enhance CM effectiveness. The effort in CM can offer consumers the opportunity to feel good by doing good, especially when they are driven to reinforce their moral identity. Given that for most consumers, the moral identity is highly important to their self-concept (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Reed II et al. 2007; Reed II et al. 2016), effort-based CM can be an effective promotional strategy.

## Conclusion

As consumers increasingly consider the social, ethical and environmental implications of their consumption, firms have begun to prioritize social responsibility within their business models by offering brands and products that are positioned on their morally relevant attributes. For firms, understanding the factors that drive and shape moral consumption can therefore offer significant practical value. This dissertation addresses this question by investigating how consumers use self-signals to form their moral identity, and by extension, how this effect influences consumption.

The first essay—titled “Going Green with Envy: How Envy Impacts Self-Perceptions and Green Product Consumption”—investigates the moral self-signaling value of envy, and how envy influences moral consumption. More specifically, this essay demonstrates that experiencing malicious (vs. benign) envy increases morally relevant consumption and behavior. The process underlying this effect is the desire to restore the altered perceptions of moral identity that result from experiencing malicious envy. In particular, experiencing malicious envy increases perceptions of moral impurity, and adversely influences moral self-regard. Because consumers are driven by the desire to restore a morally tainted self-image evoked by experiencing malicious envy, their intentions to engage in morally superior behavior (i.e., purchase ethical products) increases. This essay also shows that social media postings of others, particularly social media activity of close (vs. distant) others, are one way to trigger malicious envy and lead to this effect. Consistent with the proposed conceptual model, malicious envy also leads to symbolic moral cleansing, whereby the desirability of cleansing-related products is heightened due to the increased accessibility of cleansing-related concepts that are triggered by threats to one’s moral self-concept. Lastly, the moral cleansing effect of malicious envy can be attenuated by modifying the metacognitive beliefs about the primary experience of envy through the use of normalizing thoughts.

The second essay—titled “Cause Marketing as a Self-Signal: When Anticipated Effort Improves Consumer Response”—examines how the moral identity shapes consumer preferences for morally-positioned marketing campaigns based on anticipated moral self-signaling utility, and by extension, how this impacts consumer responses to the brand. This essay demonstrates that, when driven to reinforce their moral identity, consumer evaluations of consumer effort in CM relative to non-effortful CM are enhanced. This effect occurs both when consumers are chronically motivated to reinforce their sense of the moral self due to centrality of moral identity to the self-concept, as well as when they are driven to repair a previously tarnished moral identity. The motivation to reinforce the moral identity compels consumers to favor effort-based CM relative to both purchase only CM and no-purchase CM campaigns wherein firms donate directly to the cause. Furthermore, when consumers are driven by moral self-image concerns, leveraging the consumer effort with the CM campaign to collect meaningful consumer data, such as customer feedback and product reviews, does not compromise CM effectiveness. This essay further demonstrates that the process underlying this effect is moral self-signaling. Specifically, when consumers are motivated to reinforce their moral identity, they construe the anticipated effort in CM as an opportunity to boost their sense of moral self relative to non-effortful CM. This occurs because, on face value, the consumer does not stand to benefit from engaging in the effort post-purchase, and therefore the effort cannot be confounded with self-interest. Because of this, consumer effort that reflects a selfless act, with no ostensible self-benefit is favored over effort in CM that benefits both the cause and the self. Therefore, when consumers are driven to

morally self-signal, effort in CM that allows for social signaling, and by extension leads to reputational benefits, decreases CM effectiveness.

Taken together, the two essays contribute to the literature on the moral identity by extending previous research on how morally relevant cues are used to convey information to the self about one's moral character, and the role this self-signaling plays in ethical and sustainable consumption. Prior research has established that consumers rely on external cues in the form of their moral and immoral behavior to update and revise their sense of the moral self (Cascio and Plant 2015; Jordan, Mullen, and Murnighan 2011; Reed II et al. 2016; Sachdeva, Iliev, and Medin 2009). From a theoretical perspective, identifying envy as a cue that shapes the moral self-concept, extends this stream of research by revealing that internal emotional states also serve as cues that inform the moral self-concept. Although, internal states have not been previously considered as capable of effectively informing the moral self-concept because they are not easily verifiable (Bem 1972; Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Bodner and Prelec 2003), the first essay demonstrates that the manifestation of malicious envy signals moral impurity to the self, and lowers the moral self-regard. Findings from the first essay further extend prior research in moral self-regulation by demonstrating that this effect compels individuals to morally cleanse—both symbolically and behaviourally—in an effort to restore their tainted self-view. The second essay shows how the anticipated self-signaling value of cause marketing linked brands shapes consumer preferences when consumers are driven to reinforce their moral identity. Consumers who are driven by moral self-signaling motives therefore respond more favorably to effort-based campaigns relative to conventional CM because effort in CM is construed as offering a comparatively stronger signal of moral identity than non-effortful CM. More specifically, consumers infer that having the opportunity to participate in an effortful campaign after purchasing a CM-linked product will allow them to feel more moral than participating in a purchase-only CM campaign.

The current dissertation provides important managerial implications. First, because social media plays a conducive role in triggering envy (Liu and Ma 2018), findings from the first essay suggest that consumers are more likely to respond favorably to morally relevant marketing content while on these platforms. In recent years, social media has become an important platform through which brands connect with consumers in order to build their image, drive sales, and generate traffic to their websites. Findings from the current research suggest that marketers of products or brands positioned on their ethical or environment attributes may consider such platforms for effectively communicating with consumers. Findings also suggest that social media sites would also provide an effective platform for marketers hoping to engage consumers in prosocial behavior in the context of charitable causes and non-profit organizations. Second, findings from the second essay suggest that marketers of CM-linked brands can improve consumer responses to effort-based campaigns by subtly reminding consumers that they may be falling short of their internal moral standards, thereby activating their desire to morally self-signal and, consequently, driving favorable responses to effortful campaigns. Furthermore, findings suggest that for marketers implementing CM in product categories that appeal to consumers with highly central moral identities, such as green and sustainability-related products (Spielman 2020; Wu and Yang 2018), the implementation of effort-based CM may lead to improved return on investment by maximizing CM effectiveness, while minimizing associated costs.

In highlighting how consumers use cues to shape their self-perceptions of moral identity, and how, by extension, this relationship influences socially responsible consumption, the current

research offers important consumer insights to marketing practitioners, and paves the way for future research, at a time where social, ethical and sustainability-related issues are increasingly shaping the consumer landscape.

## References

- AICPA (2016), “Keeping Up with the Joneses’ Goes Online as Many Americans Show off Luxury Purchases,” *American Institute of Certified Public Accountants*, <https://www.aicpa.org/press/pressreleases/2016/keeping-up-with-the-joneses-goes-online.html>.
- Ames, Daniel R. and Gita V. Johar (2009), “I’ll Know What You’re Like When I See How You Feel: How and When Affective Displays Influence Behavior-based Impressions,” *Psychological Science*, 20 (5), 586–93.
- Andrews, Michelle, Xueming Luo, Zheng Fang, and Jaakko Aspara (2014), “Cause Marketing Effectiveness and the Moderating Role of Price Discounts,” *Journal of Marketing*, 78 (6), 120–42.
- Atkinson, John W. and David Birch (1970), *A Dynamic Theory of Action*. New York: Wiley.
- Aquino, Karl and Americus Reed II (2002), “The Self-importance of Moral Identity,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83 (6), 1423–440.
- Aronson, Elliot and Judson Mills (1959), “The Effect of Severity of Initiation on Liking for a Group,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 59 (2), 177–81.
- Arora, Neeraj and Ty Henderson (2007), “Embedded Premium Promotion: Why It Works and How to Make It More Effective,” *Marketing Science*, 26 (4), 514–31.
- Axson, Danny and Joel Cooper (1985), “Cognitive Dissonance and Psychotherapy: The Role of Effort Justification in Inducing Weight Loss,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 21 (2), 149–60.
- Barasch, Alixandra, Emma E. Levine, Jonathan Z. Berman, and Deborah A. Small (2014), “Selfish or Selfless? On the Signal Value of Emotion in Altruistic Behavior,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 107 (3), 393–413.
- Barone, Michael J., Anthony D. Miyazaki, and Kimberly A. Taylor (2000), “The Influence of Cause-Related Marketing on Consumer Choice: Does One Good Turn Deserve Another?” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28 (2), 248–62.
- Baumeister, Roy F. (Ed.) (1999), *The Self in Social Psychology*. Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.
- Bem, Daryl J. (1972), “Self-Perception Theory,” in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 6, ed. Leonard Berkowitz, New York, NY: Academic Press, 1–62.
- Bénabou, Roland and Jean Tirole (2006), “Incentives and Prosocial Behavior,” *American Economic Review*, 96 (12), 1652–78.
- Bénabou, Roland and Jean Tirole (2010), “Individual and Corporate Social Responsibility,” *Economica*, 77 (305), 1–19.
- Bénabou, Roland and Jean Tirole (2011), “Identity, Morals, and Taboos: Beliefs as Assets,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 126 (2), 805–55.
- Bodner, Ronit and Drazen Prelec (2003), “The Diagnostic Value of Actions in a Self-signaling in Everyday Decision Making,” in *The Psychology of Economic Decisions*, Vol. 1, ed. Isabelle Brocas and J. Carillo, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 105–23.
- Brehm, Jack W., Rex A. Wright, Sheldon Solomon, Linda Silka, and Jeff Greenberg (1983), “Perceived Difficulty, Energization, and the Magnitude of Goal Valence,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 19 (1), 21–48.
- Briñol, Pablo, Richard E. Petty and Derek D. Rucker (2006), “The Role of Metacognitive Processes in Emotional Intelligence,” *Psicothema*, 18 (Suplem.1), 26–33.

- Bromley, Dennis Basil (1993), *Reputation, Image and Impression Management*, Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons.
- Carrington, Michal J., Benjamin A. Neville, and Gregory J. Whitwell (2014), "Lost in Translation: Exploring the Ethical Consumer Intention-Behaviour Gap," *Journal of Business Research*, 67 (1), 2759–67.
- Cascio, Jessica E. and Ashby Plant (2015), "Prospective Moral Licensing: Does Anticipating Doing Good Later Allow You to be Bad Now?" *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 56, 110–16.
- Cohen-Charash, Yochi and Jennifer Mueller (2007), "Does Perceived Unfairness Exacerbate or Mitigate Interpersonal Counterproductive Work Behaviors Related to Envy?" *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 666–80.
- Crimston, Daniel, Paul G. Bain, Matthew J. Hornsey, and Brock Bastian (2016), "Moral Expansiveness: Examining Variability in the Extension of the Moral World," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 111(4), 636–53.
- Crusius, Jan and Jens Lange (2014), "What Catches the Envious Eye? Attentional Biases Within Malicious and Benign Envy," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 55 (November), 1–11.
- Crusius, Jan and Thomas Mussweiler (2012), "When People Want What Others Have: The Impulsive Side of Envious Desire," *Emotion*, 12 (1), 142–53.
- de Pelsmacker, Patrick, Liesbeth Driesen, and Glenn Rayp (2005), "Do Consumers Care about Ethics? Willingness to Pay for Fair-Trade Coffee," *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 39 (2), 363–85.
- Duffy, Michelle K. and Jason D. Shaw (2000), "The Salieri Syndrome: Consequences of Envy in Groups," *Small Group Research*, 31 (1), 3–23.
- Duffy, Michelle K., Kristin L. Scott, Jason D. Shaw, Bennett J. Tepper and Karl Aquino (2012), "A Social Context Model of Envy and Social Undermining," *Academy of Management Journal*, 55 (3), 643–66.
- Duval, Shelley and Robert A. Wicklund (1972), *A Theory of Objective Self Awareness*, New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Ellen, Pam Scholder, Deborah J. Webb and Lois A. Mohr (2006), "Building Corporate Associations: Consumer Attributions for Corporate Socially Responsible Programs," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34 (2), 147–57.
- Festinger, Leon (1957), *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Fishbach, Ayelet and Ravi Dhar (2005), "Goals as Excuses or Guides: The Liberating Effect of Perceived Goal Progress on Choice," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (3), 370–77.
- Franke, Nikolaus, Martin Schreier, and Ulrike Kaiser (2010), "The 'I Designed It Myself' Effect in Mass Customization," *Management Science*, 56 (1), 125–40.
- Folse, Judith Anne G., Ronald W. Niedrich, and Stacy Landreth-Grau (2010), "Cause-relating Marketing: The Effects of Purchase Quantity and Firm Donation Amount on Consumer Inferences and Participation Intentions," *Journal of Retailing*, 86 (4), 295–309.
- Gerard, Harold B. and Grover C. Mathewson (1966), "The Effects of Severity of Initiation on Liking for a Group: A Replication," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 2 (3), 278–87.
- Giebelhausen, Michael, Haeun Helen Chun, J. Joseph Cronin, and G. Tomas M. Hult (2016), "Adjusting the Warm-Glow Thermostat: How Incentivizing Participation in Voluntary

- Green Programs Moderates Their Impact on Service Satisfaction,” *Journal of Marketing*, 80 (4), 56–71.
- Gino, Francesca, Maryam Kouchaki and Adam D. Galinsky (2015), “The Moral Virtue of Authenticity: How Inauthenticity Produces Feelings of Immorality and Impurity,” *Psychological Science*, 26 (7), 983–96.
- Gneezy, Ayelet, Alex Imas, Amber Brown, Leif D. Nelson, and Michael I. Norton (2012), “Paying to Be Nice: Consistency and Costly Prosocial Behavior,” *Management Science*, 58 (1), 179–87.
- Grau, Stacy L. and Judith A.G. Folse (2007), “Cause-Related Marketing (CRM): The Influences of Donation Proximity and Message-Framing Cues on the Less-Involved Consumer,” *Journal of Advertising*, 36 (4), 19–33.
- Gupta, Shruti and Julie Pirsch (2006), “A Taxonomy of Cause-related Marketing Research: Current Findings and Future Research Directions,” *Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing*, 15 (1), 25–43.
- Harker, Lori and Dacher Keltner (2001), “Expressions of Positive Emotion in Women’s College Yearbook Pictures and their Relationship to Personality and Life Outcomes across Adulthood,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80 (1), 112–24.
- Hayes, Andrew F. (2018), *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis*, New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Henderson, Conor M., Joshua T. Beck, and Robert Palmatier (2011), “Review of the Theoretical Underpinnings of Loyalty Programs,” *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 21 (3), 256–76.
- Henderson, Ty and Neeraj Arora (2010), “Promoting Brands Across Categories with a Social Cause: Implementing Effective Embedded Premium Programs,” *Journal of Marketing*, 74 (6), 41–60.
- Herziger, Atar, Grant Donnelly, and Rebecca Walker Reczek (2020), “Over-Recycling: When Motivated Sustainability Goes Wrong,” paper presented at the Society of Consumer Psychology Conference, Huntington Beach, California.
- Howie, Katharine, Lifeng Yang, Scott J. Vitell, Victoria Bush, and Douglas Vorhies (2015), “Consumer Participation in Cause-Related Marketing: An Examination of Effort Demands and Defensive Denial,” *Journal of Business Ethics*, 147 (3), 679–92.
- Hull, Clark L. (1943), *Principles of Behavior: An Introduction to Behavior Theory*, New York, NY: D. Appleton-Century Company, Incorporated.
- IEG (2018), “Cause Sponsorship Spending To Total \$2.14 Billion In 2018,” *Information Engineering Group Inc.*, [https://www.sponsorship.com/Latest-Thinking/Sponsorship-Infographics/Cause-Sponsorship-Spending-To-Total-\\$2-14-Billion-/Infographic.aspx](https://www.sponsorship.com/Latest-Thinking/Sponsorship-Infographics/Cause-Sponsorship-Spending-To-Total-$2-14-Billion-/Infographic.aspx)
- IEG (2019), “Sponsorship Spending of Causes to Grow 4.6% in 2019,” *Information Engineering Group Inc.*, <https://www.sponsorship.com/Latest-Thinking/Sponsorship-Infographics/Sponsorship-Spending-of-Causes-to-Grow-4-6--in-201.aspx>
- Jennings, Peter L., Marie S. Mitchell, and Sean T. Hannah (2015), “The Moral Self: A Review and Integration of the Literature,” *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36 (S1), S104–68.
- Jordan, Jennifer, Elizabeth Mullen and J. Keith Murnighan (2011), “Striving for the Moral Self: The Effects of Recalling Past Moral Actions on Future Moral Behavior,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37 (5), 701–13.
- Jost, John T., Arie W. Kruglanski, and Thomas O. Nelson (1998), “Social Metacognition: An Expansionist Review,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 2 (2), 137–54.

- Kaspersky Labs (2017), "Unsocial Media: Jealousy of Online Friends Leaves People Feeling Down, Kaspersky Lab study reveals," *Kaspersky Labs*, [https://usa.kaspersky.com/about/press-releases/2017\\_unsocial-media-jealousy-of-online-friends-leaves-people-feeling-down-kaspersky-lab-study-reveals](https://usa.kaspersky.com/about/press-releases/2017_unsocial-media-jealousy-of-online-friends-leaves-people-feeling-down-kaspersky-lab-study-reveals)
- Kivetz, Ran and Itamar Simonson (2002), "Earning the Right to Indulge: Effort as a Determinant of Customer Preferences towards Frequency Program Rewards," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39 (2), 155–70.
- Kivetz, Ran and Itamar Simonson (2003), "The Idiosyncratic Fit Heuristic: Effort as a Determinant of Consumer Response to Loyalty Programs," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 40 (4), 454–67.
- Koschate-Fischer, Nicole, Isabel V. Stefan, and Wayne D. Hoyer (2012), "Willingness to Pay for Cause- Related Marketing: The Impact of Donation Amount and Moderating Effects," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49 (6), 910–27.
- Kotler, Philip and Nancy Lee (2005), *Corporate Social Responsibility: Doing the Most Good for Your Company and Your Cause*, New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Krishna, Aradhna (2011), "Can Supporting a Cause Decrease Donations and Happiness? The Cause Marketing Paradox," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 21 (3), 338–45.
- Krishna, Aradhna and Uday Rajan (2009), "Cause Marketing: Spillover Effects of Cause-Related Products in a Product Portfolio," *Management Science*, 55 (9), 1469–85.
- Lafferty, Barbara A., Ronald E. Goldsmith, and G. Thomas Hult (2004), "The Impact of the Alliance on the Partners: A Look at Cause-Brand Alliances?" *Psychology & Marketing*, 21 (7), 511–33.
- Lange, Jens and Jan Crusius (2015), "Dispositional Envy Revisited: Unraveling the Motivational Dynamics of Benign and Malicious Envy," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41 (2), 284–94.
- Lazarus, Richard S. (1991), "Progress on a Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory of Emotion," *American Psychologist*, 46 (8), 819–34.
- Leary, Mark R. and Robin M. Kowalski (1990), "Impression Management: A Literature Review and Two-component Model," *Psychological Bulletin*, 107 (1), 34–47.
- Lee, Saerom, Hans Baumgartner, and Karen Page Winterich (2017), "Did They Earn It? Observing Unearned Luxury Consumption Decreases Brand Attitude When Observers Value Fairness," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 28 (3), 412–36.
- Lin, Ruoyun and Sonja Utz (2015), "The Emotional Responses of Browsing Facebook: Happiness, Envy, and the Role of Tie Strength," *Computers in Human Behavior*, 52, 29–38.
- Liu, Chang and Jianling Ma (2018), "Social Media Addiction and Burnout: The Mediating Roles of Envy and Social Media Use Anxiety," *Current Psychology*, 13 (1), 1–9.
- Liu, Gordon and Wai-Wai Ko (2011), "An Analysis of Cause-related Marketing Implementation Strategies Through Social Alliance: Partnership Conditions and Strategic Objectives," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 100 (2), 253–81.
- Mayer, John D. and Yvonne N. Gaschke (1988), "The Experience and Meta-Experience of Mood," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 55 (1), 102–11.
- Mayer, John D. and Peter Salovey (1993), "The Intelligence of Emotional Intelligence," *Intelligence*, 17 (4), 433–42.
- Meyvis, Tom and Stijn M. J. Van Osselaer (2018), "Increasing the Power of Your Study by Increasing the Effect Size," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 44 (5), 1157–173.



- Miceli, Maria and Cristiano Castelfranchi (2007), "The Envious Mind," *Cognition and Emotion*, 21 (3), 449–79.
- Mochon, Daniel, Michael I. Norton, and Dan Ariely (2012), "Bolstering and Restoring Feelings of Competence via the IKEA Effect," *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 29 (4), 363–69.
- Monin, Benoît and Alexander H. Jordan (2009), "The Dynamic Moral Self: A Social Psychological Perspective," in *Moral Self, Identity and Character: Prospects for a New Field of Study*, ed. Darcia Narvaez and Daniel K. Lapsley, New York: Cambridge University Press, 341–54.
- Moors, Agnes, Phoebe C. Ellsworth, Klaus R. Scherer and Nico H. Frijda (2013), "Appraisal Theories of Emotion: State of the Art and Future Development," *Emotion Review*, 5 (2), 119–24.
- Newman, George E. and Daylian M. Cain (2014), "Tainted Altruism: When Doing Some Good Is Evaluated as Worse Than Doing No Good at All," *Psychological Science*, 25 (3) 648–55.
- Norton, Michael I., Daniel Mochon, and Dan Ariely (2012), "The IKEA Effect: When Labor Leads to Love," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22 (3), 453–60.
- Norscia, Ivan and Elisabetta Palagi (2011), "Yawn Contagion and Empathy in Homo Sapiens," *PLoS ONE*, 6 (12), Article e28472.
- Parrott, W. Gerrod and Richard H. Smith (1993), "Distinguishing the Experiences of Envy and Jealousy," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64 (June), 906–20.
- Pelozo, John, Katherine White, and Jingzhi Shang (2013), "Good and Guilt-Free: The Role of Self-Accountability in Influencing Preferences for Products with Ethical Attributes," *Journal of Marketing*, 77(1), 104–19.
- Petty, Richard E., Pablo Briñol, Z.L. Tormala, and Duane T. Wegener (2007), "The Role of Metacognition in Social Judgement," in *Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*, ed. E. Tory Higgins and Arie W. Kruglanski, New York, NY: Guilford Press, 254–84.
- Polonsky, Michael Jay and Richard Speed (2001), "Linking Sponsorship and Cause Related Marketing: Complementarities and Conflicts," *European Journal of Marketing*, 35 (11/12), 1361–89.
- Reed II, Americus, Karl Aquino, and Eric Levy (2007), "Moral Identity and Judgments of Charitable Behaviors," *Journal of Marketing*, 71 (1), 178–93.
- Reed II, Americus, Adam Kay, Stephanie Finnel, Karl Aquino, and Eric Levy (2016), "I Don't Want the Money, I Just Want Your Time: How Moral Identity Overcomes the Aversion to Giving Time to Prosocial Causes," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 110 (3), 435–57.
- Robins, Richard and Roberta A. Schriber (2009), "The Self-Conscious Emotions: How are they Experienced, Expressed, and Assessed?" *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 3 (6), 887–98.
- Robinson, Stefanie Rosen, Caglar Irmak, and Satish Jayachandran (2012), "Choice of Cause in Cause-Related Marketing," *Journal of Marketing*, 76(4), 126–39.
- Roseman, Ira, Cynthia Wiest and Tamara S. Swartz (1994), "Phenomenology, Behaviors, and Goals Differentiate Discrete Emotions," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67 (2), 206–21.

- Sachdeva, Sonya, Rumen Iliev and Douglas L. Medin (2009), “Sinning Saints and Saintly Sinners: The Paradox of Moral Self-Regulation,” *Psychological Science*, 20 (4), 523–28.
- Salerno, Anthony, Juliano Laran and Chris Janiszewski (2018), “The Bad Can Be Good: When Benign and Malicious Envy Motivate Goal Pursuit” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 46 (2), 388–405.
- Salovey, Peter and Judith Rodin (1991), “Provoking Jealousy and Envy: Domain Relevance and Self-Esteem Threat,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 10 (4), 395–413.
- Samu, Sridhar and Walter Wymer (2009), “The Effect of Fit and Dominance in Cause Marketing Communications,” *Journal of Business Research*, 62 (4), 432–40.
- Savary, Jennifer and Ravi Dhar (2016), “When Quitting Feels Like Giving Up: Self-Signaling in Forfeiture Choice,” working paper, Yale University.
- Scheier, Michael F. and Charles S. Carver (1982), “Self-Consciousness, Outcome Expectancy, and Persistence,” *Journal of Research in Personality*, 16 (4), 409–18.
- Scherer, Klaus and Johnny R. J. Fontaine (2019), “The Semantic Structure of Emotion Words across Languages is Consistent with Componential Appraisal Models of Emotion,” *Cognition and Emotion*, 33 (4), 673–82.
- Schoeck, Helmut (1969), *Envy: A Theory of Social Behavior*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.
- Sela, Aner and Baba Shiv (2009), “Unraveling Priming: When Does the Same Prime Activate a Goal versus a Trait?” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (3), 418–33.
- Shuman, Vera and Klaus R. Scherer (2014), “Concepts and Structures of Emotions,” in *Educational Psychology Handbook Series. International Handbook of Emotions in Education*, ed. Reinhard Pekrun and Lisa Linnenbrink-Garcia, New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 13–35.
- Sirgy, M. Joseph (1982), “Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9 (3), 287–300.
- Sivanathan, Niro and Nathan C. Pettit (2010), “Protecting the Self Through Consumption: Status Goods as Affirmational Commodities,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 46 (3), 564–70.
- Smith, Richard H. (1991), “Envy and the Sense of Injustice,” in *The Psychology of Jealousy and Envy*, ed. Peter Salovey, New York, NY: Guilford Press, 79–99.
- Solomon, Robert C. (1999), *Wicked Pleasures: Meditations on the Seven "Deadly" Sins*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Spielmann, Nathalie (2020), “Green is the New White: How Virtue Motivates Green Product Purchase,” *Journal of Business Ethics*, forthcoming.
- Statista (2019), “Number of Monthly Active Facebook Users in the United States and Canada as of 4th Quarter 2019,” *Statista*, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/247614/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>
- Statista (2020), “Advertising spending in North America from 2000 to 2022,” *Statista*, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/429036/advertising-expenditure-in-north-america/>
- Strahilevitz, Michal and John G. Myers (1998), “Donations to Charity as Purchase Incentives: How Well They Work May Depend on What You Are Trying to Sell,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (4), 434–46.

- Tandoc Jr., Edson C., Patrick Ferrucci and Margaret Duffy (2015), "Facebook Use, Envy, and Depression among College Students: Is Facebooking Depressing?" *Computers in Human Behavior*, 43, 139–46.
- Thompson, Geir, Lars Glasø and Øyvind Martinsen (2016), "Antecedents and Consequences of Envy," *Journal of Social Psychology*, 156 (2), 139–53.
- Turiel, Elliot (1983), *The Development of Social Knowledge: Morality and Convention*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Tyler, Tom R., Robert Orwin, and Lisa Schurer (1982), "Defensive Denial and High Cost Pro-Social Behaviour," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 3 (4), 267–81.
- Wicklund, Robert A. and Jack W. Brehm (1976), *Perspectives on Cognitive Dissonance*, Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Van de Ven, Niels (2016), "Envy and Its Consequences: Why It is Useful to Distinguish between Benign and Malicious Envy," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 10 (6), 337–49.
- Van de Ven, Niels and Marcel Zeelenberg (2015), "On the Counterfactual Nature of Envy: 'It Could Have Been Me,'" *Cognition and Emotion*, 29 (6), 954–71.
- Van de Ven, Niels, Charles Hoogland, Richard H. Smith, Wilco W. Van Dijk, Seger M. Breugelmans, and Marcel Zeelenberg (2015), "When Envy Leads to Schadenfreude," *Cognition and Emotion*, 29 (6), 1007–025.
- Van de Ven, Niels, Marcel Zeelenberg and Rik Pieters (2009), "Leveling Up and Down: The Experiences of Benign and Malicious Envy," *Emotion*, 9 (3), 419–29.
- Van de Ven, Niels, Marcel Zeelenberg and Rik Pieters (2011a), "The Envy Premium in Product Evaluation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (6), 984–98.
- Van de Ven, Niels, Marcel Zeelenberg and Rik Pieters (2011b), "Why Envy Outperforms Admiration," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37 (6), 784–95.
- Van de Ven, Niels, Marcel Zeelenberg and Rik Pieters (2012), "Appraisal Patterns of Envy and Related Emotions," *Motivation and Emotion*, 36 (2), 195–204.
- Van Dijk, Wilco W., Jaap W. Ouwerkerk, Sjoerd Goslinga and Myrke Nieweg (2006), "When People Fall from Grace: Reconsidering the Role of Envy in Schadenfreude," *Emotion*, 6 (1), 156–60.
- Van Kleef, Gerben A., Carsten K. W. De Dreu, Davide Pietroni and Antony S. R. Manstead (2006), "Power and Emotion in Negotiation: Power Moderates the Interpersonal Effects of Anger and Happiness on Concession Making," *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 36 (4), 557–81.
- Wegner, Daniel M. (1994), "Ironic Processes of Mental Control," *Psychological Review*, 101 (1), 34–52.
- West, Colin and Chen-Bo Zhong (2015), "Moral Cleansing," *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 6, 221–25.
- Winterich, Karen Page and Michael J. Barone (2011), "Warm Glow or Cold, Hard Cash? Social Identity Effects on Consumer Choice for Donation Versus Discount Promotions," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 48 (5), 855–68.
- Wright, Rex A. and Jack W. Brehm (1984), "The Impact of Task Difficulty upon Perceptions of Arousal and Goal Attractiveness in an Avoidance Paradigm," *Motivation and Emotion*, 8 (2), 171–81.

- Wu, Bo and Zhiyong Yang (2018), "The Impact of Moral Identity on Consumers' Green Consumption Tendency: The Role of Perceived Responsibility for Environmental Damage," *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 59, 74–84.
- Yoon, Yeosun, Zeynep Gürhan-Canli, and Beyza Bozok (2006), "Drawing Inferences about Others Based on Corporate Social Responsibility Associations," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34 (2), 167–73.
- Zemack-Rugar, Yael, Rebecca Rabino, Lisa A. Cavanaugh, and Gavan J. Fitzsimons (2016), "When Donating is Liberating: The Role of Product and Consumer Characteristics in the Appeal of Cause-Related Products," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 26 (2), 213–30.
- Zentall, Thomas R. (2010), "Justification of Effort by Humans and Pigeons: Cognitive Dissonance or Contrast?" *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 19 (5), 296–300.
- Zhang, Ying, Jing Xu, Zixi Jiang, and Szu-Chi Huang (2011), "Been There, Done That: The Impact of Effort Investment on Goal Value and Consumer Motivation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38 (1), 78–93.
- Zhong, Chen-Bo and Katie Liljenquist (2006), "Washing Away Your Sins: Threatened Morality and Physical Cleansing," *Science*, 313 (5792), 1451–452.
- Zipf, George Kingsley (1949), *Human Behavior and the Principle of Least Effort: An Introduction to Human Ecology*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Press.
- Zizzo, Daniel J. and Andrew Oswald (2001), "Are People Willing to Pay to Reduce Others' Incomes?" *Annales d'Economie et de Statistique*, 63/64, 39–65.

## Appendix A

### Essay 1: Study 1 Materials

Now with 10% more natural juice.  
Uses only fresh ingredients.

**help solve  
your thirst &  
climate change.**

90% of our packaging comes from post-consumer recycled products.  
Produced locally to reduce emissions in transportation.



The image shows a can of Minute Maid Apple juice. The can is covered in condensation droplets, suggesting it is cold. The label on the can features the brand name 'Minute Maid' in a stylized font, with 'Minute Maid' in green and 'Minute Maid' in black. Below the brand name, it says 'Minute Maid' in a smaller font, and 'APPLE' in a larger font. The can is positioned on a grassy hill, and the background is a clear blue sky.

## Appendix B

### Essay 1: Materials for Additional Analysis in Study 2 Discussion

Now with 10% more natural juice.  
Uses only fresh ingredients.

**juicy goodness.**



90% of our packaging comes from post-consumer recycled products.  
produced locally to reduce emissions in transportation.

The advertisement features a can of Minute Maid Apple juice on the left, which is covered in condensation. The label on the can is green and white, with the brand name 'Minute Maid' in a large, bold font and 'APPLE' below it. To the right of the can is a clear glass filled with yellow apple juice, with a splash of juice rising from the top. A single green apple sits next to the glass. The background is a plain, light color.

## Appendix C

### Essay 1: Study 3 Materials

#### a. Click-to-Give fundraiser campaign


CLICK-TO-GIVE

American Society for the  
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals  
(ASPCA)

Help Us Keep Our Nation's Animals Safe  
**1 click = 1 cent donation to the ASPCA**

By clicking in the center of the ASPCA logo below, you will generate a donation of 1-cent per click to the ASPCA. All proceeds will be directly donated to the ASPCA.

You will be able to click ">>" to continue in 40 seconds. However, you can stay longer on this page and keep clicking. There are **no limits** to the number of clicks. Every penny counts.

The image shows the ASPCA logo centered within a circular border composed of many small, light blue dots. The logo itself consists of the word "ASPCA" in a bold, sans-serif font, with the "P" in orange and the "A" in grey. Below the logo, the tagline "WE ARE THEIR VOICE." is written in a smaller, grey, sans-serif font.

b. Image after being clicked





## Appendix D

### Essay 1: Study 4 Materials

#### a. Benign envy condition

Imagine you work in an office building as an entry level employee. There is another entry level employee in the cubicle next to, who you've gotten to know over the last year.

Your colleague mentions to you that she was waiting to hear back from the office manager regarding a promotion she had requested. You thought to yourself that she is very deserving of a promotion. She had the most experience at her position, she exceeded all quarterly performance goals, and she demonstrated exceptional leadership initiative on her recent projects.

Now imagine that, over your lunch break, you are browsing Facebook, and notice a recent status update and post from your colleague. Please take your time and look over their post on the next page.

#### b. Malicious envy condition

Imagine you work in an office building as an entry level employee. There is another entry level employee in the cubicle next to, who you've gotten to know over the last year.

Your colleague mentions to you that she was waiting to hear back from the office manager regarding a promotion she had requested. You thought to yourself that she is not very deserving of a promotion. She did not have enough experience at her position, she had not met quarterly performance goals, and she had not demonstrated any leadership initiative on her recent projects.

Now imagine that, over your lunch break, you are browsing Facebook, and notice a recent status update and post from your colleague. Please take your time and look over their post on the next page.

c. Facebook post

 **Alex W.** is at work.  
Today at 12:10pm · 🌐

My new office!!! Got the promotion! No more cubicle life for me!



👍❤️👍 James and 24 others

👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share

View 1 more comment

 **Jake Allen** Congrats! 🎉 1  
Like · Reply · 15 mins

 **Nathalie Watts** Congratulations!!! 🎉🎉🎉 1  
Like · Reply · 8 mins

 Write a comment ...

## Appendix E

### Essay 1: Study 5 Materials



## Appendix F

### Essay 1: Study 6 Materials

#### a. Benign envy condition

Imagine you work in an office building as an entry level employee. There is another entry level employee who started some time before you in the cubicle next to you. You got to know each other a little bit and became friends.

A promotion opportunity was recently made available to both of you. You both pursued the position, but you believed that your colleague was a better fit and would have a better chance at attaining it given that she has more experience, and because of the recent successful projects she completed .

You know that any day now you will find out whether you get the promotion. Now imagine that, over your lunch break, you are browsing Facebook, and notice a recent status update and post from your colleague.

Please take your time and look over their post on the next page.

#### b. Malicious envy condition

Imagine you work in an office building as an entry level employee. There is a new entry level employee who started a couple of months ago in the cubicle next to you. You got to know each other a little bit and became friends.

A promotion opportunity was recently made available to both of you. You both pursued the position, but you believed that you were a better fit and would have a better chance at attaining it given that you have more experience, and because of the recent successful projects you completed.

You know that any day now you will find out whether you get the promotion. Now imagine that, over your lunch break, you are browsing Facebook, and notice a recent status update and post from your colleague.

Please take your time and look over their post on the next page.

## Appendix G

### Essay 1: Follow up study (Study 2)

The envy manipulation used in the follow up study was identical to the one used in study 2. The manipulation was successful and none of the participants correctly guessed the purpose of the study. Feelings of malicious envy were significantly higher for the malicious envy relative to the benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.69$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ;  $M_{\text{benign}} = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 1.91$ ;  $F(1, 141) = 16.44$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .104$ ); while feelings of benign envy were significantly higher for the benign envy relative to the malicious envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.79$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ;  $M_{\text{benign}} = 5.27$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ;  $F(1, 141) = 5.89$ ;  $p = .02$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .040$ ). Perceived undeservingness of the envied other was significantly higher in the malicious envy versus benign envy condition ( $M_{\text{malicious}} = 4.93$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ;  $M_{\text{benign}} = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 2.00$ ;  $F(1, 141) = 12.04$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .079$ ). Envy intensity did not differ between benign and malicious envy conditions ( $F(1, 141) = 2.17$ ,  $p = .14$ ), nor did negative affect ( $F(1, 141) = .51$ ,  $p = .48$ ).

#### Moral Impurity

Envy	Mean	Std. deviation
Benign	3.54	2.14
Malicious	4.48	1.54

#### Moral Self-Regard

Envy	Mean	Std. deviation
Benign	4.46	2.04
Malicious	3.57	1.54

## Appendix H

### Essay 1: Malicious and Benign Envy Measures

#### Malicious Envy (Crusius and Lange 2014)

I felt malicious envy toward the person.  
I wished that the other person would no longer have what I envied.  
I would have liked to damage what I envied.  
I would have liked to bad-mouth the achievement.  
I felt coldness toward the person I envied.  
I wished that the other person would fail at something.  
I would have liked to hurt the person.  
I had negative thoughts about the person.  
I would have liked to take what I envied away from the person.

#### Benign Envy (Crusius and Lange 2014)

I felt benign envy.  
I wanted to try harder to obtain what I envied.  
I felt inspired to also attain what I envied.  
I wished to have what I envied.  
I considered the person I envied to be likeable.  
I wanted to be like the person.  
I desired what I envied.

## Appendix I

### Essay 2: Pilot Study Materials



**Varona Cereal** is a consumer **cereal** brand that has recently been introduced into the North American market. They offer breakfast cereals that come in a variety of flavors.

**Varona Cereal** has also recently announced its partnership with **Food for the Hungry**, a hunger-relief charity.

### **CM: Effort**

**Varona Cereal** has decided to partner with **Feed the Hungry**, by contributing to their "Share a Meal" campaign.

To prompt a **donation**, customers need to:

- **Text** "I want to feed the hungry" along with a unique code found inside their cereal box, to the provided number.

For every text message received, Varona Cereal will **donate \$3.00**.

At the end of the campaign, Feed the Hungry expects to have received \$175,000.

### **CM: No effort**

**Varona Cereal** has decided to partner with **Feed the Hungry**, by contributing to their "Share A Meal" campaign.

For every cereal box sold, Varona Cereal will **donate \$3.00**.

At the end of the campaign, Feed the Hungry expects to have received \$175,000.



## Appendix J

### Essay 1: Study 1 Materials



**Varona Chocolate** is a consumer **chocolate** brand that has recently been introduced into the North American market. They offer chocolate bars that come in a variety of flavors.

**Varona Chocolate** has also recently announced its partnership with **Food for the Hungry**, a hunger-relief charity.

## CM: Effort

**Varona Chocolate** has partnered with **Food for the Hungry**, agreeing to contribute to the cause through donations on its customers' behalf.

**Varona Chocolate** will make monetary contributions to **Food for the Hungry's** "Share your Meal" campaign.

- To prompt a donation, customers need to upload a picture of one of their meals on the **Food for the Hungry** website. No purchase is required.
- For every uploaded picture, **Varona Chocolate** will donate **\$1.00**. Uploaded pictures will be displayed in a special collage on the **Food for the Hungry** website, as part of their "Share Your Meal" campaign.

At the end of the campaign, **Food for the Hungry** expects to have received **\$175,000 in donations** from **Varona Chocolate** on its customers' behalf.

## CM: No Effort

**Varona Chocolate** has partnered with **Food for the Hungry**, agreeing to contribute to the cause through donations on its customers' behalf.

**Varona Chocolate** will make monetary contributions to **Food for the Hungry's** "Share your Meal" campaign.

- No purchase is required to prompt the donations.
- A special collage will be displayed on the **Food for the Hungry** website, as part of their "Share Your Meal" campaign.

At the end of the campaign, **Food for the Hungry** expects to have received **\$175,000 in donations** from **Varona Chocolate** on its customers' behalf.

## Appendix K

### Essay 2: Study 1 Follow-up Study Materials

#### CM: No Effort

**Varona Chocolate** has partnered with **Food for the Hungry**, agreeing to contribute to the cause through donations on its customers' behalf.

**Varona Chocolate** will make monetary contributions to **Food for the Hungry's** "Share your Meal" campaign.

- No purchase is required to prompt the donations.
- A special collage will be displayed on the **Food for the Hungry** website, as part of their "Share Your Meal" campaign.

At the end of the campaign, **Food for the Hungry** expects to have received **\$175,000 in donations** from **Varona Chocolate** on its customers' behalf.

#### CM: Low Effort

**Varona Chocolate** has partnered with **Food for the Hungry**, agreeing to contribute to the cause through donations on its customers' behalf.

**Varona Chocolate** will make monetary contributions to **Food for the Hungry's** "Share your Meal" campaign.

- To prompt a donation, customers need to upload a picture of one of their meals on the **Food for the Hungry** website. No purchase is required.
- For every uploaded picture, **Varona Chocolate** will **donate \$1.00**. Uploaded pictures will be displayed in a special collage on the **Food for the Hungry** website, as part of their "Share Your Meal" campaign.

At the end of the campaign, **Food for the Hungry** expects to have received **\$175,000 in donations** from **Varona Chocolate** on its customers' behalf.

## CM: High Effort

**Varona Cereal** has partnered with **Food for the Hungry**, agreeing to contribute to the cause through donations on its customers' behalf.

**Varona Cereal** will make monetary contributions to **Food for the Hungry's** "Share your Meal" campaign.

- To prompt a donation, customers need to upload pictures of their breakfast plates on the **Food for the Hungry** website. No purchase is required.
- For every **5 pictures uploaded per customer**, **Varona Cereal** will **donate \$1.00**. Uploaded pictures will be displayed in a special collage on the **Food for the Hungry** website, as part of their "Share Your Meal" campaign.

At the end of the campaign, **Food for the Hungry** expects to have received **\$175,000 in donations** from **Varona Cereal** on its customers' behalf.

## Appendix L

### Essay 2: Study 2 Materials

#### Moral Identity Manipulation

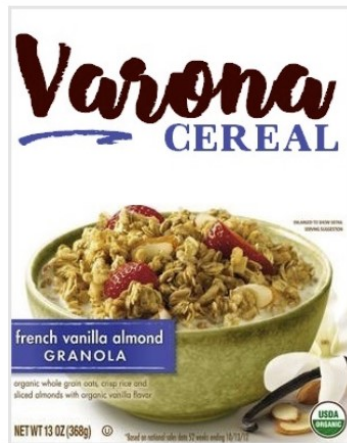
In the past year, please indicate how often you have performed each behavior below.

(1 = Never, 2 = Once, 3 = 2-4 times, 4 = 5-7 times, 5 = 8 or more times)

- Volunteer to tutor or help children catch-up with school work.
- Collect clothes and blankets to be donated to hospitals.
- Volunteer at a non-profit charity organization.
- Help organize and sort donations at a homeless shelter.
- Run an errand for an elderly neighbor.
- Help senior citizens with yard work (e.g., rake leaves, shovel snow, mow the lawn).
- Participate in the cleanup of a local river, pond, or lake.
- Prepare a home-cooked meal for the residents of a homeless shelter.
- Donate non-perishable food to a food bank.
- Donate blankets to a homeless shelter.
- Foster animals that shelters don't have space for.
- Donate used books to your local library.
- Plant a tree at a local or community park.
- Clean up a local park.
- Deliver groceries and meals to elderly neighbors.
- Teach computer skills to the elderly.
- Take care of cats and dogs at an animal shelter.
- Organize online and offline games and activities for children in hospitals.
- Read to residents at a nursing home.
- Organize or participate in a community blood drive.
- Read books or letters to a person who is visually impaired.
- Organize or participate in a car wash and donate the profits to charity.
- Help deliver meals and gifts to patients at a local hospital.
- Donate stuffed animals to children in hospitals.
- Volunteer to clean up trash at a community event.

Your overall score is 35 out of 80.

Compared to the average participant, you seem to be 72% less involved in helping others in need.



**Varona Cereal** is a consumer **cereal** brand that has recently been introduced into the North American market. They offer breakfast cereals that come in a variety of flavors.

**Varona Cereal** has announced its partnership with the **American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)**.

## CM: Direct Donation

### Varona Supports the ASPCA

Varona has decided to partner with the **American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)**, by contributing to their "We Are Their Voice" campaign.

Varona Cereal will **donate \$175,000 to the ASPCA.**



## CM: Purchase with No Effort

### Varona Supports the ASPCA

Varona has decided to partner with the **American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)**, by contributing to their "We Are Their Voice" campaign.

For every cereal box sold, Varona Cereal will **donate \$3.00.**

*At the end of the campaign, the ASPCA expects to have received \$175,000.*



## CM: Purchase with Effort

### For each product review submitted on Varona website, Varona Will Donate \$3 to the ASPCA

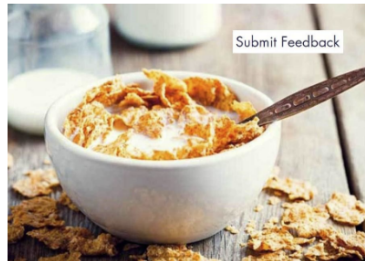
Varona has decided to partner with the **American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)**, by contributing to their "We Are Their Voice" campaign.

To prompt a **donation of \$3.00**, customers need to:

1. Visit the **link** provided ([varona.com/marketingcampaign/wearetheirvoice/](http://varona.com/marketingcampaign/wearetheirvoice/))
2. Enter the code found under their cereal boxtop.
3. Submit **customer feedback** about your thoughts on the new cereal.

*The feedback you provide will help us offer new and tasty cereal options.*

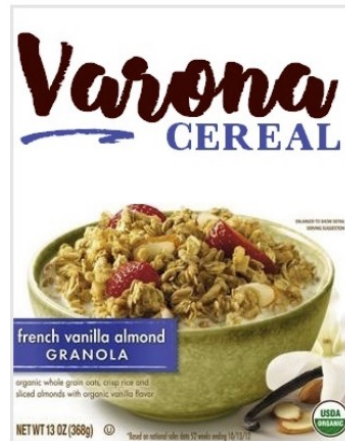
*At the end of the campaign, the ASPCA expects to have received \$175,000.*





## Appendix M

### Essay 2: Study 3 Materials



**Varona Cereal** is a consumer **cereal** brand that has recently been introduced into the North American market. They offer breakfast cereals that come in a variety of flavors.

**Varona Cereal** has announced its partnership with the **American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)**.

#### CM: Effort

### Varona Supports the ASPCA

**Varona** has decided to partner with the **American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)**, by contributing to their "We Are Their Voice" campaign.

For every cereal box sold, Varona Cereal will **donate \$3.00**.

*At the end of the campaign, the ASPCA expects to have received \$175,000.*



## CM: No Effort

### For each rating & product review submitted on Varona website, Varona Will Donate \$3 to the ASPCA

Varona has decided to partner with the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), by contributing to their "We Are Their Voice" campaign.

To prompt a **donation of \$3.00**, customers need to:

1. Visit the link provided ([varona.com/marketingcampaign/wearetheirvoice/](http://varona.com/marketingcampaign/wearetheirvoice/))
2. Enter the code found under their cereal boxtop.
3. Provide a **star rating** (1-to-5) of the new cereal.
4. Submit a **written review** reflecting your thoughts on the new cereal.

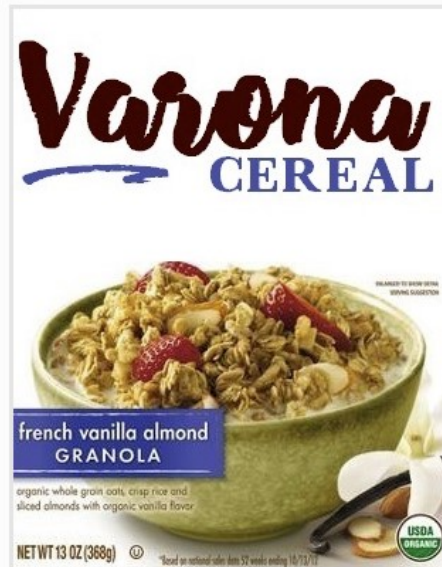
*The feedback you provide will help us offer new and tasty cereal options.*

*At the end of the campaign, the ASPCA expects to have received \$175,000.*



## Appendix N

### Essay 2: Study 4 Materials



**Varona Cereal** is a **cereal** brand that will soon be introduced into the North American market.

It will offer breakfast cereals that come in a **variety of flavors**, in order to appeal to a wide range of consumer tastes.

**Varona Cereal** has also recently announced its partnership with **Food for the Hungry**, a hunger-relief charity.

## CM: Private Effort

### "End Hunger" Campaign

**Varona Cereal** has decided to partner with **Food for the Hungry**, by contributing to their "End Hunger" campaign.

To prompt a donation, customers need to:

- Take a **picture** of their breakfast.
- Go on the **anonymous upload link** provided (<https://ctrlq1.org/endlhunger/>).
- Upload their picture, along with the code found inside their Varona Cereal box.

For every uploaded picture, Varona Cereal will **donate \$1.00**.

At the end of the campaign, Food for the Hungry expects to have received \$175,000.

## CM: Public Effort

### "Share your Meal to End Hunger" Facebook Campaign



**Varona Cereal** has decided to partner with **Food for the Hungry**, by contributing to their "Share your Meal to End Hunger" Facebook campaign.

To prompt a donation, customers need to:

- Take a **selfie** with their breakfast.
- Login to their **Facebook** account.
- Upload their picture on Facebook with the hashtag #shareyourmealtoendlhunger, along with the code found inside their Varona Cereal box.

For every uploaded picture, Varona Cereal will **donate \$1.00**.

At the end of the campaign, Food for the Hungry expects to have received \$175,000.