Religion and the Morality of Mentality

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Christian doctrine considers mental states important in judging a person's moral status, whereas Jewish doctrine considers them less important. The authors provide evidence from 3 studies that American Jews and Protestants differ in the moral import they attribute to mental states (honoring one's parents, thinking about having a sexual affair, and thinking about harming an animal). Although Protestants and Jews rated the moral status of the actions equally, Protestants rated a target person with inappropriate mental states more negatively than did Jews. These differences in moral judgment were partially mediated by Protestants' beliefs that mental states are controllable and likely to lead to action and were strongly related to agreement with general statements claiming that thoughts are morally relevant. These religious differences were not related to differences in collectivistic (interdependent) and individualistic (independent) tendencies.

I've looked on a lot of women with lust. I've committed adultery in my heart many times.—President Jimmy Carter

Assessment of other people's character is perhaps one of the most important moderators involved in interpersonal interaction. Such assessments are based on evaluations of the moral trajectories of individuals (Kupperman, 1991). The attribution of immorality in any instance is often based on actions, such that immoral activities result in a judgment of poor character. Innate moral actions often have an objective quality and, hence, play a central role in most legal systems. However, even in predominantly behavioral-based legal systems, mental states such as intentions often enter into moral judgments (e.g., the difference between murder and involuntary manslaughter in the American legal system). In spite of the fact that mental events are difficult to assess, they are seen as sufficiently important to be often incorporated into the law.

Tetlock, Kroskel, Elson, Green, and Lerner (2000) have recently produced evidence that there are certain sacred values held within a culture, such that many people will respond with moral outrage to individuals who merely think about violating these values. We propose that there is variation across people in the moral status assigned to mental events and one of the determinants of this variation is religion.

We believe that Judaism and Christianity (particularly Protestantism) differ in the moral status attributed to thoughts. Judaism teaches that people were created with an inclination to do good (yetzer tov) and an inclination to do evil (yetzer ra). Therefore, inclinations to perform immoral acts are inherent in humans, and the task of being a moral person is to overcome the temptation. There is little or no sense in Judaism that thoughts about immoral actions, for example, are equivalent to the actions themselves or are in themselves immoral. To the extent that mental states are moralized in Judaism, it is often for the view of the fact that such mental states, when excessive, might be seen as unhealthy and because they may lead to sinful behavior (Appel, 1975; Berger, 1967; A. B. Cohen, 1998; M. S. Cohen, 1990; Hoffmann, 1993; Kellner, 1978; Prager & Telushkin, 1981; Schlessinger & Vogel, 1998; Telushkin, 1991; Urbach, 1975).

We believe that another reflection of this type of Jewish attitude toward mental events is in its view of commandments that seem to prescribe or proscribe mental events or states. We first note that such commandments appear to compose a very small minority (less than 5%) of the total set of commandments (N = 613) that are

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1 When we cite particular quotations from Scripture or other sources, it is with the recognition that there are other passages from the same sources that may express different points of view and that different movements in different historical periods within a given religion may have had different views. The selections, therefore, are not intended to be interpreted as a comprehensive review but as a representation of the general tenor of the views of the two religions that is based on extensive interviews conducted with religious experts.
incumbent on Jews; two examples include a prohibition against coveting anything of one’s neighbor and a requirement to honor one’s mother and father (both from the Ten Commandments; Blackman, 1994). In addition, many of the commandments concerning mental states have been interpreted in purely behavioral ways. There are several examples of this phenomenon, but we focus on one example, the commandment to honor one’s parents (Exodus 20:12), which has been explained as follows: “What constitutes ‘honor’? One must provide them with food and drink and clothing. One should bring them home and take them out, and provide them with all their needs cheerfully” (Ginzberg, 1961, Vol 4, chapter 143, p. 1).

In contrast to this general Jewish unconcern with the moral implications of mental events or states, Christian dogma holds that mental events related to actions are in some sense equivalent to the action itself: “You have heard that it was said ‘you shall not commit adultery’, but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:27–28; New American Standard Version). Fox (1983/1989, in The Sermon on the Mount: The Key to Success in Life, said about this particular sentence, “In this unforgettable paragraph, Jesus stresses the Master Truth, so utterly fundamental, yet so unsuspected by the world at large, that what really matters is thought... a wrong thought is just as destructive an act as a wrong deed” (pp. 63–64). Fox (1983/1989) said that the “Old Law” dealt with an earlier and lower state of the race consciousness” (p. 55) and argued that Jesus came to bring humanity to the next step, which means confronting the law inwardly as well as outwardly.

We elected to make our comparisons between Jews and Protestants, as opposed to Catholics. Although Protestantism and Catholicism share reliance on the New Testament doctrine we have discussed, it is our sense that the emphasis on mental events relative to behavior is clearer in Protestantism than in Catholicism. We recognize that Protestantism covers many distinct sects, but for the purposes of these first studies on this topic, we consider them as a group.

Focus of the Current Studies

There appears to be a significant difference in the mental status of moral events in Jewish versus Protestant doctrine. This raises the interesting question of whether such a difference in doctrine is manifested in the moral judgments of Jews and Christians. In the following studies, we explore whether certain mental states have differential moral status for Jewish versus Protestant participants. We explore this in the context of three different kinds of moral values: honor toward one’s parents (Study 1), marital fidelity (Studies 2 and 4), and kindness to animals (Study 3).

We also began an investigation of whether our dogma-based hypothesis accounts directly for the differences we report between Jews and Protestants or whether there are mediating variables or other alternative accounts. In particular, we consider five alternative accounts of the purported empirical differences. We consider the possibility that the findings

1. result directly from differences in religious dogma,
2. are mediated by or independently result from a tighter linkage between thoughts and actions on the part of Protestants as compared with Jews,
3. are mediated by or independently result from a belief on the part of Protestants that thoughts are more controllable than Jews believe them to be,
4. result from the fact that Jews are linked both ethnically and religiously, whereas Protestants share only a religion or faith (Morris, 1996; Neusner, 1993), or
5. result from the possibility that Jews are more collectivistic than are Protestants, whereas Protestants are more individualistic than are Jews (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Sampson, 2000; Triandis, 1995).

Study 1

In Study 1, we compare judgments of a scenario in which an adult does not inwardly like his parents but takes good care of them with a second scenario in which the adult does not inwardly like his parents and is also behaviorally negligent in taking care of them. We predicted that in the second case, in which a moral violation is expressed in behavior, there would be no difference in moral judgments between Jews and Protestants. On the other hand, in the first case, in which the mental state is morally questionable but the behavior is not, we predicted harsher moral judgments by Protestants than by Jews.

Method

Data Collection. Participants were recruited and ran through the experiment on the Internet, as in previous research on similar topics (A. B. Cohen & Rozin, 2000; A. B. Cohen, Siegel, & Rozin, 2000). The questionnaire was put into HTML format and posted on Adam Cohen’s Web page, and then the questionnaire was advertised in religion sites on the World Wide Web and listservs for Jews and Christians at the University of Pennsylvania. This method of participant recruitment may make the samples more representative than would be the case if we had used what is perhaps the more common method of participant recruitment, introductory level psychology classes. One might object that Internet recruitment of participants is unusual and biased, but several recent studies suggest that, across a wide range of topics, experiments run on the Web yield data that are remarkably comparable to those yielded by more traditional methods (see Bailey, Fouts, & Throckmorton, 2000; Baron & Siegman, 2000; Buchanan, 2000; Krantz & Dalal, 2000). For example, Bailey et al. (2000) found that data from almost 600 college students regarding sexual behavior were comparable to data of over 7,000 Internet participants. Buchanan (2000) reviewed several studies done on the Internet showing that the psychometric properties of personality inventories were similar whether the participants were recruited through the Internet or through university samples.

Participants. Participants were 67 Jews (32 women and 35 men) and 56 Protestants (34 women and 22 men). Sex of participants did not differ by religion, χ²(1, N = 123) = 2.06, p = .15. Participants self-reported their education. We coded an elementary school education as 1, a high school education as 2, some college as 3, a college degree as 4, and a graduate degree as 5. We probed participants’ religious commitment by...
asking, "How religious or spiritual are you?" We used both religiosity and spirituality in this item because, on the basis of our interviews with religion experts, we learned that Protestants often object to being characterized as religious, as the term carries a connotation for them of being insincerely, behaviorally religious but not sincerely committed to their faith (i.e., spiritual). Other work has shown separate ratings of religiosity and spirituality to be correlated above .60 (A.B. Cohen & Rozin, 2000; see also our Study 4, in which these ratings, obtained separately, were highly correlated). We coded religiosity and spirituality ratings on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Participants were asked in an open-ended format to indicate their religion or faith, and most Jewish participants responded simply "Jewish" or "Judaism." Most Protestant participants responded simply "Protestant" or "Christian." Participants were also coded as Protestant if they indicated a Protestant denomination (e.g., Baptist or Lutheran). Given that there are no doubt meaningful differences between individuals of different denominations within any religion or faith, it is regrettable that such information is not available, and in future studies it will be important to ask participants to be more specific.

Questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this experiment explored the extent to which participants believe that honoring one's parents is a matter of a mental state or of behavior. We chose honoring one's parents because both Jewish and Protestant dogmas teach that it is important to honor one's parents, as it is one of the Ten Commandments.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. In both conditions, the scenario started by describing a person who does not inwardly like his parents:

Mr. K. is a 1992 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. K. is very involved in his church, and he says that his parents are more important to him than they are to him. He is not religious, but he says that he has come to accept his parents' views.

He is, however, not willing to challenge his parents. He says that he is not sure that he is doing the right thing, and he says that he is not sure that he is doing what his parents would want.

In the pretend condition, the scenario continued to explain that although Mr. K. does not like his parents, he behaves outwardly as though he does:

Nevertheless, Mr. K. has always made sure to behave as if he really cares about his parents. Mr. K. is sure to call and visit his parents regularly. Every year, he sends his mother flowers on her birthday and his father a box of cigars on his birthday. When his parents grow old, they know that they will not have to worry about anything because Mr. K. will take care of them.

Thirty-two Jews and 31 Protestants were in this condition.

In the sincere condition, the scenario ended by describing Mr. K. as not acting outwardly as though he likes his parents:

Because Mr. K. does not like his parents, he often times forgets to call them for a few weeks at a time or to send them gifts on their birthdays. To tell the truth, Mr. K.'s parents feel as if he is neglecting them. When his parents grow old, they do not know that Mr. K. will take care of them.

Thirty-five Jews and 26 Protestants were in this condition.

Participants expressed their agreement with all items on a scale ranging from -2 (strongly disagree) to 2 (strongly agree). There were also four items that dealt generally with honoring one's parents, but not to the specifics of the scenario, and hence we did not expect these items to differ from the scenario assignment of the participants. The four items measured the "heart" item ("When it comes to honoring your parents, it is more important to honor them in your heart than in your actions"), the "natural" item ("It's natural for some people just not to like their parents"), the "care" item ("When it comes to honoring your parents, it is more important to take care of them than it is to like them"), and the "control" item ("People can't be expected to control their feelings about their parents").

Other items were expected to vary by condition: "Mr. K. has good character," "Mr. K. honors his parents," "It isn't so bad for Mr. K. to dislike his parents so long as he treats them well" (only in the pretend condition), "It wouldn't be so bad for Mr. K. to dislike his parents if he treated them well" (only in the sincere condition)." (It is hypothetical for Mr. K. to act as if he likes his parents when he really doesn't like them" (only in the pretend condition), and "If Mr. K. does not like his parents, there is no reason why he should act as though he does" (only in the sincere condition).

Results and Discussion

The Protestants (M = 3.9, SD = 1.02) reported being more religious or spiritual than did the Jews (M = 3.0, SD = 1.4), t(120) = 4.26, p < .001, whereas the Jews (M = 3.9, SD = 1.0) were more educated than were the Protestants (M = 3.0, SD = 1.00, t(121) = 4.84, p < .001. The Jews (M = 35.2, SD = 13.0) were older than were the Protestants (M = 30.3, SD = 12.8), t(120) = 2.52, p < .01.

The four items that were not related to the specific scenario condition were analyzed across the condition. Consistent with our predictions, Jews disagreed more than did Protestants that when it comes to honoring one's parents, it is more important to honor them in your heart (see Table 1: heart). In all analyses of variance (ANOVAs) in this study, we partitioned out the effects of sex, age, education, and religiosity/spirituality on the hypothesis that these are potentially confounding variables. This difference remained marginally significant after we partitioned out the effects of age, education, and religiosity/spirituality through analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) F(1, 112) = 3.17, MSE = 2.08, p < .08. The adjusted least squares mean for the Jews was -0.9 (SEM = 0.5), and for the Protestants it was -.4 (SEM = 0.5).

Sex, religiosity/spirituality, age, and education did not have significant individual effects. In contrast, Jews agreed much more than did Protestants that when it comes to honoring one's parents, it is more important to take care of them than it is to like them (see Table 1: care). This difference remained significant after we partitioned out the effects of sex, age, education, and religiosity-

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Jewish M</th>
<th>Jewish SEM</th>
<th>Protestant M</th>
<th>Protestant SEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hear</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-0.2*</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-0.1***</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Control</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-0.4**</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-1.0***</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypercritical</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.5**</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wouldn't be so bad</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isn't so bad</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-1.0***</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Significance of difference of means was tested by two-sample t-tests. Asterisks indicate a significant Jewish-Protestant difference in the predicted direction. Significance values are two-tailed and are not corrected for multiple tests.

* p < .05, ** p < .01. ***p < .001.
spirituality, $F(1, 112) = 8.32, MSE = 1.56, p = .005$. Sex, age, education, and religiosity–spirituality did not have significant effects. These differences are consistent with our predictions about the relative importance of behavior versus mental states for Jews and Protestants.

Jews agreed more than did Protestants that it is natural for some people just to not to like their parents (Table 1: natural) and that people cannot be expected to control their feelings about their parents (see Table 1: control). Both of these differences remained significant after we controlled for sex, age, education, and religiosity–spirituality, $F(1, 112) = 5.78, MSE = 1.7, p = .02$; and $F(1, 112) = 2.79, MSE = 1.6, p = .001$, respectively. For the natural item, the adjusted least squares mean for the Jews was 0.8 ($SEM = 0.5$), and for the Protestants the mean was 0.1 ($SEM = 0.5$). On this item, sex, age, education, and religiosity–spirituality did not have significant effects. For the control item, the adjusted least squares mean for the Jews was 0.2 ($SEM = 0.5$), and for the Protestants the mean was $-0.8$ ($SEM = 0.5$). For this item, there was a significant effect of religiosity–spirituality, $F(1, 112) = 6.04, p = .02$, such that more religious–spiritual people disagreed more than did less religious–spiritual people with this item ($r = -3.2, p = .001$). These results show that Jews and Protestants differed in ratings of how natural and controllable feelings about parents are; this is the first demonstration, to our knowledge, that Jews and Protestants differ in model of mind.

There were two items that were the same in both conditions: agreement that the target person has good character, and agreement that he honors his parents. These items were analyzed through a 2 (religion: Jewish or Protestant) × 2 (condition: sincere or pretend) ANCOVA with sex, age, religiosity–spirituality, and education as covariates. For the character item, there was a significant Religion × Condition interaction (Figure 1, top). $F(1, 109) = 4.82, MSE = 1.2, p = .03$. This interaction came about because in the sincere condition, Jews and Protestants gave similar ratings. However, in the pretend condition, Jews gave higher ratings than did Protestants ($p = .05$ by Tukey’s honestly significant difference test). Moreover, although Jews in the pretend condition gave higher ratings than did Jews in the sincere condition ($p = .001$), Protestants in both conditions gave similar ratings ($p = .39$). Contained within this interaction was a significant effect of version, $F(1, 109) = 12.98, p = .001$, and a significant effect of religion, $F(1, 109) = 3.32, p = .08$. Sex, education, age, and religiosity–spirituality did not have significant effects.

A similar pattern was found for the item measuring participants’ agreement that Mr. K. honors his parents. The Religion × Condition interaction was significant (see Figure 1, bottom), $F(1, 109) = 9.54, MSE = 1.2, p = .003$. In the sincere condition, Jews and Protestants gave similar ratings. However, in the pretend condition, Jews gave higher ratings than did Protestants ($p = .001$ by Tukey’s HSD test). Contained within this interaction were significant effects both of condition, $F(1, 109) = 49.28, p = .001$, and of religion, $F(1, 109) = 15.00, p = .001$.

In the sincere condition, in which the target person did not act as though he liked his parents, both Jews and Protestants disagreed with the statement that if Mr. K. does not like his parents, then there is no reason for him to act as though he does (see Table 1: act). Also, in an ANCOVA controlling for age, education, religiosity–spirituality, and sex, religion did not have a significant effect ($F < 1$). However, in the pretend condition, Jews rated Mr. K.’s behavior as less hypocritical than did Protestants (see Table 1: hypocrite). This difference survived controls for sex, age, education, and religiosity–spirituality, $F(1, 54) = 8.21, MSE = 1.8, p = .006$. The adjusted least squares mean for the Jews was $-0.6$ ($SEM = 0.5$), and for the Protestants, it was $0.6$ ($SEM = 0.5$). Sex, age, education, and religiosity–spirituality did not have significant effects.

Similarly, in the sincere condition, Jews and Protestants agreed to a similar extent that it would not be so bad for Mr. K. to dislike his parents if he treated them well (see Table 1: wouldn’t be so bad). In an ANCOVA partitioning out the effects of sex, age, education, and religiosity–spirituality, religion did not have a significant effect ($F < 1$). However, in the pretend condition, Jews agreed more than Protestants that it is not so bad for Mr. K. to dislike his parents as long as he treats them well (see Table 1: isn’t so bad). This difference survived controls for sex, age, religiosity–spirituality, and education, $F(1, 54) = 22.55, MSE = 1.2, p = .001$. The adjusted least squares means for the Jews and Protestants were $-0.6$ ($SEM = 0.4$) and $-0.9$ ($SEM = 0.4$), respectively. Sex, age, education, and religiosity–spirituality did not have significant effects.

In all, the results of this study show that Jews and Protestants had a similar view of a target person who neither inwardly feels his parents nor outwardly acts as though he does. However, Jews had a more positive attitude toward a person who pretends as though he likes his parents, and, moreover, Jews considered this person to be
honoring his parents more than did Protestants. For all items, the pattern of results was in the predicted direction, and nearly all effects remained significant after we controlled for age, education, and spirituality—religiosity. Thus, these results show that Jews considered inner state to be less relevant than did Protestants in making moral judgments. We observed some differences in model of mind between Jews and Protestants in that Jews rated disliking one’s parents as more controllable and more natural than did Protestants.

**Study 2**

In Study 2, we explored the same issues in the context of having an affair. We further explored differences in model of mind regarding thoughts about immoral actions, used an expanded set of measurements on character judgments, and directly asked about the general moral significance of thoughts.

**Method**

**Participants.** Participants were recruited and ran through the experiment as in Study 1. Participants were 64 Jews (27 men and 37 women) and 132 Protestants (44 men and 88 women). Ratio of the sexes of participants of different religions did not differ, χ²(1, N = 196) = 2.36, p ≤ .13. Participants self-reported their education and religiosity—spirituality as in Study 1.

**Questionnaire.** The scenario we used was similar to the scenarios in Study 1 and to those used in previous research (A. B. Cohen & Rozin, 2000), and it read as follows:

> **Mr. B.** is a 1992 graduate of the College of Arts and Sciences. He graduated with a 3.6 GPA with a BA in English and a minor in Communications. Since graduation, Mr. B. has worked at an entry-level job in a marketing firm. Mr. B. married his college sweetheart six months after they both had their graduation from college. Mr. B. and his wife do not have any children. One of Mr. B’s colleagues at work is a very attractive woman. This woman sometimes flirts with Mr. B. and they both know that she would be willing to have a sexual affair with him. Sometimes, Mr. B. consciously entertains thoughts about having a sexual affair with his colleague.

There were three types of dependent variables in this study. Five items were intended to measure participants’ impression of the target person, the “character,” “sin,” “guilt reaction,” “disgust,” and “other ways” items. All items were rated on scales ranging from 1 to 5, anchored as indicated after each question. The first item measured character (“How does it affect your judgment of Mr. B’s character to know that Mr. B. consciously entertains thoughts about having a sexual affair with his colleague?”; very negatively—very positively), and the second item measured sin (“In the view of whatever religion you belong to or were raised in, how sinful or virtuous do you think Mr. B. consciously entertaining thoughts about having a sexual affair with his colleague is?”; very sinful—very virtuous).

The third item measured the extent to which participants felt that their assessments of Mr. B. ’s character relied on a guilt reaction or moral intuition (Heidt, in press; Heidt, Koller, & Dia, 1995). This item was “My gut reaction is that Mr. B. consciously entertaining thoughts about having a sexual affair with his colleague is wrong” (strongly disagree—strongly agree).

The final two items were “It is disgusting or polluting for Mr. B. to consciously entertain thoughts about having a sexual affair with his colleague” (strongly disagree—strongly agree) and “Even if Mr. B. does not have a sexual affair with his colleague, he will probably be a bad person in other ways” (strongly disagree—strongly agree).

Another type of item on the questionnaire assessed participants’ model of mind, including their perception of the likelihood that Mr. B. would act on the thoughts and how controllable the thoughts were. The logic of using such items was two-fold. First, it is possible that Jews and Protestants would differ on these items, given the result from Study 1 that Jews rated disliking one’s parents as more natural and less controllable, as compared with Protestants. Second, the link between the moral status of mental events and model of mind has not previously been explored, and such items could mediate the relationship between religion and moral status of mental events (should we be able to demonstrate any). The items were as follows: “How likely do you think Mr. B. is to have a sexual affair with his colleague?” (very unlikely—very likely) and “How much control do you think Mr. B. has over his consciously entertaining thoughts about having a sexual affair with his colleague? In other words, are his thoughts involuntary, or do they result from voluntary effort?” (completely involuntary—completely voluntary).

The last type of item on the questionnaire assessed in a general way the moral significance of consciously entertaining thoughts. We hypothesized that Jews would agree less than Protestants with these items; if so, this would suggest that differences between Jews and Protestants in moral judgments in this study are related to differences in the general moral significance of mental events. Participants responded to all of the following items on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). These items were the “feature” item (“A feature of immoral people is that they consciously entertain thoughts about doing immoral things”), the “heart” items ("Being a moral person is a matter of what is in your heart rather than what you do").

We also asked for ratings about the effect on character of actually having an affair. We did this for two reasons. First, we reasoned that it would be inappropriate to include in the analysis participants who did not think that having a sexual affair is immoral. Second, different views about the degree of offense on the part of Jews as compared with Protestants might moderate some of the findings; so it was important to show that any religion differences are not solely due to differences in judgments of the action itself. The item we used to measure this was the “action” item ("How would it affect your judgment of the character of a person to know that they actually did have a sexual affair?"; very negatively—very positively).

**Results and Discussion**

**Demographics.** The Jews (M = 2.6, SD = 1.4) and the Protestants (M = 2.8, SD = 1.2) were not significantly different in education, t(192) = 1.09, p ≤ .29. The mean age of the Jews was 25.7 years (SD = 12.7), which was slightly lower than that of the Protestants (M = 29.1, SD = 12.8), t(188) = 1.79, p ≤ .08. The Jews (M = 2.8, SD = 1.4) and Protestants (M = 3.0, SD = 1.4) were not significantly different in religiosity—spirituality, t(192) = 1.15, p ≤ .25.

**Impressions scores.** To simplify data analysis, we averaged the five impression variables (character, sin, disgust, guilt reaction, and other ways) into one impression scale (Cronbach’s α = .79), reverse scoring the appropriate items such that higher scores on the scale indicate more negative impression of the target person. Consistent with our predictions, Protestant participants had a more negative impression of the target person than did Jewish participants (Table 2: impression scale). It is important to note that Jews and Protestants did not differ significantly on how it would affect their judgments of a person’s character if that person actually had an affair (Table 3).

The Protestant sample was 69% female, and the Jewish sample was 59% female. Women have been shown to be more disturbed
Table 2
Means for Jews and Protestants on Impression Scale in Studies 2–4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale and model</th>
<th>Jewish M</th>
<th>Jewish SEM</th>
<th>Protestant M</th>
<th>Protestant SEM</th>
<th>Covariates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Impression scale</td>
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<td>None</td>
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<td>Demographics, action ratings</td>
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<td>Model 2b</td>
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<td>0.7***</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>Demographics, action ratings, likelihood ratings, controllability ratings</td>
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<td>Model 2c</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.6***</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>Demographics, action ratings, importance of thoughts scale</td>
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<td>Study 3</td>
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<td>Impression scale</td>
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<td>1.2***</td>
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<td>Model 3a</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.2***</td>
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<td>Model 3b</td>
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<td>1.1†</td>
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<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.2***</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>Demographics, action ratings, controllability ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3d</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>Demographics, action ratings, &quot;as bad as&quot; item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impression scale</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5**</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4a</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5†</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>Demographics, action ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4b</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2†</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>Demographics, action ratings, likelihood ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4c</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.1†</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>Demographics, action ratings, control ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4d</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>Demographics, action ratings, &quot;as bad as&quot; item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4e</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2†</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>Demographics, action ratings, Self-Construct Scales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data were analyzed through analysis of covariance. Asterisks indicate a significant Jewish–Protestant difference in the predicted direction. Significance values are two-tailed and are not corrected for multiple tests. Demographic variables include age, education, religiosity, sex, and the Sex × Religion interaction.

Table 3
Means for Jews and Protestants on Ratings of the Actions Being Contemplated in Studies 2–4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Jewish M</th>
<th>Jewish SEM</th>
<th>Protestant M</th>
<th>Protestant SEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-2.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-2.9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-2.6*</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Significance of difference of means was tested by two-sample z tests. Asterisks indicate a significant Jewish–Protestant difference in the predicted direction. Significance values are two-tailed and are not corrected for multiple tests. In Studies 2 and 3, lower numbers indicate a more negative impression. In Study 4, a higher number indicates a more negative impression. Thus, in all three studies, Jews had a more negative view of the actions being contemplated.

by a partner’s fantasies than are men (Yarab & Allgeier, 1998; Yarab, Allgeier, & Sensibaugh, 1999). Also, although the difference was nonsignificant, Jews rated the action of having an affair slightly worse than did the Protestants. The samples also differed somewhat in age, education, and religiosity. To investigate the effect of religion on impression scores with sex, age, education, religiosity, the Sex × Religion interaction, and action ratings partialled out, we performed a multiple regression predicting impression scale scores by religion with these possible confounds entered as covariates. The effect of religion was highly significant, \( F(1, 175) = 42.64, MSE = 1.0, p \leq .001 \) (see Table 2: Model 2a). Sex also had a significant effect in this regression, \( F(1, 175) = 4.62, p \leq .03 \), such that women (adjusted, least squares \( M = 0.5, SEM < 0.1, n = 118 \)) had a more negative impression of the target person than did men \( (M = 0.1, SEM = 0.1, n = 64) \). Religiosity also had a significant effect in this regression, \( F(1, 175) = 19.87, p \leq .001 \), in that more religious participants had a more negative impression of the target person than did less religious participants \( (r = .39, p \leq .001) \). Also, action ratings had a significant effect, \( F(1, 175) = 26.11, p \leq .001 \); because those participants who rated the action of having an affair worse also rated the target person more negatively \( (r = -0.32, p \leq .001) \). This regression model accounted for 45% of the variance in impression scale scores.

Model of mind. Jews and Protestants also differed on certain aspects of model of mind. Protestants rated the thoughts about an immoral action as more controllable and likely to be acted on than did Jews (Tables 4 and 5). Jewish–Protestant differences on the likelihood ratings, \( F(1, 182) = 5.49, MSE = 2.40, p < .02 \) (see Table 4: Model 2a) and on controllability ratings, \( F(1, 183) = 12.80, MSE = 2.69, p < .001 \) (see Table 5: Model 2a) survived controls for sex, the Sex × Religion interaction, age, education, and religiosity. Across participants, those who rated likelihood of acting on the thoughts higher had more negative
impressions of the target person \( (r = .24, p < .001) \), and those who rated the thoughts as controllable gave more negative impression ratings \( (r = .44, p < .001) \).

Jewish-Protestant differences in impression scale scores survived controls for likelihood and controllability ratings as well as sex, the Sex × Religion interaction, education, age, action ratings, and religiosity–spirituality, \( F(1, 170) = 25.46, MSE = .077, p < .001 \) (see Table 2: Model 2b), suggesting that the religiosity differences are not entirely due to differences in model of mind but that such model of mind items do partly explain the relationship between religion and moral judgment because the effect of religion was quite reduced (a change in \( F \) from 42.64 to 25.46). This model accounted for 52% of the variance in impression scale scores. The fact that this model reduced the effect of religion substantially suggests that some, but not all, of the religion effect may be mediated by differences in views of the likelihood of action and in the controllability of the thoughts. Both likelihood ratings, \( F(1, 170) = 9.87, p < .002 \), and controllability ratings, \( F(1, 170) = 21.97, p < .001 \), had significant unique contributions in this regression model. We believe these are the first data to show which aspects of model of mind relate to moral judgment of mental events. Such differences are interesting not only because of their possible role in mediating between religion and moral judgment but also because they show religious differences in model of mind.

Moral significance of thoughts. Even though they were only modestly intercorrelated \( (\alpha = .55) \), for the sake of simplicity, the three items measuring the moral significance of thoughts in general were averaged into an importance of thoughts scale. (Analyzing the data with these items individually leads to the same conclusions.) Protestants had much higher scores on this scale than did Jews (Table 6), and the difference remained after we controlled for age, religiosity, sex, the Sex × Religion interaction, and education, \( F(1, 183) = 26.51, MSE = .330, p < .001 \) (Table 6: Model 2a). Religious participants scored higher than did nonreligious participants \( (r = .29, p < .001) \). There was still a significant effect of religion on impression scores after we partialed out the effect of this scale as well as the effects of sex, religiosity, age, education, and action ratings, \( F(1, 177) = 11.08, MSE = .91, p < .001 \) (Table 2: Model 2c).

Study 3

In Studies 1 and 2, we show meaningful and interesting differences between Jewish and Protestant participants in accordance with our hypotheses. In this study, we explore whether such differences are evident in the context of a third moral domain, cruelty to animals.

Method

Data collection. Data were collected in the same manner as in Studies 1 and 2.

Participants. Participants were 83 Jews (44 women and 39 men) and 110 Protestants (64 women and 46 men) recruited and run through the experiment on the Internet. Sex did not vary between the samples. \( \chi^2(1, N = 193) = 0.51, p > .47 \). As in Studies 1 and 2, participants self-reported their level of religiosity–spirituality and education, and responses were transformed into ordinal scales.

Questionnaire. The scenario used was similar to that used in Study 2 and was as follows:

Mr. B. is a senior at the College of Arts and Sciences. One of his courses is a seminar in marketing strategy. Mr. B. asked his professor for permission to turn in his final paper late because of his heavy course load. But his professor did not give him permission, although it was within his right to do so. Mr. B. was not able to get his paper finished on time, and his grade on the paper was changed from an A to a C. Mr. B. is angry at his professor because of this. Every day on the way to school, Mr. B. passes by this professor’s house and sees the professor’s dog in the yard. His professor has brought up his dog many times in class, and everyone knows that the professor loves the dog very much. One day Mr. B. realized that it would be easy to give the dog a treat with poison in it, and no one would ever know that he did it. Sometimes, Mr. B. consciously entertains thoughts about poisoning his professor’s dog.

Dependent measures were similar to those in Study 2, but we replaced the three moral significance items with an “as bad as” item, which asked

| Item and model | Jewish | | Protestant | | | Covariates |
|----------------|--------|----------|------------|----------|-----------------|
| Study 2        |        |          |            |          |                 |
| Likelihood item| -0.3   | 0.2      | 0.4**      | 0.1      | None            |
| Model 2a       | -0.4   | 0.2      | 0.4*       | 0.2      | Demographics    |
| Study 3        |        |          |            |          |                 |
| Likelihood item| -1.6   | 0.2      | -0.5**     | 0.2      | None            |
| Model 3a       | -1.5   | 0.2      | -0.6**     | 0.2      | Demographics    |
| Study 4        |        |          |            |          |                 |
| Likelihood item| 0.0    | 0.5      | 1.7**      | 0.4      | None            |
| Model 4a       | 0.0    | 0.5      | 1.2*       | 1.5      | Demographics    |

Note. Data were analyzed through analysis of covariance. Asterisks indicate a significant Jewish-Protestant difference in the predicted direction. Significance values are two-tailed and are not corrected for multiple tests. Demographic variables include age, education, religiosity, sex, and the Sex × Religion interaction.

\( * p < .10 \), \( ** p < .05 \), \( *** p < .01 \).
Table 6
Means for Jews and Protestants on Moral Significance of Thoughts Ratings in Studies 2–4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item/scale and model</th>
<th>Jewish M</th>
<th>Jewish SEM</th>
<th>Protestant M</th>
<th>Protestant SEM</th>
<th>Covariates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of thoughts scale</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.6***</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2a</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.7***</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>Demographics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“As bad as” item</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0***</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3a</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.0***</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>Demographics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“As bad as” item</td>
<td>-4.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-0.9***</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4a</td>
<td>-6.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.7***</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Demographics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data were analyzed through analysis of covariance. Asterisks indicate a significant Jewish-Protestant difference in the predicted direction. Significance values are two-tailed and are not corrected for multiple tests. Demographic variables include age, education, religiosity, sex, and the Sex × Religion interaction. In Studies 2 and 3, ratings were made on a -3 to 3 scale. In Study 4, ratings were made on a -7 to 7 scale. *** p ≤ .001.

Results and Discussion

In this study, we used a data analysis strategy similar to the one we used in Study 2, and the results of this study are similar. The data are reported in parallel to those of Study 2 in Tables 2 and 3.

Demographics. Protestants (M = 3.1, SD = 1.3) in this study were significantly more religious or spiritual than were the Jews (M = 2.8, SD = 1.4), t(92) = 1.53, p ≤ .13. The mean ages of the Protestants (M = 29.8, SD = 11.5) and the Jews (M = 29.1, SD = 13.1) were not significantly different, t(191) = 0.44, p ≤ .65. The Jews (M = 3.5, SD = 0.9) were more educated than were the Protestants (M = 3.0, SD = 1.0), t(188) = 3.46, p ≤ .001.

Impressions scores. As in Study 2, we averaged five items (character, sin, disgust, got reaction, and other ways) into a single negative impressions scale (Cronbach’s α = .76). Jews had a lower negative impression of the target person, as compared with Protestants (Table 2), even though Jews rated the action worse than did the Protestants (Table 3).

We explored whether the Jewish-Protestant differences in impression scale scores survived controls for potentially confounding factors, including religiosity-spirituality, age, education, sex, and action ratings; the effect of religiosity was highly significant, F(1, 173) = 12.70, MSE = 1.10, p ≤ .001 (Table 2: Model 3a). Sex, age, religiosity, the Sex × Religion interaction, and education did not have effects in this regression. Action ratings did have effects, F(1, 173) = 6.30, p ≤ .01, such that participants who rated the action worse had a somewhat lower impression of the target person (r = -0.13, p ≤ .08). In this regression there was a significant effect of action ratings, F(1, 173) = 4.40, p ≤ .04. Eleven percent of the variance in impression scores was accounted for by these variables.

Model of mind. Protestant participants rated the thoughts more likely to be acted on and somewhat more controllable than did Jewish participants (see Tables 4 and 5). Jewish-Protestant differences in likelihood ratings, as in Study 2, survived controls for sex, religion, the Religion × Sex interaction, age, education, and religiosity-spirituality, F(1, 175) = 15.89, MSE = 2.11, p ≤ .001 (Table 4: Model 3a). As the difference between Jews and Protestants in ratings of controllability was not significant, we did not similarly explore this issue for controllability ratings in this study.

As in Study 2, we explored whether differences in these aspects of model of mind mediated between the effects of religion and impression scores. Across participants, those who rated the thoughts more likely to be acted on gave higher negative impression scale scores (r = .44, p ≤ .001), and a similar pattern was evident for the item measuring control (r = .32, p ≤ .001). In this study, controlling for likelihood ratings in addition to sex, religion, the Sex × Religion interaction, age, education, action ratings, and religiosity-spirituality left a significant effect of likelihood ratings on impressions scores, F(1, 170) = 33.50, MSE = 0.91, p ≤ .001. The effect of religion in this regression was reduced to marginal significance, F(1, 170) = 3.36, p ≤ .07 (Table 2: Model 3b).

We also investigated whether controllability accounted for some of the relationship between religion and impressions. We tested this by adding into the above-mentioned regression the control ratings and investigating whether the effect of religion was still significant. Although the explanatory power of the model was increased from 11% to 22% of the variance and although control ratings did have a significant effect, F(1, 172) = 23.29, MSE = 0.98, p ≤ .001, the effect of religion was still highly significant, F(1, 172) = 13.72, p ≤ .001 (Table 2: Model 3c).

This pattern of results suggests that differences between Jews and Protestants in likelihood of action ratings, but not controllability ratings, may mediate the relationship between religion and moral judgment.

Moral significance of thoughts. Protestants and Jews differed significantly in the predicted direction on the new "as bad as" item that measured participants' agreement that consciously entertaining thoughts about doing something immoral is as bad as doing it (Table 6). This difference remained after we controlled for age.
education, religiosity, sex, and the Sex × Religion interaction, \( F(1, 119) = 42.56, \text{MSE} = 3.30, p \leq .001 \) (Table 6: Model 3a).

Agreement with this item seems to explain Jewish-Protestant differences in impressions scores, as when we predicted impression scores from religion, religiosity-spirituality, age, education, sex, action, and the item measuring whether thinking about something immoral is as bad as doing it, the only significant effects were those of the action item, \( F(1, 113) = 4.30, \text{MSE} = 0.95, p \leq .04 \), and the "as bad as" item, \( F(1, 113) = 23.70, p \leq .001 \). The effect of religion was not significant \( (F \leq 1; \text{Table 2: Model 3d}) \).

**Study 4**

There are many possible explanations for Jewish-Protestant differences in the morality of mentality. First of all, Protestants might consider the actions themselves to be more morally important than do Jews. For example, Protestants might consider having a sexual affair to be more immoral than do Jews, so it would not be surprising if they also considered the thoughts to be more immoral. However, in our studies, Jews and Protestants did not appear to differ in their estimation of the effect performing an immoral action has on a person's moral worth. In fact, there appeared to be a tendency for the Jews to rate the actions as more immoral than did the Protestants, whereas Protestants rated the thoughts as more immoral than did the Jews.

A second hypothesis for differences in the morality of mentality between Jews and Protestants could be that Protestants consider thoughts about immoral actions to be likely to be acted on, whereas Jews do not. Although Protestants did rate thoughts about having an affair and about harming an animal to be more likely to be acted on than did Jews, controlling for such likelihood ratings reduced but did not eliminate the differences in moral judgment. Similar results were obtained in terms of the controllability of such thoughts. Although Protestants considered thoughts about immoral actions to be more controllable or voluntary than did Jews, such differences do not seem to account fully for the differences in moral judgment.

One explanation for differences in the moral status of thoughts that has received empirical support is that there are differences in religious dogma between Judaism and Protestantism. Religious differences in impressions of people who are entertaining thoughts about immoral actions are greatly reduced when one controls for agreement with statements like "Consciously entertaining thoughts about doing something immoral is as bad as doing it"; this lends support to the hypothesis that Jewish-Protestant differences in moral judgment may be related to this difference in religious dogma.

However, there are other explanations for this phenomenon as well. One possibility is related to the method of participant solicitation used in the present studies: Participants were mainly recruited through religion-related news groups. This method may have induced reactance on the part of the participants; at the very least, it probably made religion salient. Of course, this explanation cannot explain the directions of the differences we observed, but it may be responsible for an exaggeration of such differences. Nevertheless, it would be useful to establish the generalizability of the demonstrated differences.

Another explanation for religious differences in the morality of mentality could be that Judaism stresses interdependent-collectivistic self-construals to a greater extent than does Protestantism. An element of this argument might be that Jews share both a religious community and an ethnic group (Morris, 1996; Neusner, 1993), whereas Protestants do not share an ethnic link.

Perhaps related to the previous point, it has recently been argued that in the philosophy of Talmudic Judaism, "one cannot truly be a person apart from being in dialogue with others" (Sampson, 2000, p. 1428). In contrast, "Protestant Christianity has emphasized the individual's personal relationship to God, responsibility for salvation, and autonomy" (p. 1427). In fact, Sampson argued, "it seems highly unlikely that the kind of individualism so familiar today could have taken shape or have been so successfully sustained without this underlying Christian religious system" (p. 1427). In interdependent cultures, there are norms to behave properly and to fit in, regardless of one's internal state. In individualistic cultures, there are norms to express oneself, further, in independent cultures, individual's internal characteristics are salient (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). One such internal characteristic could very well be one's thoughts or intentions. Norenzayan, Choi, and Nisbett (1999) discussed a similar issue in the context of a discussion on East-West differences in perceptions of causality. They stated that "dispositional thinking could be part of a theory of mind based on a 'belief-desire' psychology, which consists of understanding the behavior of other people as the product of the joint action of beliefs and desires" (pp. 261-262). A similar process could be going on with respect to Jews and Protestants. Perhaps the Protestants in our studies had less of a tendency than did the Jews to be situationalist in their attributional styles and were thus showing more of a belief-desire psychology.

As individualism-collectivism relates to differences in such a tendency across cultures, one way to investigate this issue would be to explore whether differences in the moral status of thoughts could be related to differences in individualism and collectivism. Although independent-individualistic and interdependent-collectivistic self-construals are most often studied in a cross-cultural context, there is significant variation in individualism and collectivism across different geographic regions in the United States (Vandello & Cohen, 1999), and it is very reasonable, given the arguments of Sampson (2000) and of Norenzayan et al. (1999), to assume that differences in individualism-collectivism could account for our findings. This study examined this explanation in two stages: first, by examining whether the Jews and Protestants differed in self-construals, and second, by examining whether any such observed difference could explain the differences in the morality of mentality.

Yet another explanation for religious differences in the morality of mentality could be that Jews and Protestants have different interpretations of what it means to consciously entertain thoughts about an immoral action. If, for example, Protestants interpret such a phrase to mean consciously planning out and intending to do an action, whereas Jews interpret it to mean a velicity, it would be no wonder that Protestants attach more moral significance to the thoughts. The current findings that Protestants rate thoughts as more likely to lead to immoral actions than do Jews is consistent with this interpretation.

Study 4 was designed to address these potential explanations for the differences we have observed in the moral status of consciously entertained thoughts between Jews and Protestants. In this study we clarify the meaning of consciously entertained thoughts.
explore the relationship of individualism-collectivism to differences in moral judgment between Jews and Protestants that are based on consciously entertained thoughts about having a sexual affair, and attempt to make religious less salient to the participants by using college students as participants.

**Method**

**Participants.** Participants in this study were undergraduate psychology majors at two large universities: the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Michigan. Forty-seven Jews (31 women and 16 men) and 51 Protestants (34 women and 17 men) participated in the study. The questionnaire was computer administered. Participants were entered into a drawing in which 2 randomly selected participants each received $50 for participating.

Participants were asked to be specific regarding their religious denominations. Of the Jews, 10 were Orthodox or Traditional Jews, 13 were Conservative, 14 were Reform and 10 did not specify a denomination. Of the Protestants, 20 did not specify a denomination. 11 were Methodist, 5 were Baptist, 4 were Presbyterian, and 4 were Lutheran. The rest of the Protestant participants came from other denominations that were not well-represented.

Participants self-rated their level of religious commitment in two ways, rating religiosity and spirituality separately on the same scale as in previous studies (not at all-extremely). Religiosity and spirituality ratings were very highly correlated (r = .78), so these ratings were averaged into a religiosity scale. Jews (M = 2.9, SD = 1.4) were more religious than were the Jews (M = 2.2, SD = 1.4). (96) r = .28, p = .005.

**Questionnaire.** The questionnaire in this study was based on the one used in Studies 2 and 3. The scenario we used is as follows:

Mr. B. is a 1992 graduate of the University. He graduated with a 3.6 GPA with a BA in English and a minor in Communications. Since graduation, Mr. B. has worked at an entry-level job in a marketing firm. Mr. B. married his high school sweetheart six months after they both had graduated from college. Mr. B. and his wife do not have any children. One of Mr. B.'s colleagues at work is a very attractive woman. This woman sometimes flirts with Mr. B. and they both know that she would like to have a sexual affair with him. For an average of about 20 minutes a day, Mr. B. consciously entertains thoughts about having a sexual affair with his colleague by thinking about what they would have an affair and what it would be like to have an affair with her.

As in Studies 2 and 3, the participants' impressions of the target person were probed with several items. We dropped the item as, so not as to prime religion. All ratings were made on scales ranging from −7 to 7; the scale anchors are in parentheses following each item. These items were combined as form an impression-action scale in such a way that higher scores indicated a more negative impression of the target person (α = .85).

The items we used are as follows: "How does it affect your judgment of Mr. B.'s character to know that he consciously entertains thoughts about having a sexual affair with his colleague?" (extremely negatively—extremely positively; reverse scored); "Mr. B. is a bad person" (completely disagree—completely agree); "My gut reaction is that Mr. B. is a bad person" (completely disagree—completely agree); "My gut reaction is that Mr. B. is a bad person" (completely disagree—completely agree); and "Even if Mr. B. does not have a sexual affair with his colleague, he will probably be a bad person in other ways" (completely disagree—completely agree).

We included two items that probed participants' views of actually having a sexual affair to ensure that any differences between Jews and Protestants in impressions of Mr. B. would not be due to differential moral status of the action of having an affair. These two items correlated highly (r = .52, p = .001), so we combined them into an impression-action scale. These two items were as follows: "How would it affect your judgment of a person's character to know that they actually did have a sexual affair?" (extremely negatively—extremely positively; reverse scored), and "If Mr. B. were to actually have an affair with his colleague, that would make him a bad person" (completely disagree—completely agree).

A second aim of this study is to explore the relationships among individualism, collectivism, and moral judgment for thoughts. We also measured the participants' self-construals as independent—individualistic or interdependent—collectivistic using Singelis's (1994) widely used Self-Construal Scale. An example of an item from the Independent subscale is "I'd rather say 'No' directly, than risk being misunderstood." An example of an item from the Interdependent subscale is "If my brother or sister breaks the law, I feel responsible." Participants expressed their agreement or disagreement with these items on a scale ranging from −3 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree).

In Study 3, agreement with a statement that consciously entertaining thoughts about doing something immoral is as bad as doing it accrued for Jewish-Protestant differences in impressions of a person who was thinking about poisoning a professor's dog in retaliation for a low grade. This suggests that differences in Jewish dogma, as compared with Protestant dogma, explain the Jewish-Protestant difference in impressions of a person who is thinking about immoral actions. The same item, the "as bad as" item, was included in this study, and participants expressed their agreement on a scale ranging from −7 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree) scale. We also asked participants to rate the likelihood that Mr. B. would have an affair on a scale ranging from −7 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (very likely).

**Results and Discussion**

Replication of previous findings. Protestants did have a more negative impression of Mr. B. for thinking about having an affair (Table 2). Also, as in the prior study, Protestants and Jews did not differ significantly in their perception of the moral importance of actually having an affair; however, the Jews actually had a slightly higher score than the Protestants, indicating a more negative impression of having an affair (Table 3).

The Jewish-Protestant difference on the impressions-thoughts scale was significant and only slightly smaller after we controlled for sex, the Religion × Sex interaction, religiosity, age, education, and the impressions-actions scale, F(1, 85) = 4.98, MSE = 3.75, p = .03 (Table 2: Model 4a). These results indicate that Jewish-Protestant differences in moral impressions of consciously entertaining thoughts about having an affair are not due to different interpretations on the part of Jews and Protestants regarding what it means to consciously entertain thoughts about having an affair.

**Model of Mind.** As in Study 2, Protestants rated the target person more likely to act on his thoughts (Table 4). The effect of religion on likelihood ratings was nearly significant when we controlled for impressions-actions scores, sex, the Sex × Religion interaction, age, education, and religiosity—spirituality, F(1, 85) = 3.25, MSE = 9.09, p = .08 (Table 4: Model 4a). Controlling for likelihood ratings in addition to sex, the Religion × Sex interaction, age, education, religiosity—spirituality, and impressions—actions ratings somewhat reduced the effect of religion on impressions, F(1, 81) = 2.85, MSE = 3.48, p = .10 (Table 2: Model 4b). We consider this to indicate that differences in likelihood ratings are a partial account of the religious differences.

As in Study 2, Protestants rated the thoughts as somewhat more controllable than did Jews (Table 5: control). Controlling for age, education, religiosity, sex, and the Sex × Religion interaction still left a marginal effect of religion on controllability ratings, F(1, 87) = 3.16, MSE = 10.52, p = .08 (Table 5: Model 4a). Predicting
impressions—thoughts scores from religion, sex, the Religion × Sex interaction, age, education, religiosity, impressions—actions, and control ratings showed that the effect of religion was slightly reduced relative to when we did not partial out the effect of control ratings. \(F(1, 83) = 2.76, \text{MSE} = 3.33, p = .10\) (Table 2: Model 4c). Taken together, these findings regarding model of mind suggest that likelihood and controllability ratings differences between Jews and Protestants are a partial account of the differences in impressions.

**Religious dogma.** In Studies 2 and 3, we provided some evidence that Jewish—Protestant differences in impressions were related to differences in religious dogma—specifically, that Protestantism teaches that thinking about an immortal action is bad as doing it. This interpretation is also supported in Study 4. Jews disagreed with this item more than did Protestants (Table 6). Jewish—Protestant differences in agreement with this item persisted after we controlled for sex, the Sex × Religion interaction, age, education, and religiosity, \(F(1, 88) = 9.71, \text{MSE} = 11.87, p = .002\) (Table 6: Model 4a). Religious participants agreed with this item more than did nonreligious participants across religions (\(r = .43, p = .001\)). Controlling for this item in an ANCOVA along with the effects of sex, the Sex × Religion interaction, age, education, religiosity, and impressions—actions scores reduced the effect of religion on impressions—thoughts scores dramatically. \(F(1, 83) = 0.80, \text{MSE} = 3.56, p = .37\) (Table 2: Model 4d).

**Self-construal.** Next, we explored whether Jewish—Protestant differences were likely to be due to differences in independent or interdependent self-construals. Jews and Protestants had similar scores on both the scale for independent self-construal (Jews: \(M = 1.0, \text{SEM} = 0.1\); Protestants: \(M = 0.9, \text{SEM} = 0.1\)) and the scale for interdependent self-construal (Jews: \(M = 0.5, \text{SEM} = 0.1\); Protestants: \(M = 0.7, \text{SEM} = 0.1\)). Impressions—thoughts scores were not significantly correlated with independent scale scores (\(r = -.14, p = .25\)). However, interdependence scale scores were strongly correlated with impressions—thoughts scores (\(r = .43, p = .001\)), indicating that participants with highly interdependent self-construals had more negative impressions of the target person because of his thoughts. Controlling for both independent and interdependent self-construal scale scores reduced but did not eliminate the effect of religion on impressions—thoughts scores while controlling also for age, education, the Religion × Sex interaction, religiosity, and impressions—actions, \(F(1, 72) = 4.14, \text{MSE} = 3.43, p = .05\) (Table 2: Model 4e).

The fact that higher levels of interdependence were associated with more moral opprobrium based on thoughts is opposite from the direction we predicted. One possibility is that ethnic group may be confused with religion in this sample. For example, Christian Asians might be expected both to be moralizing of mental states by virtue of their religion and to have an interdependent self-construal owing to their ethnic heritage. To address this concern, we limited data analysis to the 40 Jews and 28 Protestants who reported their ethnic identity as White, European, or European American. These subsamples of Jews and Protestants had very similar independent self-construal (Jews: \(M = 1.0, \text{SD} = 0.7\); Protestants: \(M = 0.9, \text{SD} = 0.6\)) and interdependent self-construal scores (Jews: \(M = 0.6, \text{SD} = 0.8\); Protestants: \(M = 0.5, \text{SD} = 0.6\)). Jews (\(M = -8.0, \text{SD} = 2.41\)) had marginally less negative impressions—thoughts scale scores than did Protestants (\(M = 0.2, \text{SD} = 2.0\)), \(r(66) = 1.73, p = .09\). The impressions—thoughts scale was still not significantly correlated with the independent self-construal scale (\(r = -0.13, p = .32\)), and the interdependent self-construal scale was still significantly correlated with impressions—thoughts scale (\(r = .40, p = .002\)).

**Summary.** The results of this study are important for several reasons. First, they replicate the effects of Studies 1–3 among college student participants, and this method of recruitment should have ensured that religion was much less salient than in Studies 1–3. Second, the results suggest that Jewish—Protestant differences in the morality of mentality do not seem to be due to differences between Jews and Protestants in their construal of what it means to be consciously entertaining thoughts. Third, the current results bolster the account that Jewish—Protestant differences in the morality of mentality are due to differences in religious dogma. Fourth, they show that the differences do not appear to be explained by differences in self-construals between Jews and Protestants.

**General Discussion**

**Religion and the Morality of Mentality: Findings, Possible Mediators, and Alternative Accounts**

We hypothesized that Protestants would be more swayed by inappropriate mental states or events than would Jews when making moral judgments in these studies. In Study 1, Jewish participants were less condemning of a person who did not inwardly like his parents although he acted as though he did, relative to Protestants. In Studies 2–4, Jews were less morally condemning of a person who was consciously entertaining thoughts about two different kinds of immoral actions. Thus, the general claim of this article is strongly supported in all four studies.

One reasonable interpretation of the current set of findings is simply that Jews are not interested in mental states of any kind (relative to behavior and relative to Protestants). We do not believe this is the best interpretation, however. We know of no reason in Jewish law to predict a lack of interest in mental states, and it is certainly not our impression that Jews are uninterested in mental states. Another hypothesis is that Jews do not see moral import in negative mental states in particular. In other studies, Jews and Protestants have been shown to give the same amount of high moral credit for thinking about virtuous actions, including giving charity and donating bone marrow (A. B. Cohen, 2001). Therefore, the Jewish view of mental states is probably not that they are irrelevant, but Jews may use mental states as a way of being charitable in making interpersonal judgments—giving credit for positive mental states and not harshly judging negative mental states. Protestants, on the other hand, may see themselves as being holist in their moral judgments, taking into account both behavior and mental states. These conclusions are naturally preliminary and should be followed up in future research.

One alternative account for the current findings might be that Jews have a more lenient view toward the moral status of the actions associated with honoring one’s parents, or having an affair, and of poisoning a dog. However, there is no reason to make that hypothesis from differences in religious dogma. More compelling are our findings that Jews and Protestants in Study 1 had similar, negative views of a person who neither inwardly liked his parents nor acted as though he did; in Studies 2–4, Jews rated the actions
being contemplated as more negative than did Protestants, significantly so in Study 3.

A second possibility that might explain the differences observed is that Protestants might consider thoughts about immoral actions as more likely to lead to the immoral action (in Studies 2–4). Protestants rated the thoughts in Studies 2–4 as more likely to be acted on than did Jewish participants. However, controlling for likelihood does not eliminate the effect of religion on impressions of the target person.

Another explanation for differences between Jews and Protestants in the morality of mentality has to do with the controllability of the thoughts. In Study 1, Protestants rated feelings about one’s parents as more controllable than did Jews, and in Studies 2–4, Protestants rated thoughts about immoral actions as more controllable than did Jews (nonsignificantly in Study 3). However, controlling for such ratings only slightly reduces the effect of religion on impressions.

One reasonable account that does not seem to explain religious differences in the morality of mentality is differences in independent–individualistic or interdependent–collectivistic self-construal. Jews and Protestants did not differ on these scales, and controlling for these scales did not explain the effect of religion on impressions of the target person in Study 4.

We started out by hypothesizing that differences in Jewish and Protestant dogmata concerning the moral status of consciously entertained thoughts would result in Protestants being more morally condemning of such thoughts than are Jews, and the fact that Protestants agreed more than did Jews in Studies 2–4 with items measuring the moral status of consciously entertained thoughts (e.g., “Consciously entertaining thoughts about doing something immoral is as bad as doing it”) bolsters this account. In Studies 3 and 4, controlling for agreement with such an item virtually eliminated the effect of religion on impression ratings.

One serious alternative account of the data is not addressed in these studies. This account has to do with the fact that being Jewish is both a claim about a religious status and a claim to membership in an ethnic group. By contrast, being a Protestant has little to do with ethnic status (Morris, 1996). We believe it is possible that such differences may be associated with a focus on inner states on the part of Protestants and a focus on observable characteristics (e.g., behavior) on the part of Jews, a point of view that is addressed in a recent article exploring how Jews and Protestants make judgments about religiosity (A. B. Cohen et al., 2000). This article showed that Jews consider religious practice to be more important than religious belief in being a good Jew, whereas Protestants consider religious belief to be more important than religious practice in being a good Christian. Furthermore, for Jews, religious practice is a significant predictor of people’s self-rated religiosity, whereas belief makes no further independent contribution to religiosity; in contrast, for Christians, both religious practice and religious belief significantly and independently predict self-rated religiosity.

Differences in the moralization of mental states may be associated with whether membership in the religion is descent based or assent based. In other words, whether one is legally Jewish is a matter of one’s parentage, or descent (Morris, 1996). This is a readily observable condition; hence, Jews may be biased toward attending to what is external or observable (i.e., behavior) in making their moral judgments. In contrast, being a Protestant is a matter of belief; one is a Christian if one accepts in one’s heart the belief structure of a Protestant faith. Studies are currently underway in our laboratory (A. B. Cohen, Mohsen, & Rozin, 2001) to investigate this hypothesis using Judaism and Hinduism as examples of descent religions, and Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism as assent religions.

Morality of Mentality and Other Cultures

In Studies 2–4, it could be argued that the kinds of moral violations being contemplated—having a sexual affair or poisoning a dog—are moral violations in the sense that they harm others, violate justice concerns, and violate others’ rights (or, if you will, not only the professor’s rights but the dog’s rights), although it is conceivable that other concerns could come into play. Violations of such concerns, which Shweder, Mueh, Mahapatra, and Park (1997) broadly referred to as falling under the ethic of autonomy, are the principal reasons for invoking moral judgment in Western cultures, in which individualism is the ideal.

In other cultures, particularly in Hindu India, there are other kinds of actions that are considered moral violations and that would not elicit moral judgment in Western, individualistic cultures. Violations of the ethics of community and of divinity are also moralized in India. The ethic of community relies on concepts such as duty, hierarchy, and interdependency, and its aim is to protect the integrity of the society. Study 1, which focuses on the inward and outward honoring of one’s parents, is related to this ethic. However, no study in this article focuses on the ethic of divinity, which is focused on maintaining a sacred, natural order; tradition; and purity and avoiding pollution and sin (Shweder et al., 1997). Given that different kinds of actions have different moral weights across cultures, it would be valuable to investigate what kinds of mental events, related to what kinds of actions, have moral status across cultures. For instance, in Hindu India, do thoughts or temptations regarding potentially polluting actions, such as eating food that is impure, have moral status? This question is particularly interesting because both Hinduism and Judaism are particularly concerned with issues of purity and pollution and with maintaining a sacred world order.

There may also be interesting intragroup differences concerning what types of mental events are moralized. Jensen (1998) has shown that the divinity code may be more related to fundamentalism than to religion, in that orthodox Hindus and conservative Baptists are more similar to each other on this dimension than they are to less religious members of their own religions. Progressive people in both cultures tend to reason about moral issues in terms of the ethic of autonomy, whereas fundamentalist people in both cultures reason in terms of divinity.

Model of Mind

In Study 1, Jews rated it more natural than did Protestants for people to dislike their parents, and Jews also agreed more than did

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1 Islam should provide an especially interesting case. Although Islam is an assent religion, it is also primarily concerned with religious practice and issues of community, as opposed to religious belief. It has been argued that the five basic devotional–ritual duties, the Pillars of Islam, are a good example of this orthopraxic character (Denny, 1993).
Protestants that people cannot be expected to control their feelings about their parents. In Studies 2 and 3, Protestants rated thoughts about different kinds of immoral actions as more controllable and likely to be acted on, though these differences do not wholly account for the Jewish-Protestant differences in impressions. Furthermore, in Study 4, when what it means to consciously entertain thoughts about having an affair was clarified to entertaining thoughts about when and how Mr. B. would have an affair with his colleague for about 20 min per day, Jews and Protestants still differed in moral judgment of the thoughts. This is relevant to the discussion of model of mind because in Studies 2 and 3, one might think that Protestants interpreted consciously entertaining thoughts to mean something akin to intention and as something likely to result in action, whereas Jews may have interpreted consciously entertaining thoughts to mean something close to a fleeting thought.

We believe these are the first findings to show religious differences in model of mind, although some cultural differences in model of mind have been shown (D'Andrade, 1987; Lillard, 1997; Lutz, 1985; Parish, 1991). These may also be the first findings to show which aspects of model of mind relate to moral judgment concerning mental events. Data from Studies 2-4 suggest that differences between Jews and Protestants in ratings of the likelihood that thoughts will be acted on and of the controllability of the thoughts may partially mediate the differences in moral judgment. The relationships among religion, moral judgment, and model of mind should be explored in future studies.

Model of mind differences between members of different religions may have clinical implications. Wegner and Erber (1993) proposed that people who feel that their religions or social mores prohibit sexual thoughts may, ironically, be at risk for developing sexual obsessions, given the paradoxical effects of attempted thought suppression (e.g., Wegner, 1990; Wegner, Schneider, Carter, & White, 1987). Wegner and Erber (1993) noted that, in their autobiographies, both Jimmy Swaggart (1977) and Jim Bakker (1976) claimed to hold religious convictions to resist unclean thoughts. Abramowitz, Huppern, Cohen, Cahill, and Tolin (in press) have recently begun to explore religious differences in the tendency to worry about morality, including immoral thoughts, in the context of an instrument called the Penn Inventory of Scrupulosity, and the data are suggestive that Jews in the normal population show a lower frequency of concern about such moral scrupulosity than do Protestants and Catholics.

General Conclusions

Past research on religion and values has tended to focus on the relationships between religiosity and values and has demonstrated that across various religions, people who are more religious have more conservative values (e.g., Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 1996; Schwartz & Huismans, 1995). The current set of studies show interesting and meaningful differences between adherents of different religions in moral judgment. Jews and Protestants were shown to rate the moral importance of various mental events and states in accordance with how their religious doctrines seem to dictate they should. We report direct evidence from the general beliefs about the moral status of thoughts that ideology acts directly on judgments. We also identify Jewish-Protestant differences in model of mind (likelihood of thoughts leading to action and the controllability of thoughts) that appear to influence moral judgment of thoughts but do not completely explain the basic Jewish-Protestant effect. Although they are suggestive, the current data do not settle the issue on the source of the religion differences in model of mind.

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