Moral Judgments of Outgroup Cultural Use

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Mosley, A. J., & Solomon, L. H. (2026). Moral judgments of outgroup cultural use. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *32*, 82-95. doi: 10.1037/cdp0000721

This publication was made possible through the support of grants #61080 and #61808 from the John Templeton Foundation and NSF CAREER grant #2044360, all awarded to the second author. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation or the National Science Foundation. The authors thank the members of the Columbia Social and Moral Cognition Lab for their feedback on this project.

Abstract

Objectives. Outgroup cultural use elicits controversy, including about whether it is immoral. The objective of the current work was to ask how laypeople morally evaluate individuals who adopt elements of outgroup culture for their own use and to probe a psychological mechanism underlying these evaluations.

Methods. In three studies, participants provided moral evaluations of actors who engaged in outgroup versus ingroup cultural use. In Study 2, participants additionally rated how harmful each actor's behavior was; in Study 3, participants learned whether or not each behavior caused harm.

Results. Study 1 demonstrated the basic effect that participants rated actors who engaged in outgroup cultural use as less moral than actors who did not. Two pre-registered follow-up studies highlighted the role of perceived harm in these moral judgments, as greater perceptions of harm led to harsher moral judgments of actors who used outgroup cultural elements among both Black and White perceivers.

Conclusions. By integrating work on intergroup relations and moral psychology, the current research suggests that some forms of outgroup cultural use may signal a moral shortcoming for high-status actors and is among the first to illuminate the cognitive processes driving these moral judgments.

Public Significance

Dominant group members (e.g., White Americans) sometimes use elements of outgroup culture to benefit themselves (e.g., selling cultural artifacts from groups to which they do not belong). Such behaviors elicit controversy about whether or not they are moral. The current work shows that Black and White participants evaluate such acts of outgroup cultural use as immoral because they perceive them as harmful.

Keywords: intergroup relations, morality, outgroup cultural use, social cognition

Moral Judgments of Outgroup Cultural Use

A White hairstylist opens a beauty shop specializing in dreadlock extensions. A White chef receives acclaim for his soul food restaurant. How do people evaluate such actions? Moral psychology provides insight into how people evaluate inter*personal* behaviors, i.e., one individual taking resources from or giving resources to another (e.g., Hirschfeld-Kroen et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2021; Payir & Heiphetz, 2022; Shaw et al., 2012; Yudkin et al., 2019). However, work on adults' moral cognition has largely eschewed group-based transgressions. Meanwhile, work on adults' intergroup relations rarely draws connections to moral psychology (for exceptions, see Leach et al., 2007; Mosley & Solomon, in press; Simpson & Rios, 2017; Starck et al., 2021). However, many immoral actions are group-based (e.g., Chen et al., in press; Danbold et al., 2022; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Jones, 1997; Spruill & Lewis, 2022). The current work explored judgments of outgroup cultural use through the lenses of moral psychology and intergroup relations to determine whether participants view such use as morally wrong and, if so, why. Thus, the present studies advanced the science of morality and intergroup relations while strengthening bridges between psychology and related disciplines, such as philosophy.

The Importance of Studying Moral Evaluations of Outgroup Cultural Use

The term "outgroup cultural use" refers to adopting, imitating, or possessing cultural elements from an outgroup or "source community" (Scafidi, 2005; Ziff & Rao, 1997). Scholars have categorized such use according to power differentials between the actor and source community, including cultural exploitation (dominant actor taking from low-status source community), cultural dominance (low-status actor taking from high-status source community), cultural exchange (actor taking from equal status source community), and transculturation

(cultural product created from at least two equal-status source communities). While cultural exchange and transculturation occur among people and groups with approximately equal social power, cultural exploitation and cultural dominance imply unequal power relationships, and social psychologists have primarily investigated these acts due to their implications for intergroup relations (Mosley & Biernat, 2021; Mosley et al., 2023, in press). Following this tradition, the current work focused on perceptions of White actors using elements of Black culture. Such use—which prior scholars have considered to be cultural appropriation, or one group's inappropriate use of symbols or practices that hold value for a different group (Lenard & Ballint, 2020)—is pervasive (Jackson, 2019). However, prior work has not focused on experimentally probing the perceived moral status of actors who engage in outgroup cultural use or investigating psychological mechanisms underlying these evaluations. Addressing these topics makes three main contributions.

First, much work on outgroup cultural use currently resides outside of psychology. This scholarship has made conceptual arguments about whether such use is morally wrong (Buescher & Ono, 1996; Matthes, 2016, 2019; Ono & Buescher, 2001; Riley & Carpenter, 2016; Rogers, 2006; Scafidi, 2005; Ziff & Rao, 1997). The current work contributes an empirical perspective to this question by probing how people view outgroup cultural use and testing a cognitive mechanism underlying their perceptions.

Second, the present studies advance work on intergroup relations by asking how participants evaluate outgroup cultural use. Despite dominant group members' optimism about intergroup relations (Kraus et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2013), work on intergroup relations documents continuing outgroup prejudice and support for group-based hierarchies (e.g., Marshburn et al., 2017; Remedios & Snyder, 2015; Swencionis et al., 2021). We ask whether or

not this negativity extends to people who use cultural elements from a group to which they do not belong. Further, by drawing on theorizing from moral psychology regarding the importance of perceived harm to moral judgments, the current work investigates a cognitive mechanism rooted in moral cognition that may underlie evaluations of people who engage in outgroup cultural use. Without integrating work on morality and intergroup bias, it would not be possible to fully understand *why* people evaluate outgroup cultural use in the ways they do.

Third, the current research advances work in moral psychology by probing the extent to which participants view outgroup cultural use as morally wrong. Currently, most studies in moral psychology focus on the interpersonal level of analysis (Hester & Gray, 2020; Mosley & Heiphetz, 2021). However, humans exist in groups, and many morally relevant behaviors occur in intergroup contexts (e.g., Chen et al., in press; Danbold et al., 2022; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Jones, 1997; Spruill & Lewis, 2022). Investigating moral cognition at the intergroup level therefore allows moral psychology to speak to a broader array of human experiences.

To make these contributions, we adopt perspectives from intergroup relations and moral psychology to test two competing hypotheses regarding people's views of outgroup cultural use. On the one hand, the *virtue hypothesis* suggests that perceivers evaluate actors who engage in outgroup cultural use as more morally virtuous than actors who do not, as perceivers may view such use as producing societal benefit. On the other hand, the *immorality hypothesis* suggests that actors who engage in outgroup cultural use elicit negative moral evaluations, as perceivers may believe that such behaviors cause intergroup harm. The present work is rooted in a desire to disentangle these hypotheses, and we did not begin this research with directional predictions. Therefore, below, we lay out reasons for making each hypothesis. However, because earlier studies informed later ones, our theorizing about possible mechanisms stemmed from the effects

we observed in Study 1. Therefore, our writing about this part of the research is based on our knowledge of the directional effects we had already observed.

Perceptions of Outgroup Cultural Use as Virtuous

In an era of increased globalization, scholars have argued that some acts of outgroup cultural use have positive benefits for society, which may underlie perceptions of such use as moral. Intellectual property scholar Susan Scafidi (2005) notes that, if executed correctly, outgroup cultural use can lead to mutually beneficial exchanges and create new opportunities for members of the community that originally developed specific cultural objects and traditions (i.e., the source community). She argues that respectfully engaging in outgroup cultural practices may send messages of outgroup open-mindedness, cross-cultural expression, and aesthetic appreciation of outgroup cultural products.

Similarly, in his "cultural handicap hypothesis," philosopher James Young (2005, 2010) argues that many forms of outgroup cultural use can produce societal benefits such as successful artistic works. He uses examples such as Picasso and the Beatles to conclude that it is not the ownership of the content but rather the artists' experience and familiarity with techniques that determines the aesthetic value of the product. He also argues that an outsider's perspective can add value to the cultural product by opening the economic market for such products and generating interest in the source community's culture. In later work, Young (2021) argues that outgroup cultural use can pay homage to source communities and therefore speaks to the actor's positive intentions. These accounts suggest that outgroup cultural use can serve as a way to appreciate multicultural perspectives, create aesthetic value, and move towards an integrated society.

Laypeople may also view outgroup cultural use favorably in some circumstances. For instance, participants report relatively favorable moral evaluations of White people who exert effort to learn about Black culture, versus White people who put in little effort to learn about this topic (Mosley & Solomon, in press). If participants perceive outgroup cultural use as an attempt to learn about a culture that differs from the actor's own, they may evaluate such use positively. Additionally, putting time and effort into learning about a group's history and culture may signal respect for the source community, appreciation for their norms and customs, and psychological investment in community members, thus garnering positive moral evaluations from perceivers (Opara et al., 2019). Indeed, Black participants may view outgroup cultural use relatively favorably when they perceive such use to be respectfully done by members of a group that is similar to themselves (Kirby et al., 2023).

Participants may also view outgroup cultural use as virtuous if they think that such use improves intergroup relations. In fact, enacting outgroup cultural practices can sometimes reduce prejudice towards source communities by facilitating social connectedness and sparking outgroup interest. For instance, when White American participants designed a music video for a Mexican band with a Mexican American peer, they showed less implicit bias against Latinos and expressed greater interest in interacting with Mexican Americans up to six months later (Brannon & Walton, 2013). The authors argued that freely participating in a multi-cultural activity allowed people to express, share, and interact with outgroup members, which could have intergroup benefits.

Laypeople may share this view, in which case they may also perceive outgroup cultural use positively. However, Brannon and Walton's (2013) work did not consider the social judgments of Mexican perceivers—i.e., members of the source community. Thus, it is possible

that dominant group members hold a more favorable view of outgroup cultural use than members of source communities. This difference may be especially likely to occur if actors who engage in outgroup cultural use belong to groups that are higher in social status than source communities, as source communities are particularly vulnerable in this case. For instance, when observing a White chef receiving money and prestige from operating a well-known soul food restaurant, White observers may focus on benefits to an ingroup member and potentially to themselves (if they like to eat at this restaurant). In contrast, Black observers may consider the greater difficulties Black, versus White, individuals experience in obtaining loans to start a business (and for other purposes, such as purchasing a home; McGhee, 2021; Nopper, 2011) and receiving recognition for their work, including within the restaurant industry (Williams, 2019; Wong, 2020). Thus, the perceivers' and actors' group membership may moderate moral evaluations of outgroup cultural use, with White participants being especially likely to view White actors' outgroup cultural use as virtuous.

Perceptions of Outgroup Cultural Use as Immoral

As discussed above, some scholarship and social discourse suggests that people may evaluate outgroup cultural use as virtuous. However, others contend that people evaluate the adoption of others' cultural artifacts and practices as immoral. In a climate of increasing awareness about unequal race relations and pervasive systematic racism (Leach & Allen, 2017; Richeson, 2018; Rogers et al., 2021), people may view outgroup cultural use as a broader reflection of ongoing historical legacies of colonialism, chattel slavery, and cultural genocide, where White Americans profited from the appropriation, commodification, and erasure of Black and Indigenous culture and resources (Etoke, 2022; Hartman, 2022; Riley & Carpenter, 2016). For instance, although Black participants perceive outgroup cultural use more favorably when

they perceive the group engaging in this use to be similar to—rather than different from—themselves, overall they showed relatively negative evaluations of outgroup cultural use compared with control behaviors (Kirby et al., 2023). Likewise, given people's ability to detect prototypical forms of prejudice (Inman & Baron, 1996; O'Brien et al., 2008; Rodin et al., 1990), White participants may view outgroup cultural use as immoral if they perceive such use to indicate prejudice.

Similarly, philosophers have highlighted the morally objectionable status of outgroup cultural use due to its harmful consequences for marginalized communities (Riley & Carpenter, 2016; Scafidi, 2005; Ziff & Rao, 1997). To this end, philosopher Erich H. Matthes (2016, 2019) argues that people judge acts of outgroup cultural use as immoral because such acts perpetuate intergroup oppression. He offers the example of White Australian rapper Iggy Azalea, who appropriates the image of Black women for financial gain in a context where Black women are derogated for the same features. Matthes further discusses how in this case, and similar cases of minstrel shows and Blackface, dominant group members use outgroup members' culture to disparage and humiliate those outgroups while demonstrating their own group's superiority. Relatedly, others have argued that outgroup cultural use facilitates racial oppression because it reinforces negative racial stereotypes (Riley & Carpenter, 2016) and erroneously depicts the source community (Ziff & Rao, 1997). Studies supporting this perspective show that exposure to mascots such as Chief Wahoo increases negative stereotyping against Indigenous Americans (Kim-Prieto et al., 2010), providing further evidence of the negative consequences outgroup cultural use may engender.

Many philosophical debates about the perceived morality of outgroup cultural use have centered around cultural exploitation, when dominant group members take on elements of

minoritized source communities. For example, Buescher and Ono (1996) describe Disney's *Pocahontas* as a film that exploits the narrative of Native American spirituality for the consumption and profit of a White audience. The authors assert that by depicting a White colonialist character as a benevolent protagonist who rescues a young Indigenous woman, this narrative denies Native Americans' histories and experiences while benefitting the image and esteem of the dominant group. These arguments also assert that people may be particularly likely to view outgroup cultural use as immoral because such use directs valued resources (e.g., collective autonomy, esteem, monetized and symbolic compensation) away from source community members to the dominant group, thus implicating cultural theft (Ono & Buescher, 2001; Rogers, 2006; Scafidi, 2005).

As discussed in the section above, high- and low-status group members experience outgroup cultural use differently (Finkelstein & Rios, 2022; Mosley & Biernat, 2021; Mosley et al., 2023), which may lead low-status group members to hold particularly negative moral evaluations of these acts. For example, Indian participants primed to think of their country as low- (versus high-) status evaluated Westerners who consume traditional Indian clothing less positively (Finkelstein & Rios, 2022). Further, Native (but not White) American high school students who see stereotypical images of Native American mascots—images that are designed to benefit the dominant culture—report lower self-esteem and community self-worth (Fryberg et al., 2008). Similarly, Black, but not White, Americans who view scenarios of White actors adopting Black culture evaluate such acts as more appropriative, intentional, harmful, and needing to be confronted compared to scenarios depicting Black actors using White culture (Mosley & Biernat, 2021). Due to their marginalized sociopolitical position and lower endorsement of colorblind ideologies (the belief that race does not matter; Nelson et al., 2013;

Mosley et al., 2023), low-status group members may experience outgroup cultural use more negatively than do high-status group members, particularly when high-status group members take elements of low-status cultures for their own use. Black Americans are particularly likely to cite White actors' culturally appropriative acts as a common theme that contributes to racial oppression and harms collective Black power at the intergroup level (Twali et al., 2023). As a result, Black participants may hold more negative views of White actors' outgroup cultural use than would White participants, and Black participants may report particularly negative responses to White actors who adopt elements of Black culture as compared with Black actors who adopt elements of White culture. The current work tested these possibilities.

Perceptions of Harm

If outgroup cultural use is akin to cultural thievery (Ziff & Rao, 1997), as the immorality hypothesis suggests—and if people judge actors who steal from others as immoral (Reeder & Spores, 1983)—then people may also judge actors who use elements of outgroup culture as immoral. Further, judgments of harm are highly correlated with perceptions of outgroup cultural use (Mosley & Biernat, 2021; Mosley et al., 2023, in press). Because individuals perceive harmful acts as immoral (Heiphetz & Young, 2014; Miller & Cushman, 2013), they may also perceive actors who cause harm when using elements of outgroup culture as immoral. Thus, in addition to probing participants' moral judgments of outgroup cultural use, we tested the extent to which they perceived such actions as harmful.

Moral psychology identifies a key mechanism underlying perceptions of immorality that the intergroup literature has largely ignored—that such evaluations constitute a key component of person impression more broadly (Brambilla & Leach, 2014) and that a key driver of such perceptions is views of how much harm someone's behavior causes (Heiphetz & Young, 2014;

Miller & Cushman, 2013). Harm and immorality are not synonymous; people do not necessarily perceive harmful behaviors as morally wrong when they are accidental (e.g., Cushman, 2015; Young & Saxe, 2008), target anti-social actors (Hamlin et al., 2011), or achieve socially acceptable goals (Royzman & Borislow, 2022). Nevertheless, moral psychology has identified harm as an important component of perceptions of immorality (e.g., Gray et al., 2012); even people who disagree about other aspects of morality typically agree that harming others is generally wrong (e.g., Graham et al., 2009). Thus, the current work integrates perspectives from intergroup relations and moral psychology to probe the role that perceptions of harm play in judgments of outgroup cultural use. If the immorality hypothesis is correct, then judgments of harm may underlie participants' judgments of cultural appropriation as morally wrong. However, if the virtue hypothesis is correct, judgments of harm would not be expected to underlie perceptions of cultural appropriation, because people typically perceive harmful behaviors as morally wrong rather than virtuous (Heiphetz & Young, 2014; Miller & Cushman, 2013).

While moral psychology contributes an important perspective to the current research by highlighting perceptions of harm as an important component underlying moral judgments of outgroup cultural use, past work in moral psychology has typically focused on evaluations of inter*personal* harms, such as one person giving to or taking from another, without regard to those people's group membership or the cultural relevance of the behaviors in question (Hirschfeld-Kroen et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2021; Payir & Heiphetz, 2022; Shaw et al., 2012; Yudkin et al., 2019). As noted above, however, many morally relevant behaviors occur in inter*group* contexts. Past work on intergroup relations has typically investigated evaluations rooted in character traits such as warmth and competence (e.g., Fiske et al., 2007; Kunst et al., 2022). Given the importance of morality for person perception (Brambilla & Leach, 2014; Goodwin et al., 2014),

the current research extends previous work on social cognition in intergroup contexts by examining moral evaluations to better understand intergroup relations.

Overview of Present Research

Three studies asked how White and Black United States residents evaluate actors who engage in outgroup cultural use. Initially, we tested two competing predictions regarding the link between outgroup cultural use and moral evaluations. On the one hand, individuals could perceive outgroup cultural use as virtuous because of the perceived positive benefits that it can bring to society, the actor, and the community that originally developed a particular cultural object or tradition. On the other hand, individuals could perceive outgroup cultural use as immoral because of the implications of racial oppression and resulting intergroup exploitation. After establishing which hypothesis received more support from our data, we probed a potential mechanism underlying evaluations of outgroup cultural use.

In addition to asking whether participants, overall, evaluate outgroup cultural use as virtuous or immoral, we explored whether participants' racial group membership might moderate whichever effect we observed. By testing how Black and White participants respond to outgroup cultural use enacted by Black and White actors, we contributed to the diversity of psychological science, which has relied on largely White samples to date (Roberts et al., 2020).

Study 1

As an initial step, Study 1 explored Black and White participants' perceptions of outgroup cultural use. Because perceptions of such use may depend on the relative group status of the source community and the person using elements of that community's culture (Mosley & Biernat, 2021; Mosley et al., 2023), we also varied the race of actors engaged in cultural use.

Method

Participants

We determined sample size based on an a priori power analysis using G*Power. In this and all subsequent studies, we collected all data prior to analyzing responses. Here and in subsequent studies, demographic data included participant race, gender, and age (three social categories that are particularly important for social cognition, Fiske, 1998; Messick & Mackie, 1989) but did not include socio-economic status. As we were unsure what effect size to expect, we conservatively assumed a small effect (partial η^2=.15) with other standard parameters (α=.05, 80% power). We estimated a desired sample size of 731 participants and obtained data from 933 respondents in anticipation of needing to exclude some responses. From this total sample, we excluded seven respondents for self-identifying as members of a non-recruited racial group (neither Black nor White) during the demographics portion of the study, 19 respondents due to duplicate IP addresses (maintaining their first response), 45 respondents for failing an attention check, and two respondents for reporting confusion with materials. An additional 206 respondents began the study but did not complete it (e.g., indicated consent to participate but did not answer experimental items). Analyses included the remaining 654 participants. Based on a sensitivity test in G*Power, this sample size provided 80% power to detect an interaction effect of Cultural Use, Actor Race, and Participant Race on moral evaluations of 0.11 or greater.

The 654 participants ranged from 18 to 79 years old (*M*=34.82 years, *SD*=12.67 years). Participants self-identified as White-American (51%) or Black-American (49%) and as female (52%), male (46%), or non-binary (2%); <1% of participants did not report gender. All materials and procedures described below and in subsequent studies were approved by the last author's university IRB. In this and all subsequent studies, participants provided informed consent by clicking a button on an online consent form. Here and in subsequent studies, we report all

measures, manipulations, and exclusions.

Design and Procedures

This study adopted a 2 (Cultural Use: Outgroup vs. Ingroup) x 2 (Actor Race: Black vs. White) x 2 (Participant Race: Black vs. White) between-subjects design. Participants learned that the purpose of the study was to "understand how people think about different scenarios." They then evaluated three counterbalanced images depicting actors engaging with cultural elements of music, hairstyle, or literature. Participants were randomly assigned to read about three Black actors or three White actors. Based on random assignment, these actors engaged in outgroup (experimental condition) or ingroup (control condition) cultural use. For instance, participants read about a White stylist selling dreadlocked extensions (White actor/outgroup cultural use, n=165), a White stylist selling blonde pin-straight hair extensions (White actor/ingroup cultural use, n=165), a Black stylist selling pin-straight hair extensions (Black actor/outgroup cultural use, n=169), or a Black stylist selling dreadlocked extensions (Black actor/ingroup cultural use, n=155). Scenarios were adapted from previous research (Mosley & Biernat, 2021) and are available in supplementary materials.

After reading each scenario, participants indicated their moral judgments with three counterbalanced items using scales ranging from 1 (most immoral) to 7 (most moral). One example item read, "How would you evaluate this person's moral character?"; see Supplementary Materials for whole scale. For analyses below, we averaged these three items across the three scenarios for White and Black actors. Reliabilities (αs) ranged from .91 to .94 across the four conditions (White actor/outgroup cultural use, White actor/ingroup cultural use, Black actor/outgroup cultural use, Black actor/ingroup cultural use). Following this measure, participants responded to an item assessing subjective perceptions of cultural appropriation using

a three-item scale adapted from Mosley and Biernat (2021). A sample item read, "This person is appropriating Black/White culture" (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree); see Supplementary Materials for whole scale. This measure was not central to the questions probed in the current manuscript and will not be discussed further. Participants ended this and all subsequent studies with a demographic questionnaire and a debriefing that included instructions for how to receive compensation.

Results

Below, we report analyses including all three vignettes used in the study, as originally planned. However, one vignette described an actor winning an award for performing music associated with his ingroup or outgroup. This vignette was potentially problematic (e.g., because actual controversy has not focused on White rappers winning awards from Black Entertainment Television, as our vignette described). Therefore, the supplementary materials report analyses for all studies excluding this vignette. These analyses reflect patterns similar to those reported below.

We analyzed moral judgments using a 2 (Cultural Use: Outgroup vs. Ingroup) x 2 (Actor Race: Black vs. White) x 2 (Participant Race: Black vs. White) between-subjects ANOVA (Figure 1). Each main effect reached significance: (1) Cultural Use, F (1, 646)=10.21, p=.001, partial η^2=.02, indicating that participants delivered harsher moral judgments, on average, when responding to actors who engaged in outgroup versus ingroup cultural use (providing evidence for the *immorality hypothesis*); (2) Actor Race, F (1, 646)=35.59, p<.001, partial η^2=.05, indicating that participants delivered harsher moral judgments, on average, when responding to White versus Black actors; (3) Participant Race, F (1, 646)=11.02, p<.001, partial η^2=.02, indicating that White participants delivered harsher moral judgments, on average, than did Black

participants. None of the two-way interactions reached significance (Cultural Use x Actor Race: F (1, 646)=3.59, p=.059, partial η^2=.006; Cultural Use x Participant Race: F (1, 646)=1.56, p=.212, partial η^2=.002; Actor Race x Participant Race: F (1, 646)=0.50, p=.823, partial η^2<001). However, the main effects were qualified by a Cultural Use x Actor Race x Participant Race interaction, F (1, 646)=6.34, p=.012, partial η^2=.01.

To further probe this three-way interaction, we compared moral judgments of actors who engaged in outgroup versus ingroup cultural use separately among Black and White participants evaluating Black and White actors. This analysis included four comparisons; therefore, p-values needed to be .013 or lower to pass the Bonferroni-corrected significance threshold. Black participants judged White actors more harshly when those actors engaged in outgroup, versus ingroup, cultural use, F (1, 162)=15.76, p<.001, partial η^2=.09. No other pairwise comparisons reached significance, ps≥.144.

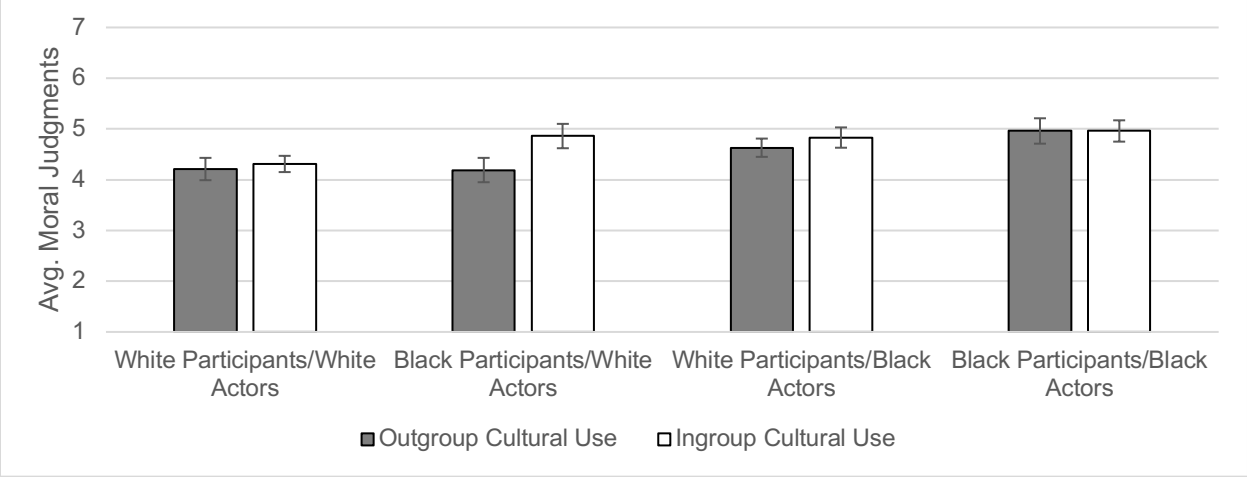

Figure 1. Perpetrator Race x Participant Race x Cultural Use interaction on moral judgments, Study 1. Higher bars indicate more positive moral judgments. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Discussion

The main goal of Study 1 was to explore how participants evaluated actors who engaged in outgroup, versus ingroup, cultural use. Adding nuance to this broad question, we further probed the extent to which participants' moral judgments varied depending on their own and the actor's racial group membership.

Of main relevance to the competing hypotheses tested in the current work, Study 1 provided support for the *immorality* hypothesis by showing that on average, collapsed across participant race and actor race, individuals evaluated outgroup cultural use as morally worse than ingroup cultural use. Additionally, Study 1 provided support for moderation based on the participant's and actor's racial group membership. Specifically, Black participants perceived White actors as less virtuous when they engaged in outgroup, rather than ingroup, cultural use. This result may reflect the role that social status plays in perceptions of cultural use. Low-status (Black) participants may be particularly attuned to the harms that outgroup cultural use brings to source communities and therefore evaluate such use as less moral compared with White participants. Further, because low-status (e.g., Black) communities are more vulnerable to exploitation than are high-status (e.g., White) communities (Jackson, 2019; McGhee, 2021; Ziff & Rao, 1997), Black participants may hold particularly negative views of outgroup cultural use that can harm Black people (e.g., White people appropriating elements of Black culture). Study 2 sought to determine whether Study 1's effects were replicable and to test the role of perceived harm in participants' moral judgments more directly.

Study 2

In Study 1, participants—particularly Black participants evaluating White actors—judged actors more harshly when those actors engaged in outgroup, versus ingroup, cultural use. Study 2 sought to determine whether this effect would replicate in a new sample and, if so, why it might

emerge. Specifically, Study 2 investigated the extent to which perceptions of harm underlie moral judgments of actors engaged in outgroup cultural use, as perceptions of harm are central to moral judgments (Heiphetz & Young, 2014; Miller & Cushman, 2013).

Method

Participants

We determined sample size based on an a priori power analysis using G*Power software. Assuming a small effect size (β=.14; the absolute value of the average beta weight of the effect of cultural use on moral judgments demonstrated in Study 1 across participant race), α=.05, and 80% power, we estimated a desired sample size of 808 participants after taking into account participant exclusions. We used Prolific.com to recruit 812 United States residents; an additional 265 respondents opened the survey but did not complete it. A pre-screening survey allowed us to recruit Black and White participants, and we excluded four respondents for later identifying as a different race during the demographics portion of the study. We also excluded four additional respondents due to duplicate IP addresses (maintaining their first response). Analyses included the remaining 804 participants. Based on a sensitivity power analysis in G*Power, this sample size provided 80% power to detect an interaction effect of Cultural Use and Participant Race on moral evaluations of 0.10 or greater.

The 804 participants ranged from 18 to 90 years old (M=35.96 years, SD=12.21 years). Participants self-identified as White-American (50%) or Black-American (50%), and as female (47%), male (51%), or non-binary (2%); <1% did not report gender. In this and subsequent studies, we verified that respondents had not completed prior studies to ensure sample independence.

Design and Procedures

We pre-registered the research design and analyses at https://aspredicted.org/JPM_R77. Our pre-registration described the main goals of the study in terms of questions stemming from Study 1 that suggested directionality based on the results from that study ("We will test whether participants exhibit harsher moral judgment of vignettes depicting cultural appropriation vs. control vignettes and whether perceptions of harm mediate this relationship. We will also investigate whether this model applies differently to Black vs. White participants"). To be consistent with Study 1 and to apply conservative thresholds—thus helping us to avoid Type I error—we continued to use two-tailed tests and apply Bonferroni corrections, here and in Study 3.

Study 2 adopted a 2 (Cultural Use: Outgroup vs. Ingroup) x 2 (Participant Race: Black vs. White) between-subjects design. In this case, participants only evaluated descriptions of White actors. By reducing the number of conditions, we simplified the design and increased the power of our analyses. We focused on White rather than Black actors because people perceive the prototypical act of outgroup cultural use as enacted by a White person (Mosley & Biernat, 2021). Additionally, the strongest effects found in Study 1 emerged for White actors; therefore, focusing on this condition allowed us to explain more variance.

Using the stimuli from Study 1, participants evaluated three counterbalanced images depicting scenarios of White actors engaging with cultural elements of music, hairstyle, and literature. After viewing each image, participants indicated their *perceptions of harm* (mediator variable; Mosley & Biernat, 2021) using three items including, "This person's behavior caused harm to others" (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree; see Supplementary Materials for whole scale). These items had acceptable reliability (αs=.94 for both the ingroup and outgroup conditions). After rating harm for all scenarios, participants reported moral judgments for the

same scenarios using the three-item scale from Study 1. Again, these items had acceptable reliabilities (αs=.94 for the outgroup condition and .96 for the ingroup condition).

Results

First, to determine whether Study 1's results replicated in a new sample, we analyzed moral judgments using a 2 (Cultural Use: Outgroup vs. Ingroup) x 2 (Participant Race: Black vs. White) between-subjects ANOVA (Figure 2). This analysis revealed patterns similar to those that emerged in Study 1. We observed a main effect of Cultural Use, F (1, 800)=27.39, p<.001, partial η^2=.03, indicating that participants delivered harsher moral judgments, on average, when responding to actors who engaged in outgroup, versus ingroup, cultural use (supporting the *immorality hypothesis*). We also observed a main effect of Participant Race, F (1, 800)=14.62, p<.001, partial η^2=.02, indicating that White participants delivered harsher moral judgments, on average, than did Black participants.

The Participant Race x Cultural Use interaction did not reach significance, p=.76, partial η^2<.001. The fact that the interaction effect was not significant differed from the patterns observed in Study 1. This difference across studies appears to derive from the fact that in Study 1, Black participants evaluated White actors who engaged in outgroup cultural use more negatively than White actors who engaged in ingroup cultural use, whereas White participants did not distinguish between these actors. However, in Study 2, both Black participants (t(403)=3.27, p=.001, Cohen's d=.33) and White participants (t(397)=4.21, p<.001, Cohen's d=.42) evaluated White actors more negatively when they engaged in outgroup, versus ingroup, cultural use. White participants' responses in Study 2 may have reflected a genuine belief that it is less moral for White actors to engage in outgroup, versus ingroup, cultural use. Alternatively, if White participants perceived a condemnation of White actors' outgroup cultural use as socially

desirable, their responses may have reflected a desire to conform to this norm (see also Smalarz et al., 2023). Regardless, while Black participants' negativity toward White individuals who engaged in outgroup cultural use emerged reliably across both studies, White participants' evaluations of these actors were less stable, indicating a need to interpret results among this group with caution.

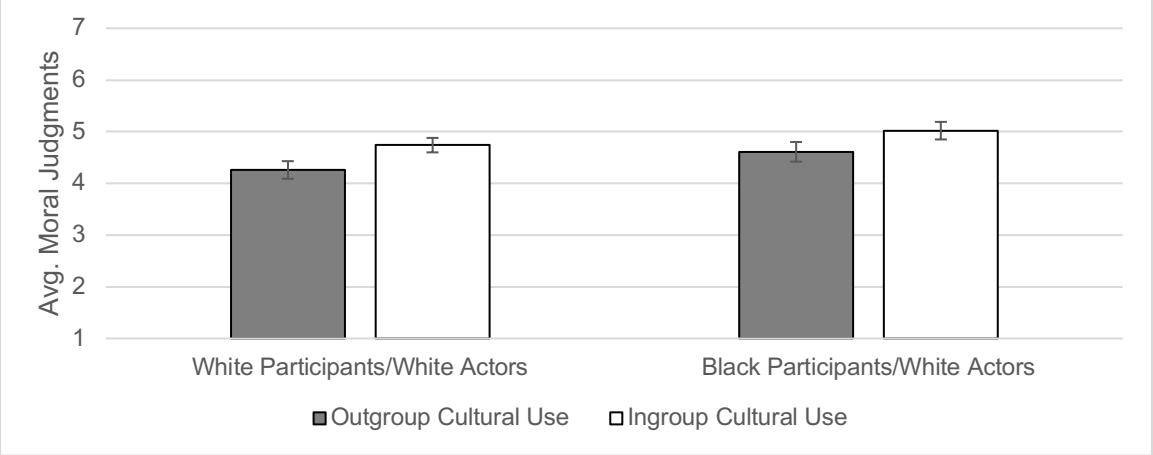

Figure 2. Participant Race x Cultural Use interaction on moral judgments, Study 2 (note that the interaction value was not significant in this study). Higher bars indicate more positive moral judgments. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Second, we analyzed perceptions of harm using a 2 (Cultural Use: Outgroup vs. Ingroup) x 2 (Participant Race: Black vs. White) between-subjects ANOVA. We observed a main effect of Cultural Use, F (1, 800)=42.17, p<.001, partial η^2=.05, indicating that participants viewed the outgroup cultural use condition as more harmful, on average, than the ingroup cultural use condition. We also observed a main effect of Participant Race, F (1, 800)=4.72, p=.030, partial η^2=.01, indicating that White participants reported greater harm, on average, than did Black participants. The Participant Race x Cultural Use interaction did not reach significance, p=.812, partial η^2<.001.

Third, and of most relevance to the central hypothesis of Study 2, we tested whether perceptions of harm mediate the relation between cultural use and moral judgments. To do so, we conducted two separate mediation analyses—one with Black participants and the other with White participants—using 5,000 bootstrapped samples (Hayes, 2013). For each model, *cultural use* served as the predictor variable, *perceptions of harm* served as the mediator, and *moral judgments* served as the dependent measure. Figure 2 depicts these results (Black participants—top panel; White participants—bottom panel). In short, both models revealed significant indirect effects. Both Black and White participants perceived outgroup cultural use as more harmful than ingroup cultural use, and the more harmful they perceived behaviors to be, the more immoral they reported those behaviors were.

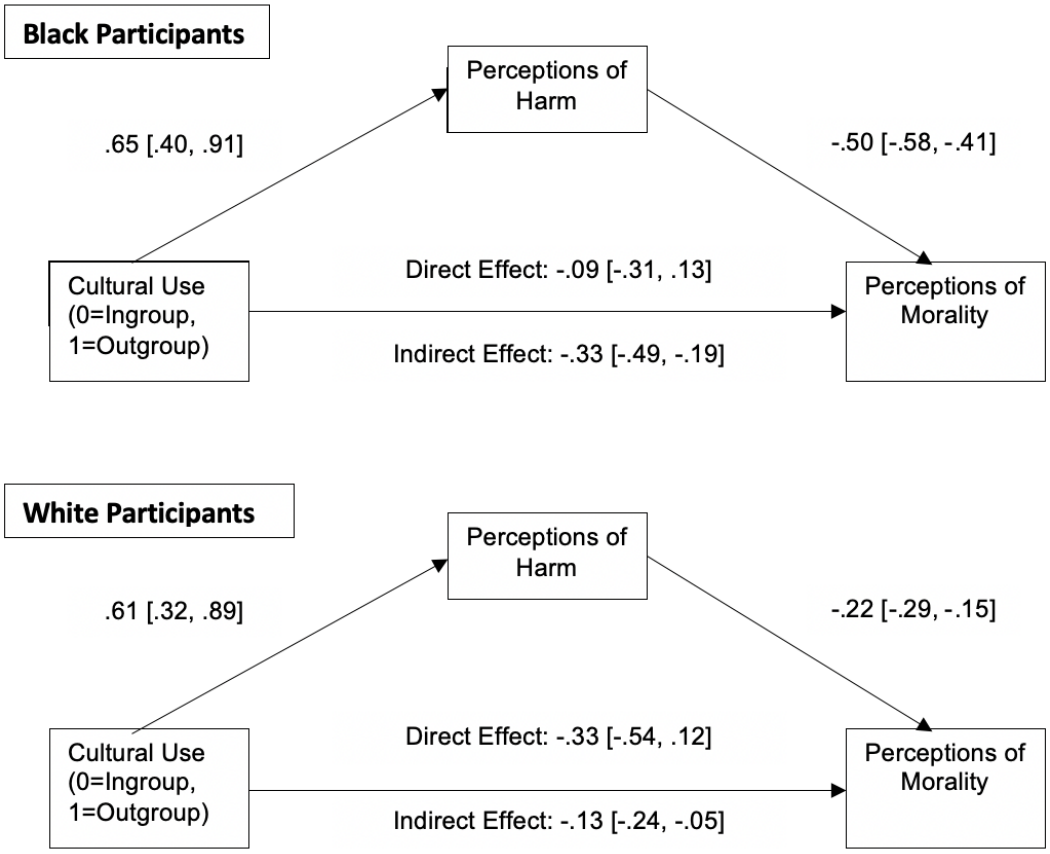

Figure 3. Mediation analysis of cultural use on moral judgments through perceived harm (Top Panel—Black Participants; Bottom Panel—White participants), Study 2.

Discussion

Study 2 sought to achieve two primary goals. First, we asked whether the results obtained in Study 1 would emerge in a new sample. The two studies revealed broadly consistent findings in that both studies supported the *immorality* hypothesis—in both studies, participants perceived outgroup cultural use as less moral than ingroup cultural use, on average. One important difference did emerge across studies: In Study 1, this effect was particularly pronounced among Black participants evaluating White actors, whereas in Study 2, both Black and White participants evaluated White actors as less moral when they engaged in outgroup versus ingroup cultural use. In other words, Black participants consistently viewed White actors as less moral when they used elements of Black rather than White culture. However, White participants' judgments were less reliable across studies, suggesting that they do not consistently evaluate their ingroup members harshly for adopting elements of Black culture for their own use.

Second, Study 2 tested a potential mechanism underlying participants' overall tendency to view outgroup cultural use as less moral than ingroup cultural use. Here, we observed that harm served as a mediator among both Black and White participants. Participants from both racial groups evaluated outgroup cultural use as more harmful than ingroup cultural use, and the more harmful they perceived outgroup cultural use to be, the less moral they thought it was.

Study 3

Study 2 replicated the effect observed in Study 1—that participants evaluate individuals more harshly when they engage in outgroup, versus ingroup, cultural use—and showed that perceptions of harm mediated this effect. Study 3 built on these results by manipulating perceptions of harm to gain greater insight into the role that these perceptions play in moral judgments of outgroup cultural use.

Method

Participants

We determined sample size based on an a priori power analysis using G*Power software. Assuming a relatively small effect size (β=.14; the effect size of cultural use condition on moral judgments demonstrated in Study 1), α=.05, and 80% power, we estimated a desired sample size of 403 participants. However, we aimed to double that number based on information regarding "powering your interaction" (Giner-Sorolla, 2018) suggesting that power analyses may underestimate needed sample size when predicted interactions involve "knockouts" rather than reversals of established patterns. Thus, we aimed for a sample size of 806 participants and oversampled by 10% (81 respondents) to account for exclusions. Therefore, we estimated a desired sample size of 888 participants (to be divisible by 8, since our design included 8 between-participants cells).

We recruited 897 United States residents using Prolific.com. We used a pre-screening survey to recruit Black and White participants and excluded two participants for later identifying as a different race during the demographics portion of the study. We excluded 16 additional respondents due to duplicate IP addresses (maintaining their first response), 15 additional respondents for failing the attention check, 46 additional respondents for reporting confusion with materials, and seven additional respondents for not following instructions. Analyses included the remaining 811 participants. Based on a sensitivity test in G*Power, this sample size provided 80% power to detect an interaction effect of Cultural Use, Harm, and Participant Race on moral evaluations of 0.10 or greater.

The 811 participants ranged from 18 to 78 years old (M=34.55 years, SD=11.83 years). Participants self-identified as White-American (50%) or Black-American (50%) and as male

(52%), female (47%), or non-binary (1%); <1% did not report gender.

Design and Procedures

We pre-registered the research design and analyses at https://aspredicted.org/FQ6_RW2. This study adopted a 2 (Cultural Use: Outgroup vs. Ingroup) x 2 (Harm: High vs. Low) x 2 (Participant Race: Black vs. White) between-subjects ANOVA. As in Study 2, participants only evaluated descriptions of White actors. This study proceeded similarly to Study 1 except that the harm manipulation was embedded with the cultural use manipulation. In the high harm condition, participants read, "People reported that [Actor's] behavior was [disrespectful/offensive/hurtful; we used one of these words per vignette, so that across all vignettes participants encountered all three words]." In the low harm condition, participants read, "People did not report that [Actor's] behavior was [disrespectful/offensive/hurtful]."

After viewing each image, participants indicated their agreement with the same measure of moral judgment as in Studies 1 and 2. Reliabilities (αs) ranged from .74 to .93 across conditions. After rating each image on moral judgments, participants indicated their agreement with a single manipulation check item ("*This person's behavior caused harm to others,*" 1–*Strongly Disagree*; 4–*Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 7–*Strongly Agree*).

Results

First, we conducted a manipulation check to determine whether the harm manipulation exerted a significant effect on perceptions of harm. An independent-samples *t*-test revealed that participants evaluated actors who caused harm to others as more harmful than actors who did not cause harm to others ($M_{\text{high harm}}$=3.99, $SD_{\text{high harm}}$=1.63, $M_{\text{low harm}}$=2.10, $SD_{\text{low harm}}$=1.40, t (809)=-17.74, p<.001, d=1.25). This analysis indicated that our manipulation was effective.

Second, and of most relevance to our main question of interest (how Black and White participants perceive individuals who engage in outgroup cultural use under conditions of low versus high harm), we analyzed moral judgments using a 2 (Cultural Use: Outgroup vs. Ingroup) x 2 (Harm: High Harm vs. Low Harm) x 2 (Participant Race: Black vs. White) between-subjects ANOVA. This analysis revealed a significant main effect of Harm, F (1, 802)=190.74, p<.001, partial η^2=.19, indicating that participants evaluated actors in the low harm condition as more moral, on average, than those in the high harm condition. This analysis also revealed a significant main effect of Participant Race, F (1, 802)=11.67, p<.001, partial η^2=.01, indicating that White participants reported harsher moral judgments, on average, than did Black participants. The main effect of Cultural Use did not reach significance, F (1, 802)=2.95, p=.086, partial η^2=.004.

We also observed two significant interactions. First, the omnibus ANOVA yielded a Cultural Use x Harm interaction, F (1, 802)=3.88, p=.049, partial η^2=.01 (Figure 3). To investigate this interaction, we conducted two sets of tests. First, we compared moral judgments of actors whose actions caused high versus low harm in the outgroup and, separately, ingroup cultural use condition. This analysis included two pairwise comparisons; therefore, p values needed to be .025 or lower to pass the Bonferroni-corrected significance threshold. Participants evaluated actors whose behavior caused high harm as less moral than actors whose behavior caused low harm in both the outgroup cultural use condition, F (1, 802)=70.58, p<0.001, partial η^2=.08, and the ingroup cultural use condition, F (1, 802)=123.68, p<0.001, partial η^2=.13. Second, within each harm condition, we compared evaluations of people who engaged in outgroup, versus ingroup, cultural use. Again, this analysis included two pairwise comparisons; therefore, p values needed to be .025 or lower to pass the Bonferroni-corrected significance

threshold. In the low harm condition, participants rated actors who engaged in outgroup cultural use as less moral than actors who engaged in ingroup cultural use, F (1, 802)=6.83, p=0.009, partial η^2=.008. We did not observe a significant difference between the outgroup and ingroup cultural use conditions when the actor's behavior caused high harm, F (1, 802)=0.031, p=0.86, partial η^2<.001.

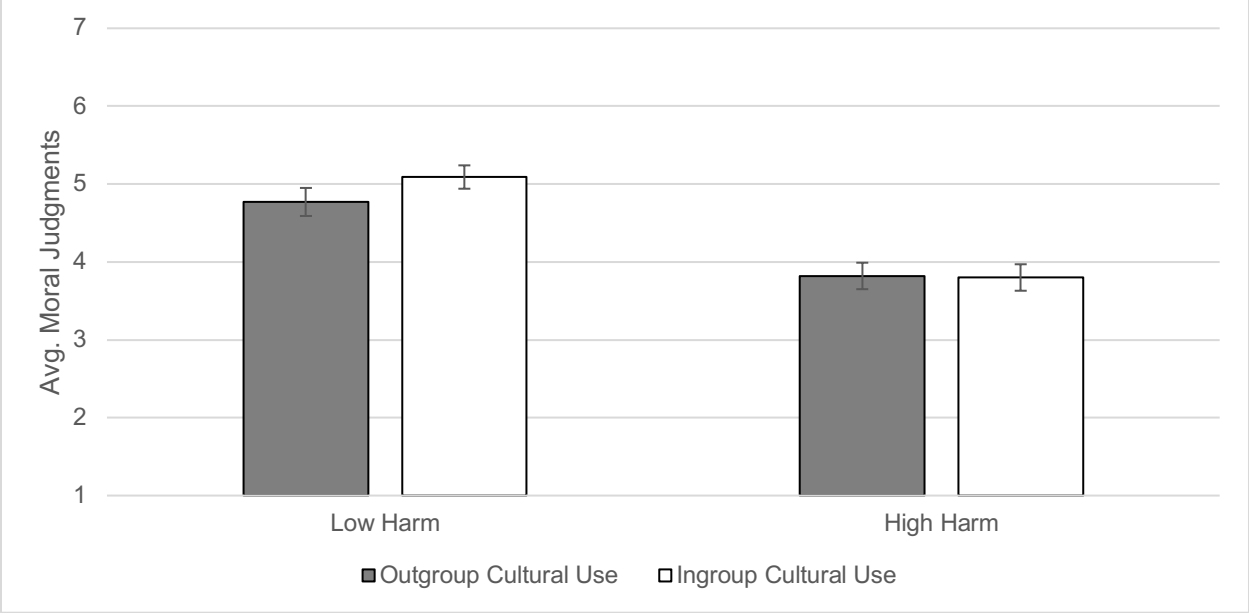

Figure 4. The Cultural Use x Harm Interaction effect on Moral Judgments, Study 3. Higher bars indicate more positive moral judgments. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Second, the omnibus ANOVA yielded a Participant Race x Harm interaction, F (1, 802)=8.17, p=.004, partial η^2=.01 (Figure 4). To investigate this interaction, we again conducted two sets of tests. First, we compared responses from Black versus White participants in the high harm condition and, separately, the low harm condition. This analysis included two pairwise comparisons; therefore, p values needed to be .025 or lower to pass the Bonferroni-corrected significance threshold. In the low harm condition, Black participants viewed actors as more moral compared to White participants, F (1, 802)=19.79, p<.001, partial η^2=.02. However, we did not observe a significant difference between Black and White participants in the high harm

condition, F (1, 802)=0.16, p=.69, partial η^2<.001. Second, we compared responses to the high versus low harm conditions among Black and, separately, White participants. Both Black participants (F (1, 802)=138.51, p<.001, partial η^2=.15) and White participants (F (1, 802)=60.16, p<.001, partial η^2=.07) rated actors causing high harm as less moral than actors causing low harm, although the effect size was approximately twice as large among Black rather than White participants.

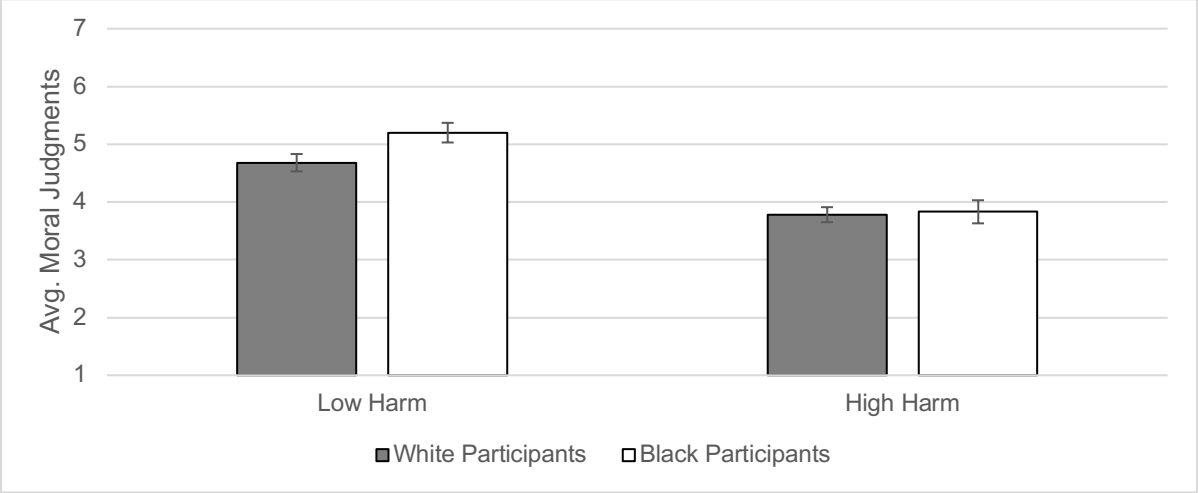

Figure 5. The Participant Race x Harm Interaction effect on Moral Judgments, Study 3. Higher bars indicate more positive moral judgments. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Neither the Cultural Use x Participant Race interaction, F (1, 802)=0.04, p=0.83, partial η^2<.001, nor the Cultural Use x Harm x Participant Race interaction, F (1, 802)=0.04, p=0.84, partial η^2<.001, reached significance.

Discussion

The main goal of Study 3 was to probe the causal role of perceived harm in Black and White participants' moral judgments of outgroup cultural use. Of greatest relevance to this question, we observed that participants perceived actors who engaged in outgroup cultural use, and whose behaviors were not harmful, as less moral than actors who engaged in ingroup

cultural use and whose behaviors were not harmful. That is, when no harm occurred, Study 3 revealed an effect similar to the one observed in Studies 1-2—on average, participants perceived outgroup cultural use as less moral than ingroup cultural use, supporting the *immorality* hypothesis. Here, participants may have perceived outgroup cultural use as inherently more harmful than ingroup cultural use even when, as the stimuli noted, "people did not report that [actor's] behavior was [disrespectful/offensive/hurtful]." For instance, participants may have perceived harm even if others did not notice or comment on it. Because Studies 1-2 also did not include people mentioning that the behavior in question was harmful, the low-harm condition provides a conceptual replication of these earlier studies.

The difference between ingroup and outgroup cultural use disappeared in the high harm condition. Here, participants rated both ingroup and outgroup cultural use as relatively immoral, compared with the low harm condition. Because harm in general can serve as a cue that a behavior is immoral (Gray et al., 2012), explicitly telling participants that people perceived a behavior as harmful appeared sufficient to elicit less positive moral judgments across the board (i.e., to bring down moral judgments of ingroup cultural use to the same, relatively lower, levels observed for outgroup cultural use). Adding a manipulation that was not present in Studies 1-2—i.e., explicitly labeling both behaviors as harmful—eliminated the difference between ingroup and outgroup cultural use that those studies revealed.

Study 3's effects did not interact with Participant Race, indicating that both Black and White participants viewed outgroup cultural use as less moral than ingroup cultural use when the actor's behavior was not harmful. However, we did observe a difference between Black and White participants when evaluating low-harm behaviors overall, collapsed across ingroup and outgroup cultural use. Specifically, Black participants provided more favorable moral judgments

of low-harm behaviors than did White participants. Because White actors often inflict harm on minoritized communities (e.g., Bonam et al., 2019; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Buescher & Ono, 1996; Danbold et al., 2022; Fryberg et al., 2008; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Jones, 1997; Leach & Allen, 2017; Marshburn et al., 2017; Messick & Mackie, 1989; Mosley & Biernat, 2021; Mosley et al., 2023; Roberts et al., 2020; Stark et al., 2021; Swencionis et al., 2021), Black participants may have started with the default assumption that White actors' behaviors would be harmful and then provided particularly high moral judgments when this expectation proved to be incorrect. This process would be akin to a shifting standards model in which individuals start with low expectations for a particular group (e.g., observers start with an assumption that women are not athletic) and then evaluate targets who do not conform to those expectations particularly positively (e.g., giving women a high amount of credit for not "throwing like a girl"; Biernat & Manis, 1994; Shelton, 2003). A shifting standards process could account for some similar results from Studies 1-2, where Black participants also provided more favorable judgments of White actors than did White participants. However, the current work was not designed to test the shifting standards model specifically, and future work can probe the role of this process in moral judgments more directly.

General Discussion

How do people morally evaluate outgroup cultural use? This work provides evidence for the *immorality hypothesis*: people show relatively negative evaluations of the morality of White actors who engage in outgroup cultural use (e.g., compared to White actors who engage in ingroup cultural use; Studies 1-3). This result seems to depend on perceptions of harm, at least to some extent. In Study 2, perceptions of harm mediated the link between the type of behavior actors performed and participants' moral judgments. That is, participants perceived outgroup

cultural use as more harmful than ingroup cultural use, and the more harmful they perceived behaviors to be, the less they perceived those behaviors as morally good. In Study 3, participants judged outgroup cultural use as less moral when they learned that those behaviors caused harm rather than when they learned that those behaviors did not cause harm. Additionally, participants only viewed ingroup cultural use as more moral than outgroup cultural use in the low harm condition. When vignettes did not explicitly mention harm, participants may have viewed outgroup cultural use as more harmful than ingroup cultural use (in line with the results of Study 2) and therefore judged it to be less moral. However, when vignettes noted that both types of behaviors caused harm, the difference between outgroup and ingroup cultural use disappeared. In this case, participants were less free to conclude that outgroup cultural use was more harmful than ingroup cultural use (because the materials described both types of behaviors as harmful) and did not perceive the former as less moral.

Theoretical and Translational Contributions

Taken together, the present findings make an important theoretical contribution to the study of moral cognition. By using an intergroup lens, these data provide new insight into moral evaluations. Currently, much research within moral psychology has focused on the interpersonal level and has assessed people's judgments of what is right and wrong without taking group membership into account (for similar critiques, see Knobe & Doris, 2010; Mosley & Heiphetz, 2021; Roskies & Nichols, 2008). The current research provides evidence for the importance of group membership to moral judgments, as participants viewed White actors as more harmful and less moral than Black actors. Thus, this work highlights the importance of integrating moral psychology and intergroup relations to gain a fuller understanding of how moral judgments

depend on group memberships and what factors (e.g., perceptions of harm, which are commonly studied in moral psychology) underlie these perceptions.

Additionally, by using a moral cognition lens, the present work provides new insight into intergroup relations. Research in intergroup relations has often probed evaluations of characteristics such as warmth, competence, and likeability (e.g., Fiske et al., 2007; Kunst et al., 2022). However, work in moral psychology indicates that perceptions of morality shape person perception to an even greater extent than the characteristics commonly studied in the intergroup literature (Goodwin et al., 2014). Thus, the current work emphasizes the need to incorporate an understanding of morality into the science of intergroup bias. In addition, an intergroup account (e.g., Mosley & Biernat, 2021; Nelson et al., 2013) would predict that participants from different racial groups would evaluate outgroup cultural use differently due to their different experiences and sociopolitical locations. However, the current work did not find reliable differences between Black and White participants; although Black participants provided more negative evaluations of White actors engaging in outgroup cultural use than did White participants in Study 1, this difference between Black and White participants did not emerge consistently across studies. These findings may reflect differences in racial socialization and experience, as they show that Black participants provide relatively negative moral evaluations of White actors engaging in outgroup cultural use more consistently than do White participants. Because this conclusion is based partially on null effects, it must be tentative and interpreted with caution. However, future work can probe the extent to which moral cognition may inform the responses of both Black and White participants.

In addition to its contributions to moral psychology and intergroup relations, this work adds to an ongoing philosophical debate on the ethics of outgroup cultural use. While some argue

that such use is positive and beneficial for society (e.g., Weiss, 2017; Young, 2010, 2021), others portray it as problematic (Ziff & Rao, 1997). The present work brings empirical data to bear on this conversation by demonstrating that both Black and White Americans evaluate outgroup cultural use as less moral than behaviors in which actors use elements associated with their own culture. The current work is descriptive, and our data do not speak to (and were not designed to address) the normative question of whether outgroup cultural use is actually immoral. Rather, these results extend past scholarship that has made arguments about whether people *should* engage in outgroup cultural use by investigating the consequences for moral cognition when people *actually do* engage in such use, regardless of whether or not they should.

Alongside these theoretical advances, this work also makes important translational contributions. Moral psychology speaks to the importance of a positive moral self-image (for a review, see Wojciszke, 2005), and the current work provides unique insight into cultivating a positive moral image in intergroup contexts. Knowing that perceivers view outgroup cultural use as less moral than ingroup cultural use may shape how individuals engage with cultures other than their own. For instance, understanding that observers may respond relatively negatively to outgroup cultural use can inform people's decisions about whether and how to engage in such use. If people expect perceivers to judge outgroup cultural use as relatively harmful compared with ingroup cultural use, they may wish to take steps to reduce perceptions of harm—for instance, by consulting with members of the source community about ways to avoid causing offense, using their behaviors to benefit the source community (e.g., donating profits from selling products that stem from that community), or reconsidering their use of some outgroup cultural products.

Limitations, Future Directions, and Constraints on Generality

The current research sheds light on outgroup cultural use, an understudied topic within psychology. While this work makes significant contributions to the study of morality and intergroup bias, it cannot address all questions relevant to cultural use. For instance, we focused on moral cognition because of the important role it plays in person perception and social outcomes (Brambilla & Leach, 2014; Goodwin et al., 2014). However, future research can assess additional aspects of social cognition, such as perceptions of warmth and competence, as well as the behavioral consequences of exposure to outgroup cultural use. Similarly, our vignettes focused on prototypical instances of outgroup cultural use (e.g., art; Mosley & Biernat, 2021) to gain a further understanding of how people evaluate such acts. However, we cannot conclude that people perceive *all* forms of outgroup cultural use as harmful and immoral. Participants may view some acts, such as practicing yoga to honor Indian culture or attending a Lunar New Year Festival to celebrate Chinese culture, as a form of cultural appreciation. Future research can assess when and why participants may view some acts of outgroup cultural use positively. Relatedly, future work can further probe the specific harms that might arise as a result of outgroup cultural use. For instance, the stimuli in Study 3 reported whether or not observers perceived the actor's behavior as harmful but did not specify what particular harm they thought occurred. We opted to provide relatively minimal information in order to align with research in moral psychology arguing that when people perceive behaviors as harmful (in general), they also perceive those behaviors as wrong (Gray et al., 2012). However, future work could specify what type of harm observers perceived and investigate whether participants respond differently to different types of harm.

Finally, our work increases the diversity of psychological science by including Black as well as White participants, but our sample does not capture the full diversity of humanity. For

instance, all participants lived in the United States. We focused on this culture because it is racially heterogeneous and, therefore, issues of outgroup cultural use appear particularly relevant. We also made the decision to build on recent scholarship highlighting the prevalence of racial injustice and anti-Black attitudes in the United States in particular (Leach & Allen, 2017; Richeson, 2018; Rogers et al., 2021). However, outgroup cultural use is not unique to the United States, particularly given increasing globalization, increased rates of intergroup contact (Kunst et al., 2022), and global histories of colonialism and racial exploitation (Winant, 2006). It is possible that researchers would observe more positive evaluations of outgroup cultural use in cultures that are more racially homogeneous than the United States, and potentially even more negative evaluations than reported here in contexts where the harms of such use are particularly salient. Future work can test these predictions.

Conclusion

A patron seeking to try a new hairstyle may not choose a beauty shop where a White hairstylist specializes in dreadlock extensions. Restaurant goers may skip the opening of a soul food restaurant of a White chef. The current work documents these views of immorality and highlights a cognitive mechanism—perceptions of harm—that could underlie them. Understanding how perceivers respond to outgroup cultural use advances theories of moral psychology and intergroup relations. This knowledge can also inform how, and whether, individuals decide to adopts elements of outgroup culture for their own use.

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