

# Do-Gooder Derogation: Disparaging Morally Motivated Minorities to Defuse Anticipated Reproach

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## Abstract

Two studies document do-gooder derogation (the putting down of morally motivated others), by studying the reactions of meat eaters to vegetarians. In Study 1, 47% of participants freely associated negative terms with vegetarians and the valence of the words was negatively related to how much participants expected vegetarians to see themselves as morally superior to nonvegetarians. In Study 2, we manipulated the salience of anticipated moral reproach by varying whether participants reported these expectations before or after rating vegetarians. As predicted, participants rated vegetarians less positively after imagining their moral judgment of meat eaters. These studies empirically document the backlash reported by moral minorities and trace it back to resentment by the mainstream against feeling morally judged.

## Keywords

moral exemplars, vegetarians, anticipated moral reproach, do-gooder derogation, moral superiority

While societies may differ on what it means to be moral, they agree that it is good to be so. Yet anecdotal evidence suggests that overtly moral behavior can elicit annoyance and ridicule rather than admiration and respect. Common terms such as “do-gooder,” “goody-goody,” or “goody-two-shoes” capture this negative attitude.

Consider vegetarians. Examples of the resentment toward this relatively harmless group<sup>1</sup> abound in Western culture, as captured by magazine cartoons (e.g., “I started my vegetarianism for health reasons, then it became a moral choice, and now it’s just to annoy people,” Alex Gregory, *The New Yorker*, May 05, 2003), T-shirts (e.g., “Nobody likes a vegetarian”), or bumper stickers (e.g., “Vegetarian: Sioux word for lousy hunter”). Vegetarians report being frequently pestered about their choice, to the point that self-help books have appeared to advise them on living among meat eaters (e.g., Adams, 2003). A harassment lawsuit brought against a Wall Street firm by a former employee for taunts about his vegetarianism demonstrates that this behavior can go well beyond friendly teasing (Jose Martinez, *New York Daily News*, January 29, 2009).

Monin and Norton (2003) presented initial evidence suggesting that meat eaters indeed put down vegetarians relative to nonvegetarians on the potency dimension identified by Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957). The goal of the present article is to demonstrate the defensive nature of this “do-gooder derogation,”<sup>2</sup> by relating it to the anticipation of moral reproach felt by majority members when faced with minority moral choices.

## Anticipated Moral Reproach

What is not to like about vegetarians? In interviews (Adams, 2003, pp. 3–7), vegetarians consistently report that their diet seems to bother meat eaters, who appear to take their culinary choices personally, coming across as contrite or threatened. It is as if vegetarians’ personal dietary choice was taken as public condemnation of others’ behavior.

Any group departing from the status quo on claims of moral principle runs the risk of giving this impression. Marginal religious movements elicit resistance by threatening notions about how people ought to live (see Nancy Tatum Ammerman’s testimony in the case of the Waco Branch Davidians, 1993), and by calling into question, in their behavior and structure, the legitimacy of established values (Harper & Le Beau, 1993). Even if the actual morality of their choice is debatable, the very fact that do-gooders claim to base their behavior on moral grounds is an implicit indictment of anyone taking a different path, because moral dictates are by definition universal (Frankena, 1973, p. 25) and apply to everyone (Turiel, 1983, p. 36).

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It is this implicit moral reproach, we will argue, that is irksome to the mainstream and motivates resentment against do-gooders.

Moral reproach, even implicit, stings because people are particularly sensitive to criticism about their moral standing. Most individuals care a lot about their moral identity (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Blasi, 2004; Dunning, 2005; Monin & Jordan, 2009), self-enhancing more on moral dimensions than on ones denoting competence (Allison, Messick & Goethals, 1989). Because of this concern with retaining a moral identity, morally motivated minorities may be particularly troubling to the mainstream and trigger resentment (Monin, 2007).

### ***Backlash Against Threats to Self-Worth***

The hypothesis presented above is consistent with a long research tradition showing that individuals will respond to self-threat by putting down the source of the threat. In the social comparison literature, for example, Alicke (2000) identifies target derogation as a response to threatening upward comparison. Similarly, Tesser (1991) proposes that individuals distance from threatening others, and Smith et al. (1996) show that individuals rejoice at the misfortune of superior others.

Monin, Sawyer, and Marquez (2008) showed a similar backlash in the case of principled rebellion. In one study, participants evaluated an alleged previous participant based on his choice in a lineup of burglary suspects in which the obvious culprit was the lone African American. Observers preferred a peer who refused to make a choice and called the task “offensive” over an obedient peer who accused the Black suspect. The pattern reversed, however, when participants were the first to make the choice. After having themselves accused a Black suspect, participants now disliked the peer who refused to make a choice. This rejection was mediated by the perception that the rebel would not like the accusing participant and was attenuated when participants could self-affirm (Steele, 1988).

### ***Theoretical Contribution of the Present Studies***

Although building on similar theoretical foundations (e.g., Monin, 2007), the studies reported here go beyond the findings presented in the Monin et al. (2008) rebel resentment studies in four important ways. First, the studies presented here document judgments about a whole group of real-world individuals, whereas the rebel studies relied on a made-up target individual who, while modeled to capture real-world whistleblowers and other principled deviants, could be criticized as a laboratory aberration with few real-world counterparts. Thus the present studies test the processes in a more ecologically valid context and speak to the existing literature on intergroup perceptions and stereotyping. By investigating the cause of blanket derogation of a real social group, we hope to contribute to the literature on motivated prejudice (e.g., Fein & Spencer, 1997) in ways that the previous work on rebels was unable to.

Second, the current studies present a stronger test of the sensitivity to moral reproach initially posited in Monin (2007). The

meat-eating mainstream provides individuals with ready-made cognitive tools (e.g., negative stereotypes), cultural products (e.g., mocking jokes), and even physical artifacts (e.g., bumper stickers) that could suffice to render vegetarians nonthreatening. Yet we propose that individuals are so sensitive to anticipated moral reproach that it can still be easily brought to the fore. We seek to demonstrate the psychological substrate of derogation by showing that individual differences in the perception of moral reproach (Study 1), or situational differences in the salience of this reproach (Study 2) predict how positively mainstream members see vegetarians, independently of these shared cultural solutions.

Third, the present studies test derogation in the context of a culturally normative and familiar behavior. In the rebel studies, the experiment induced participants to engage in a potentially dissonance-inducing behavior (writing a counter-attitudinal essay or accusing a Black man of a crime). It is not clear whether the rebel elicited discomfort by refusing to perform the task, or whether he or she merely re-instantiated a discomfort that participants had already experienced when performing the undesirable task. By contrast, reactions to vegetarians do not suffer from this ambiguity. Meat eating is a habitual, normative behavior that respondents have been performing with little compunction since early childhood. If meat eaters derogate vegetarians, then they are more likely to be doing so because of the resentment triggered by anticipated moral reproach than because of any discomfort regarding eating meat.

Fourth, the present studies are the first to directly test the role of anticipated moral reproach. Monin et al. (2008) showed that rebel rejection was mediated by the perception that the rebel would have disliked the participant—but no measure of anticipated moral reproach was included. In the present studies, we specifically asked participants how they thought vegetarians would rate the morality of meat eaters (and of participants), to test directly whether this measured anticipated moral reproach (Study 1) or its manipulated salience (Study 2) predicts do-gooder derogation.

### **Overview of Studies**

We present two studies documenting do-gooder derogation and demonstrating its roots in participants’ concern with being morally judged and found wanting. Study 1 documents derogation and tests the link with anticipated moral reproach. Study 2 manipulates the salience of anticipated moral reproach to strengthen the causal claim that it leads to derogation. In both studies, we predicted that do-gooder derogation would increase when majority group members (meat eaters) feel more judged by the members of the morally motivated minority (vegetarians).

### **Study 1: Documenting Do-Gooder Derogation**

Study 1 used a free response procedure to document participants’ views regarding vegetarians, allowing us to examine

**Table 1.** Words Associated with Vegetarians Free Response Task (Study 1)<sup>a</sup>

Judged Valence	Psychosocial Characteristics	Physical Characteristics	Food	Other
Negative	Annoying, arrogant, conceited, sadistic, judgmental, posers, pretentious, stupid, uptight (2), flawed, preachy (2), picky, weird (2), bleeding hearts, conformists, self-righteous (2), militant, PETA, crazy (2), limited, opinionated, strict, radical, vegan (2)	Malnourished, pale, tired	Cow, hunger, hungry	
Neutral	Silly	Skinny (5)	Meat (3), meatless, no meat, plant, plants, rice, salad (4), vegetable(s) (4)	Dieting, environment, sister
Positive	Earthy, hippie (6), hippies (3), alternative, green, environmentalist (2), politically correct, strong-willed, liberal (3), health-conscious (3), religious (4), careful, conscious, strong beliefs, will-power (2), animal-lovers, dedicated, caring, kind, brave, sweet, thoughtful	Thin (2), slim (2), fair (complexion), healthy (11)	Boca, lettuce (2), granola, green (3), hamburgers, tofu (2)	Uncommon, female, white, gardens, girl

<sup>a</sup> Words with average valence ratings of zero were coded as neutral, and all other words were coded as positive or negative. Numbers in parenthesis refer to the frequency with which a word was used, if more than once.

reactions to vegetarians without suggesting specific traits or their valence. To test the link between do-gooder derogation and anticipated moral reproach, we also measured the extent to which participants felt that their morality was looked down upon by vegetarians.

## Method

**Participants.** A total of 52 undergraduate students in an introductory psychology class at a private university took a one-page survey for class credit. In all, 5 self-identified vegetarians were excluded from analyses, leaving 47 nonvegetarians (16 males, 25 females, and 6 unknown).

**Materials and procedure.** Participants first chose how they would define being a vegetarian out of four options including “not eating any animal product,” “eating eggs and milk but no meat,” “eating fish but no meat,” and “eating chicken and fish but no red meat.” Participants then indicated whether they self-identified as vegetarians. They then used 7-point scales (anchored at  $-3 = \textit{extremely immoral}$  and  $+3 = \textit{extremely moral}$ , with *average* as the midpoint) to complete the phrases: “I would say I am . . . .,” “If they saw what I normally eat, most vegetarians would think I am . . . .,” “Most vegetarians are . . . .,” “Most non-vegetarians are . . . .,” “Most vegetarians think that most vegetarians are . . . .,” and “Most vegetarians think that most non-vegetarians are . . . .”

Participants were then asked to generate three words that come to mind when they think about vegetarians and were offered space to enter additional comments.

## Results

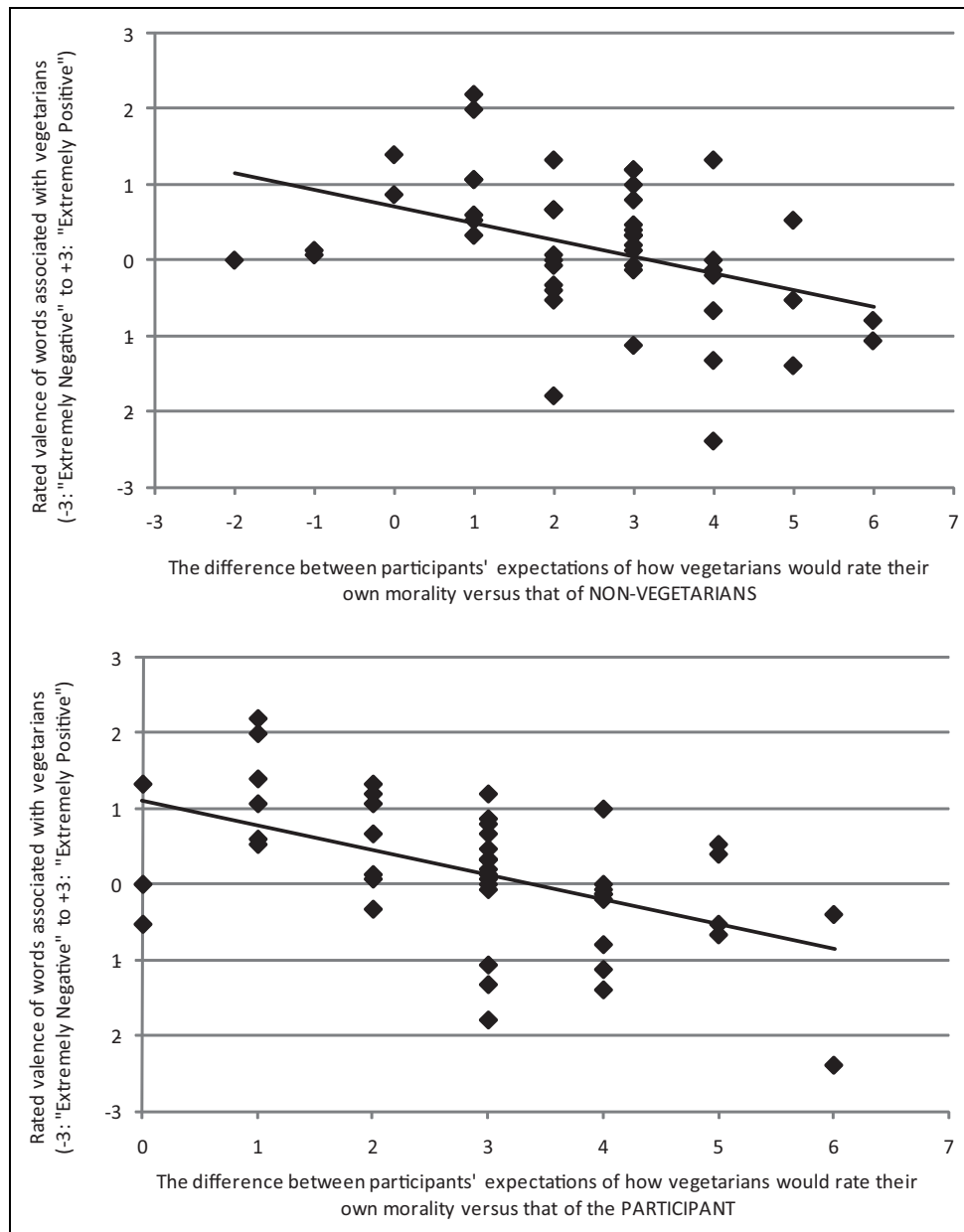
**Preliminary analysis of morality ratings.** Participants saw themselves as significantly more moral than the average midpoint of zero,  $M = 1.60$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ,  $t(46) = 12.15$ ,  $p < .001$  and than

both most vegetarians,  $M = 0.53$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ,  $t(46) = 5.88$ ,  $p < .001$ , and most nonvegetarians,  $M = 0.21$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ,  $t(46) = 9.37$ ,  $p < .001$ . They also rated vegetarians as more moral than nonvegetarians,  $t(46) = 2.79$ ,  $p < .01$ .

**Documenting anticipated moral reproach.** Our meat-eating participants expected vegetarians to draw a stark distinction between the morality of vegetarians and meat eaters, anticipating vegetarians to judge themselves as much more moral,  $M = 2.02$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ , than nonvegetarians,  $M = -0.87$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ,  $t(46) = 13.42$ ,  $p < .001$ . Although meat eaters did perceive a small difference between the morality of meat eaters,  $M = 4.21$ , and vegetarians,  $M = 4.53$ ,  $t(46) = 2.79$ ,  $P < .01$ ,  $D = 0.32$ , they expected that vegetarians would see this gap as being almost 10 times larger,  $D = 2.89$ . The significance of this difference was confirmed by a within-participant Perceiver (Self, Vegetarians)  $\times$  Target (Meat eaters, Vegetarians) analysis of variance (ANOVA) showing a significant interaction between perceiver and target,  $F(1, 46) = 130.88$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MSE = 0.60$ . In line with our theorizing, respondents thought they would be seen as slightly immoral by vegetarians,  $M = -0.47$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ , at odds with how they saw their own morality,  $M = 1.60$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ,  $t(46) = 9.20$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**Valence of word associations.** We dropped from the quantitative analysis of word associations data from three participants who did not volunteer three separate words but instead used the three slots to write “need more protein,” “eat more meat,” and “no red meat.” The remaining 130 associations (excluding 2 blanks) could be reduced to 80 unique cases.

Five naive judges rated these associations, presented in alphabetical order, using a 7-point scale ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive, with a midpoint labeled neutral. The average interjudge correlation was  $r = .72$ , and pairwise correlations ranged from .61 to .86, all  $p$  values  $< .001$ . We



**Figure 1.** Valence of associations and meta-perceptions of morality (Study 1). Top Panel: Vegetarians' own morality versus morality of non-vegetarians in general. Bottom Panel: Vegetarians' own morality versus morality of participant.

computed a composite valence score for each word by averaging across the five judges.

We were also able to classify 71 entries out of the 80 unique ones provided (89%) into 3 thematic categories (Table 1): food-related words (e.g., vegetables, tofu); descriptions of physical characteristics (e.g., skinny, pale); and words having to do with psychosocial characteristics (e.g., preachy, liberal). Of all respondents, 47% volunteered at least one negative association, with 4% listing words associated with physical weakness (e.g., malnourished, pale, tired), and 45% listing words connoting negative social characteristics (e.g., self-righteous, annoying, crazy).

*Relationship between anticipated moral reproach and valence of associations.* We correlated the average valence of the words

with two different scores calculated from each participant's morality ratings. The first of these scores represented the difference between how moral participants expected vegetarians to see themselves versus how moral they expected vegetarians to see nonvegetarians in general. The second represented the difference between how moral the participant expected vegetarians to see themselves relative to the participant. In line with our predictions, this analysis yielded a significant negative correlation between the valence of the words and the extent to which participants expected vegetarians to view themselves as morally superior to nonvegetarians,  $r(45) = -.52, p < .001$ , as well as morally superior to the participant,  $r(45) = -.41, p < .005$  (see Figure 1).

## Discussion

Study 1 shows that when they think about vegetarians and morality, nearly half of meat eaters generate negative associations. Giving us a first empirical insight into the causes of this derogation, our meat-eating sample also exhibited anticipated moral reproach, reporting that they thought vegetarians would look down on the morality of meat eaters generally, and their own specifically. Furthermore, the more participants expected vegetarians to exhibit such moral superiority, the more negative were the associations they generated. The personal nature of the threat was evident in some comments that respondents spontaneously added at the end of the questionnaire. One participant proudly wrote, “I’m the antithesis of vegetarian”; and another, “Vegetarians, eat whatever you want to eat; no one cares. But don’t give other people [expletive] for what they choose to eat.”

The traits generated by participants confirm our prediction that many meat eaters harbor negative perceptions of vegetarians. The statistical association with anticipated moral reproach also provides support for the hypothesized relationship. Although supporting our predictions, these findings suffer the limitations of correlational data. Furthermore, the richness of open-ended responses generated in Study 1 is offset by the loss of homogeneity in the responses provided, forcing us to rely on post hoc judgments of valence. In Study 2, we address the first issue by manipulating the salience of implicit moral reproach, and the second using Likert-type scales to clearly identify response valence.

## Study 2: Manipulating the Salience of Anticipated Moral Reproach

In Study 2, we manipulate the salience of anticipated moral reproach to test its causal role in do-gooder derogation. In this study, some participants considered how vegetarians would judge their morality as well as that of other nonvegetarians before evaluating vegetarians, whereas others started by evaluating vegetarians first. We predicted that when participants first contemplated being morally judged, they would be more likely to derogate vegetarians (as in Study 1) than if they evaluated vegetarians with no explicit consideration of threat.

## Method

**Participants.** Two hundred and fifty-five undergraduates from a large private university self-identified as nonvegetarians completed a two-page questionnaire as part of a larger packet.

**Design.** Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions determining the position of the moral threat relative to evaluations of vegetarians. In the Threat First condition, participants first reflected on how they would be seen by vegetarians, before rating vegetarians on a series of traits. In the Ratings First condition, this order was reversed. We predicted that participants who were prompted to consider how vegetarians see meat eaters (in the Threat First condition) would rate vegetarians less positively than when moral reproach was not

made salient (in the Ratings First control condition). At the conclusion of the questionnaire, both groups answered questions about their attitudes toward meat eating.

**Threat manipulation.** The threat manipulation consisted of asking participants to complete 4 phrases using a response on a 7-point scale ranging from *extremely immoral* to *extremely moral*: “I would say I am . . .,” “If they saw what I normally eat, most vegetarians would think I am . . .,” “Most non-vegetarians are . . .,” and “Most vegetarians think that most non-vegetarians are . . .” These questions were intended as a moral threat by forcing participants to consider the gap between how they saw their own morality and how they expected to be perceived by vegetarians.

**Evaluation of vegetarians.** Participants evaluated vegetarians (“In general, vegetarians tend to be.”) using ten 7-point scales suggested by the free responses collected in Study 1 (see Table 1): kind–mean, stupid–intelligent, healthy–unhealthy, judgmental–nonjudgmental, religious–nonreligious, dirty–clean, weak–strong, humble–conceited, moral–immoral, and fat–skinny.

**Pro-meat attitudes.** Pro-meat-eating attitudes were assessed on a 7-point scale (anchored at *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*): “I am perfectly comfortable with the fact that I eat meat,” “Killing animals for food is cruel and unjust” (reversed), “I don’t think there is any validity to the position espoused by vegetarians,” “Meat is necessary to a healthy diet,” and “I sometimes struggle with the fact that I eat meat” (reversed). Finally, participants indicated how often they ate meat, on a 6-point categorical scale (labeled *every day*, *every other day*, *2–3 days a week*, *once a week*, *less than once a week*, and *never*).

## Results

**Anticipated moral reproach.** As in Study 1, participants rated their own morality as being above the 0 midpoint,  $M = 1.24$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ,  $t(254) = 19.01$ ,  $p < .001$ , while predicting that vegetarians would rate them notably lower than how they rated themselves,  $M = -0.54$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ,  $t(254) = 18.78$ ,  $p < .001$ . Participants’ ratings of the morality of a typical nonvegetarian were again significantly higher,  $M = 0.22$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ , than those they predicted would be made by vegetarians,  $M = -0.69$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ,  $t(254) = 13.67$ ,  $p < .001$ . The extent to which participants anticipated that vegetarians would see themselves as morally superior to nonvegetarians in general, or the participant specifically, did not differ between conditions (both  $t$  values  $< 1.1$ ).

**Derogation of vegetarians in response to anticipated moral reproach.** We recoded all evaluations of vegetarians so that higher ratings indicated greater derogation (e.g., stupid). When we averaged the evaluations to generate an overall index of derogation ( $\alpha = .62$ ),<sup>3</sup> as predicted, average evaluations were less positive in the Threat First condition ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = .55$ ) than in the Ratings First condition,  $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = .48$ ,  $t(253) = 2.58$ ,  $p < .02$ .

**Attitudes toward eating meat.** We created a composite score of pro-meat attitudes by averaging the five relevant items ( $\alpha = .73$ ). Although attitudes toward meat were always measured

last, we found an unexpected marginal difference between conditions,  $t(253) = 1.67, p < .10$ . Thus, participants supported meat eating less in the Threat First condition ( $M = 4.92, SD = 1.17$ ) than in the Ratings First condition ( $M = 5.15, SD = .96$ ).

## Discussion

Whereas Study 1 showed a correlational link between anticipated moral reproach and do-gooder derogation, Study 2 shows that merely thinking about how vegetarians see the morality of nonvegetarians can trigger this effect. When that threat was present, vegetarians were rated less positively on a composite of evaluative traits than when participants were not prompted to imagine being morally appraised. Our threat manipulation did not introduce any new information about vegetarians but simply asked participants to answer four items about perceptions and meta-perceptions of moral standing. The fact that we observed a significant shift in ratings of vegetarians as a result of such a subtle manipulation demonstrates just how sensitive individuals are to moral threat.

The finding that the experimental group most critical of vegetarians seems most receptive to their lifestyle choice (as reflected by the marginal decrease in their support for meat-eating) deserves further discussion, given its counterintuitive nature. As one would expect, within each group, the participants who were most critical of vegetarians were also most supportive of meat eating ( $r = .25$  in Threat First,  $r = .19$  in Ratings First). Such psychological consistency might obfuscate a group difference in the opposite direction. A more sensitive test of the effect of the manipulation on pro-meat attitudes needs to control for evaluations of vegetarians to account for the potential suppressing effect of this variable on measures of attitudes collected later. When we regress pro-meat-eating attitudes on both condition and evaluations of vegetarians, the evaluation variable was a significant covariate,  $B = .55, SE = .13, t(252) = 4.39, p < .001$ , and the difference between conditions on pro-meat attitudes emerged as significant,  $B = -.32, SE = .13, t(252) = 2.41, p < .03$ .

One interpretation of this result is that participants in the Ratings First condition answered the attitude questions just after threat and may have therefore felt a need to bolster their pro-meat attitudes. By contrast, participants in the Threat First condition already had a chance to address the threat by evaluating vegetarians more negatively. To test the interpretation, we collected baseline data by having a new sample of 37 participants from the same population answer the pro-meat attitude questions first, and then the evaluation questions, but with no threat manipulation. Baseline pro-meat attitudes ( $M = 4.85, SD = 1.28$ ) looked much more like those expressed in the Threat First condition ( $M = 4.92, SD = 1.17$ ) than those in the Ratings First condition ( $M = 5.15, SD = .96$ ). This suggests that participants in the Ratings First condition may have been bolstering their pro-meat attitudes following threat, whereas the attitudes of the participants in the Threat First condition may have returned to baseline after the chance to derogate vegetarians. Though speculative at this point, this

interpretation raises the intriguing possibility that under conditions of threat, do-gooder derogation has the ironic effect of making the message of do-gooders more palatable. Having shot the messenger, participants may have felt less urge to also burn the message.

## General Discussion

Two studies demonstrated do-gooder derogation in the case of vegetarians on both free-response and Likert-type scale-dependent measures. In Study 1, nearly half of participants generated negative associations when asked to consider vegetarians. Moreover, these associations were more negative for participants who thought that do-gooders would consider themselves morally superior to the participant or to nonvegetarians in general. In Study 2, simply being randomly assigned to think first about what vegetarians think of meat eaters decreased the ratings of vegetarians as a group.

We interpret these results as a knee-jerk defensive reaction to the threat of being morally judged and found wanting. Participants in the Threat First condition of Study 2 were not given any new information about vegetarians, nor were they told that vegetarians would judge them negatively; yet when asked how vegetarians see them and meat eaters in general, our nonvegetarian participants readily volunteered that vegetarians would look down on them. Anticipated moral reproach is aversive and participants reacted to it by putting down the presumed source.

To be sure, do-gooder derogation is better described as a puzzling ambivalence toward principled others than as outright negativity. In Study 1, just 47% of participants freely associated vegetarians with a negative word—53% volunteered only neutral or positive words. In Study 2, derogation took the form of rating vegetarians less positively when the salience of moral reproach was increased. However, the fact that any form of derogation against a substantial group defined by a principled choice is observed at all seems intriguing enough to deserve documenting.

Because this article focuses on the relationship between anticipated moral reproach and judgments of vegetarians, we did not compare ratings of vegetarians with judgments of nonvegetarians. Only such a direct comparison would enable an interpretation of the absolute values observed in this article as positive or negative relative to the norm. In preliminary data, Monin and Norton (2003) found that vegetarians were rated significantly lower than meat eaters on potency, but higher on evaluation, using Osgood et al.'s (1957) dimensions.

### *Is the Perception of Reproach Exaggerated?*

We have focused in this article on the rejection of vegetarians by meat eaters, based on their fear of being judged. One question that we have not addressed is the extent to which this fear is exaggerated. In a follow-up study, we surveyed respondents from the population sampled in our studies, overrepresenting vegetarians ( $n = 24$  out of 67 complete respondents). On the scales used in our studies, meat eaters thought they were

perceived as more immoral ( $M = -1.14$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ) than the actual ratings offered by vegetarians,  $M = -0.33$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ,  $t(65) = 3.66$ ,  $p = .001$ . Therefore, although vegetarians do look down on meat eaters' morality somewhat, they are less self-righteous than they are perceived to be. Do-gooder derogation may thus be a preemptive strike against a threat that is vastly exaggerated.

### The Challenge of Moral Leadership

One challenge raised by the backlash against moral exemplars is how moral entrepreneurs can hope to change majority views. One suggestion comes from the effect of the manipulation on attitudes toward eating meat, in Study 2. The opportunity to derogate do-gooders may have the ironic aftereffect of making majority members less resistant to minority values in the face of threat. This finding brings to mind Moscovici's analysis of minority influence (1985) as sometimes leading to private conversion, even in the face of public rejection. Given the tentative and unpredicted nature of this result, however, more research is needed to ensure that it is reliable and to better establish its mechanism.

### Theoretical Contributions

As described in the introduction, the present studies contribute most significantly to work on motivated prejudice (Fein & Spencer, 1997) and to the work on the resentment toward moral rebels (Monin et al., 2008). Although previous work has shown that direct threats to self (e.g., negative feedback about performance) can lead to increased reliance on negative stereotypes about a group, the present work shows that presumed threat in the moral domain can also lead to negative perceptions of a group defined by seemingly positive characteristics.

Furthermore, our studies are the first to specifically demonstrate the causal link between derogation and anticipated moral reproach. Although prior work has offered evidence regarding the role of threat to the self in putting down principled actors, the present studies are the first to clearly instantiate the nature of that threat.

Finally, our studies show that such resentment can arise not only after performing morally dubious behavior but also when considering familiar and socially normative actions, such as eating meat. Our society is rife with behaviors moralized by some individuals but not by others: drinking alcohol, driving an SUV, using disposable diapers, attending religious services, cohabitating before marriage. The sensitivity that our participants exhibited to our subtle threat manipulation suggests that our placid daily interactions may conceal an undercurrent of exaggerated threat perceptions and retaliatory derogation, a dynamic which deserves further study.

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### Notes

1. Not all vegetarians decide to forego meat for moral or altruistic reasons (Rozin, Markwith & Stoess, 1997). In this article, we focus on the perception of vegetarians by meat eaters more than on the rich heterogeneity of the vegetarian world. Going forward, we will equate vegetarians with moral vegetarians because they represent the prototypical vegetarian for meat eaters. Furthermore, because of the moralization of health in contemporary American society (Brandt & Rozin, 1997), being "healthier-than-thou" can carry a similar moral sting.
2. We use the term "do-gooder" to refer to individuals or groups who deviate from the majority on moral grounds, offering morality as the justification for their nonnormative behavior. We refrain from using the phrases "moral exemplars" or "moral minority," sidestepping the issue of whether a particular choice is moral. Moral hypocrisy of actors has been documented (e.g., Batson, Kobrynowicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf and Wilson, 1997; Monin & Merritt, 2011). The phenomenon of interest here is the derogation by mainstream members who may know nothing about the real intentions of the do-gooders.
3. We omitted the "religious-non-religious" evaluation from the composite since it is not apparent which side of this scale is considered positive. Including this item does not change the direction or the significance of the reported between-condition difference.

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