NOT OUR PROBLEM: INGROUP GLORIFICATION FACILITATES MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND EXCLUSION

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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University of Northern Iowa

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined how ingroup/outgroup identification and harm predict cognitive restructuring and the shifting of blame. Drawing on Moral Disengagement Theory (Bandura, 1999), which holds that individuals create a new version of reality that allows them to violate their moral beliefs, I hypothesized that implicating the ingroup, lower levels of perceived harm, and higher ingroup glorification would result in more moral disengagement. Integrating Moral Disengagement Theory with Moral Exclusion Theory (Opotow, 1990), I further hypothesized that moral exclusion—the removal of others from the moral community—would also be greater. 422 participants recruited over Prolific read a modified news article about civil unrest in Myanmar following a military coup d’état that either described protestors as being killed or arrested. Additionally, the article portrayed either the United States or Australia as a focal bystander refusing to send military or financial assistance. Participants completed questionnaires on moral disengagement, moral exclusion of the victim, and moral exclusion of the bystander. Moral disengagement and moral exclusion did not differ among participants based on harm or the identity of the focal bystander. However, moral disengagement and moral exclusion of the victims were higher among individuals who glorified the United States, whereas moral exclusion of the U.S. as a bystander was lower. These findings suggest that individual differences—such as ingroup glorification—may be more robust predictors of moral disengagement and moral exclusion than situational factors.

Keywords: moral disengagement, moral exclusion, ingroup favoritism, bystandership
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to victims of unjust suffering whose cries for help have gone ignored.
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I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Helen C. Harton for your patience, wisdom, and support. I learned and developed essential skills thanks to the overwhelming dedication you gave to my personal development over the past two years. I would also like to thank Dr. Nicholas Schwab and Dr. Kyle Endres for their contributions to the successful completion of this project.
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INTRODUCTION

On January 19, 2021, U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo declared a genocide in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), the northwesternmost corner in the People’s Republic of China (Pompeo, 2021). Since at least 2017, Chinese authorities, under the direction of the Chinese Communist Party, have detained more than one million people in Xinjiang—most of whom are ethnic or religious minorities. China has been accused of numerous human rights violations in Xinjiang, including forced re-education and sterilizations that have contributed to declines in birthrates by more than 50% between 2015 and 2018 (Associated Press, 2020). China has vehemently denied these accusations, citing terrorism and widespread poverty in Xinjiang as justifications for continued detainment of these groups.

Recent allegations of human rights violations have also occurred in the United States. Since at least the 1990s, U.S. authorities have detained migrants who unlawfully crossed the border in ICE detention centers as they await claims for asylum (American Civil Liberties Union, 1999). These ICE detention centers have been criticized by various human rights groups as inhumane for their lack of basic needs that are protected under international law (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). In September 2020, a former ICE employee submitted a complaint of mass forced hysterectomies among other concerns of miserable living conditions at the Irwin County Detention Center in Ocilla, GA (Alvarez, 2020). ICE spoke out against the allegations as anonymous, unproven allegations (OpIndia, 2020) and has previously refuted claims of mistreatment, stating
that detainees are provided the greatest possible quality of life while in custody (CBS News, 2008).

These stories paint a bleak picture. Both represent apparent unjust action where the detainees have no legal options to pursue and attempts to protest have failed (American Civil Liberties Union, 1999; Bernstein, 2010). In the latter example, the United States even enacted a “zero tolerance” policy to deter unlawful immigration that resulted in forced separation of families at the U.S.-Mexico border (Aguilera, 2019).

While both of these scenarios are deeply troubling, a stark contrast exists between these two circumstances. On the one hand, the United States has postured itself against China, recognizing the Uyghur Genocide (Pompeo, 2021). On the other hand, new public information on the reports of forced sterilizations at ICE detention centers since the whistleblower complaint has been scarce and the immigrant accusers have been deported from the country (Conway, 2020).

Americans being complicit to injustice is nothing new. In her book *A Problem from Hell: America in the Age of Genocide*, former Harvard Law Professor and Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power (2013) tells a chilling tale of America’s inaction in preventing genocide and other horrible acts. What makes America’s complicity especially damaging is how much was brought to light by Americans—many of whom risked their careers to try to save lives. The initial response to genocides in Armenia and in the Holocaust were that it was unconscionable; no comparable event existed in recent history. Later genocides popularized terms like “never forget” or “never again” but to no avail, as the United States continues to be a bystander in the mass murder of humans
across the globe (Popescu & Schult, 2019). This refusal to act should not be solely blamed on the games played by bureaucrats and politicians. For example, research shows that individuals who remove moral agency justify immoral actions or stances through moral disengagement (Bandura, 1999). By removing moral agency, moral disengagers no longer experience self-condemnation for engaging in negative behaviors, regardless of its scale. Individuals may also refuse to act because they have morally excluded victims, i.e., believing that they fall outside the boundary where rules, morals, and considerations of fairness apply (Opotow, 1990).

In this paper, I explore the conditions that facilitate selective action. In the next sections, I review research on moral disengagement and related processes that may justify or facilitate bystander interaction. I also review research on the bystander effect and examine research suggesting that moral disengagement and exclusion may be more likely to occur when the bystander is an ingroup member. Finally, I describe a study that tests whether moral disengagement and exclusion will occur when one nation is condemned for not assisting members of another who are being suppressed by their government. I hypothesized that moral disengagement would be higher and moral exclusion of the United States as a bystander would be higher when harm is perceived as low, consistent with research on how the dangerousness of a situation leads to more helping (Fischer et al., 2011). I also hypothesized that individuals would morally disengage more when the United States (the ingroup) is implicated, consistent with current understanding of the “ingroup defense” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Lastly, I predicted moral disengagement and
moral exclusion of victims would be higher among those who glorify the United States, as glorifiers go to great lengths to protect the image of their group (Roccas et al., 2006).

**Moral Disengagement**

Moral disengagement is the belief and practice that one’s morals or ethics do not apply to a particular situation. Bandura (1999) has described moral disengagement as a gradual process where acts that normally elicit self-condemnation are made acceptable by loosening mechanisms of moral control. These mechanisms permit moral conduct and restrain individuals from immoral conduct in what are described as “self-sanctions.” Per Bandura, self-sanctions may be selectively deactivated and disengaged from, explaining how individuals who relax their self-sanctions will find previously immoral conduct to now be fair or appropriate. Importantly, because this process is a rationalization of harm, moral disengagement permits inconsistency between moral values and behavior, without evoking cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) or a need to shift values to remain balanced (Heider, 1958). These mechanisms of moral control follow a regulatory process where the immoral conduct is justified, consequences are distorted, and blame gets shifted to the victim. The theory defines three distinct categories of moral disengagement practices that permit actors to harm others while still living a normal life. The three categories are divided based on the moral disengagement process—it begins with the cognitive restructuring of reprehensible conduct, followed by diffusing and displacing responsibility, and concluded by blaming and dehumanizing the victims.
Step 1: Change the Narrative via Cognitive Restructuring

One angle that China has repeatedly exploited in the detainment of Uighurs in Xinjiang is that it is done for the benefit of those detained (Sudworth, 2019). This *moral justification*—the attribution of a personal or social good to an action (Bandura, 1999) or belief that the action serves a higher moral purpose (Staub, 1989)—is the mechanism of moral control that rationalizes reprehensible conduct by making harmful actions appear good. Indeed, moral justification may be used to legitimize political violence (Martin-Peña & Opotow, 2011) and the removal of unwanted social groups (Faragó et al., 2022; Hadarics & Kende, 2018; Mentovich et al., 2016). Other examples include justifying the use of military force (Aquino et al., 2007; Hassan, 2020; McAlister et al., 2006), defending the death penalty (Osofsky et al., 2005), and restricting freedoms in the name of security (Pilecki et al., 2014). However, this justification has failed to extend to utilitarian judgments (Kahane et al., 2015), or in situations where visual imagery determines moral judgments (Amit & Greene, 2012), where valuing the many over the few does not necessarily mean moral justification ever occurred.

China and the United States have also obscured harm by using sanitized language. Describing prison-like compounds as facilities or camps masks their true nature, making harmful conduct appear more acceptable, or at least more normal (e.g., “enhanced interrogation techniques” vs. torture). This sanitization of speech is called *euphemistic labelling*—Bandura’s second mechanism of moral control—where disguised and ambiguous language distorts the truth and makes it more difficult to protest (Bandura, 1999). Euphemisms are often carefully chosen words that carry an ulterior, typically
harmful, motive (Lutz, 1987). For example, a bully might say they are just “playing around,” which not only alters the narrative but also makes them appear less responsible for their actions (Bandura et al., 1996). Euphemisms are powerful because research has shown that replacing words with agreeable terms makes harmful actions appear more acceptable (Walker et al., 2021) and can also have detrimental effects. “Ethnic cleansing” distorts perceptions of genocidal action and undermines attitudes towards stopping or preventing mass killing and violence (Blum et al., 2007). Liberal use of euphemisms such as “national security” by democratic governments like the U.S. has allowed conduct that is undeniably authoritarian (Lynch, 2006). Other examples include derogating targets as “terrorists” (Pilecki et al., 2014), victims as “rioters” (Selva & McCleary, 2021), and civilian deaths as “collateral damage” (Chilton, 1987).

Bandura’s third listed practice is how advantageous comparisons cause an action to be seen as less bad by comparing it to something worse or more harmful (Bandura, 1999). Defenders of detention facilities in the U.S. have brought attention to how the facilities have improved, and that they are still better than the places those detained have traveled from (Rosen, 2019). Behavior is contextualized by making comparisons, a concept that can be exploited to make harmful conduct appear good. Additionally, emotions like envy (Thiel et al., 2021) and guilt (Branscombe & Miron, 2004) are staunch predictors of making such comparisons, and thus facilitate greater moral disengagement. Individuals make advantageous comparisons in many areas of their personal and professional lives to make themselves appear more moral. Some everyday examples include moral disengagement in the workplace (Thiel et al., 2021; White et al.,
2009) and in intergroup evaluations (Martin-Peña & Opotow, 2011), and cheating in competitions (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2011; Boardley et al., 2014).

**Step 2: Shed Moral Agency through the Displacement and Diffusion of Responsibility**

Bandura’s second set of disengagement practices describes how perpetrators minimize their role in causing harm by displacing or diffusing responsibility. As moral agency is one’s capacity to act or be responsible for moral or immoral actions, one needs only to remove moral agency, thus reducing moral control, to perceive themselves as not responsible for any harm caused (Bandura, 1999). The first method one may use to remove moral control is the *displacement of responsibility*, which occurs when an individual perceives their actions as the result of the orders of another and thus claims no personal responsibility (Bandura, 1999). Individuals who displace responsibility most commonly are not in positions of leadership, leaving leaders as the typical recipients of the displacement. Such displacement to leadership is common among employees in the workplace (Hinrichs et al., 2012; Osofsky et al., 2005) and in professional sports (Traclet et al., 2009). Additionally, individuals who displace responsibility act more punitively and aggressively (Bandura et al., 1975), a key finding in the landmark Milgram (1974) electric shock studies (see Baumrind, 1964 and Baumrind, 2015 for a summary of critiques). However, the displacement of responsibility’s most chilling example is in the grossly inhumane actions that came from “just following orders” in genocides like Rwanda (Kamatali, 2014) and in the trial of Nazi and Holocaust perpetrator Adolph Eichmann (Barajas, 2016). Displacement has also occurred in the U.S. surrounding
immigration, where U.S. Attorneys involved in the child separation cases argued that they were only following the orders of the President (Shear et al., 2020).

Moral control may also be removed with the *diffusion of responsibility*. Individuals who diffuse responsibility justify immoral action by disavowing personal responsibility when part of a larger group, enhancing the notion of “when everyone is responsible, no one really feels responsible” (Bandura, 1999, p. 7). This phenomenon was first described by Wallach et al. (1964) as the “spreading” of responsibility that led to greater endorsement of risky group behaviors. Darley and Latané (1968) further defined the diffusion of responsibility as a reaction to other observers in a situation, as opposed to the situation itself. Relaxed morals become more acceptable with justifications such as “everyone is doing it” at places such as work (Thiel et al., 2021), when out with friends and family (Freeman et al., 1975) or when volunteering or making donations (Wiesenthal et al., 1983). The diffusion of responsibility can occur at an individual or a group level (Mynatt & Sherman, 1975). Essentially, any situation that permits individuals to obscure any sense of responsibility can lead to a breakdown of who feels responsible.

The final means individuals can reduce moral control is in the *disregard or distortion of consequences* of one’s actions. Disregard or distortion may occur from the downplaying or minimization of harm done, or by discrediting any evidence that any harmful action ever actually occurred (Bandura, 1999). By distorting consequences, individuals avoid the need for self-condemnation when it becomes easy to downplay or disconnect from the situation or spread doubt that it even happened in the first place. Such practices have been demonstrated both within Uighur re-education camps
(Associated Press, 2020) and ICE facilities (CBS News, 2008; Rosen, 2019) through methods such as shifting blame, downplaying of harm, and denying or distorting evidence surrounding the respective situations.

An additional factor in these examples that plays a prominent role in the disregard of consequences is the distance between perpetrators and victims. Harm via immoral action has a strong tendency to be higher when perpetrators do not directly see victims being harmed (Bandura, 1999; Milgram, 1963; Saulnier & Sivasubramaniam, 2015). Furthermore, downplaying harm plays a significant role in military operations of the 21st Century, where attacks such as unmanned drone strikes mean operators never make close contact with the victims (Hassan, 2020).

**Step 3: Dehumanize the Victims**

The final set of Bandura’s disengagement practices of *dehumanization* surrounds the victims of harmful actions themselves (Bandura, 1999). Dehumanization is the denial of humanity, identity, or a community by removing any moral relationship with a victim (Kelman, 1973). Once removed, victims are no longer seen as humans; instead, they are beasts or objects without emotions or feelings. This removal of human characteristics enables cruelty to people who are just “animals” or “parasites,” as self-condemnation is not necessary when victims are no longer viewed as human. Individuals are less likely to inflict harm to another when they are perceived as similar (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) or have been humanized rather than dehumanized (Castro & Zautra, 2016; Pavetich & Stathi, 2021).
Dehumanization can be either blatant or subtle. A new framework of dehumanization (Kteily & Landry, 2022) proposes that blatant dehumanization occurs when an individual shows a clear and unambiguous attitude or perception to deny one’s humanity, such as denying a social service or using dehumanizing language. This form of dehumanization, while intense and unambiguous, is not always done so explicitly. Such overt forms of dehumanization have been demonstrated using the Human-Ape Implicit Association Test (Paladino et al., 2002) and in reverse-correlation image generation studies of Arabs and White Americans (Petsko et al., 2021). Additionally, incidents of blatant dehumanization have occurred both in Xinjiang, where the Uyghurs are an “ideological virus” (Human Rights Watch, 2018), and in the United States, where Mexican immigrants are branded as “rapists” and “thieves” (Ames, 2019; Mark, 2018).

Subtle dehumanization, meanwhile, refers to the emotional attributions of dehumanization. Theories of infrahumanization (Moscovici & Perez, 1997) and the two-dimensional model of humanness (Haslam, 2006) prescribe primary emotions (e.g., culture, maturity, logic) and secondary emotions (e.g., agency, warmth, rigidity), where denial of the “more human” emotions is a form of dehumanization (cf., Enock et al., 2021). These secondary emotions are more commonly applied to the ingroup, but broadly denied to outgroups (Mosso & Russo, 2019), and this denial is predicted by social distance (Waytz & Epley, 2012), differing worldviews (Cassese, 2021; Martherus et al., 2019), and collective interpersonal experiences (Bandura, 1986).

In summary, moral disengagement is a complex, gradual process where individuals may enable immoral conduct without changing their moral identity (Bandura,
1999). Individuals may disengage in several ways. Cognitive restructuring, shifting of
responsibility, and dehumanization have all been demonstrated as effective tools that
permit individuals to engage in immoral actions without self-sanctioning. However, one
does not necessarily have to follow the practices in any particular order and may engage
in only a single practice in order to reach their goal. And yet, moral disengagement is not
the only way individuals may justify or disguise reprehensible conduct. In the next
section, I describe another approach to justifying immoral behavior—moral exclusion—
and further describe how the cognitive components of these two theories relate to
cognitive consistency.

**Related Approaches**

**Moral Exclusion**

Another approach to enabling inhumane conduct is accomplished by morally
excluding the victim. Moral exclusion is the removal of others from one’s moral
boundary where moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply (Opotow,
1990). An individual’s moral boundary is defined by their scope of justice, where morally
excluded individuals or groups are placed completely outside of the moral community
(Deutsch, 1985). Much like Bandura’s third set of disengagement practices, the process
of moral exclusion focuses squarely on the victim. Rather than changing the details
surrounding the victims, moral exclusion blames the victims as being responsible for
their own suffering. Groups outside the moral community are seen as expendable, non-
entities, or even as vermin, where their removal is not only acceptable, but even
necessary for the benefit of the group (Opotow, 1990; Staub, 1990). In summary, while
moral exclusion and moral disengagement share the end goal of enabling harm, moral disengagement theory (Bandura, 1999) has greater focus on the maintaining of one’s moral identity, whereas moral exclusion is the stripping of a moral identity from others (Opotow, 1990).

Moral exclusion comes in many forms. Opotow’s theory of moral exclusion defines three dimensions of exclusion that can be applied to a given circumstance (Opotow, 2001). The first of these is engagement, or the extent to which the exclusion is either subtle or blatant. Whereas subtle exclusion is denying rights, services, and intimidation, blatant exclusion is often violent, such as hate crimes or acts of genocide. The second dimension, severity, focuses on the intensity of the harm, ranging from high to low. For instance, denying citizenship to undocumented migrants is much different than convicting them for simply existing. Lastly, extent is how narrow or widespread the action of exclusion reaches. These acts may affect an entire group—such as the exclusion of Uyghurs and Mexican immigrants—or even single individuals, such as “cancel culture” that may target specific individuals like a celebrity or politician.

Olson et al. (2011) offers a different definition of moral exclusion. Instead of strictly being the removal of a moral identity, they suggest that moral exclusion is actually two very distinct concepts have been placed under moral exclusion as an umbrella term. On the one hand, the authors argue that moral exclusion may be conceptualized as believing moral rules do not apply regarding their treatment of the victim. On the other hand, a second form of exclusion is a justification of a deliberate exclusion of positive treatment or fair treatment. Interestingly, the definition of moral
exclusion used by Olson and colleagues being the application of morals not applying to the situation shares close resemblance to moral disengagement theory (Bandura, 1999). Where the traditional interpretation of moral exclusion is denying the other fair treatment, Olsen et al.’s first model mirrors Bandura’s approach where morals are never applied to the issue in the first place. In summary, Olson et al.’s model provides a new approach to moral exclusion, that in some ways highlights the distinctions between moral disengagement and moral exclusion.

A third perspective is delegitimization, or a devaluation based on categorizing groups into extremely negative social categories (Bar-Tal, 1990). Delegitimization occurs from associating negative traits, outcasting, and dehumanizing the target groups to justify harm. Additionally, moral exclusion is predicted by right-wing authoritarianism (Hadarics & Kende, 2018; Passini, 2008), social and human dominance (Leite et al., 2018), and terrorist violence as a response to feelings of marginalization (Martin-Peña & Opotow, 2011). Individuals with a less-inclusive moral community show stronger anti-immigrant bias (Passini & Villano, 2018), and a strong moral identity can lead individuals to be more likely to be intolerant towards those outside the moral community (Passini & Morselli, 2016).

Moral exclusion has devastating consequences to those affected by it. Social psychologist and Holocaust survivor Ervin Staub, who first proposed the term moral exclusion, has described it as a bridge to greater and more destructive behavior (Staub, 1990). Indeed, moral exclusion leads to more destructive behavior in instances such as delegitimizing immigrants (Gheorghiu et al., 2021), selectively applying social justice
(Mentovich et al., 2016), and placing excluded groups into extreme and negative categories (Pilecki et al., 2014). This discrimination is higher when individuals have a greater incentive to discriminate (Locksley et al., 1982).

**Cognitive Inconsistency**

Justifying harm while maintaining a positive self-concept is inconsistent. Cognitive consistency is an approach that predates Bandura’s work. Festinger (1957)’s classic theory of cognitive dissonance describes how humans require cognitive and psychological consistency to function. Attitudes and behaviors that are not consistent cause psychological stress, and typically will result in a change of attitude or behavior, or a total rejection of the information that caused the dissonance. For example, the news of “horrendous” and “grotesque” conditions at U.S. immigration facilities is a major contradiction to American exceptionalism, which may lead many to reject this negative information (Aguilera, 2019; Alvarez, 2020), or bolster stories of positive and fair treatment within ICE facilities (OpIndia, 2020).

Another approach to restructuring is Balance Theory (Heider, 1958), which states that individuals seek to maintain consistency in attitudes, values, and beliefs over time. When an imbalance occurs between two attitudes (e.g., supporting hardline immigration policies while also having prosocial attitudes towards immigrants), one must be changed in order to achieve psychological balance. Staub (1989) has incorporated Heider’s model into another method of moral consistency—that of “moral equilibration.” When experiencing conflict between an immoral motive and a moral value, the individual has two choices. First, they may realize that the action does not match their moral beliefs and
restrain themselves from taking action. Alternatively, they may engage in moral equilibration, by shifting to a different moral value or principle.

The cognitive rebalancing of Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957), Balance Theory (Heider, 1958), and Moral Equilibration (Staub, 1989) is a cornerstone of moral disengagement and its related concepts. Moral disengagement and moral exclusion are theories of moral cognition that enable harmdoing, implying an attitude imbalance that initially restrains perpetrators from acting. Specifically, both theories largely focus on allowing or encouraging the shifting of perspective. In fact, Bandura (1999, p. 16) even directly states that “people do not ordinarily engage in harmful conduct until they have justified to themselves the morality of their actions.” Additionally, the first set of disengagement practices details how perpetrators may cognitively restructure their harmdoing, where they are effectively not acting in line with their own beliefs. Moral exclusion theory (Opotow, 1990) matches this restructuring with the creation and maintenance of a scope of justice for one’s moral community (Deutsch, 1985), and the belief that removing those outside the moral community is not only fair but may also serve a higher moral purpose (Staub, 1989).

While cognitive dissonance and its related approaches have many things in common with moral disengagement and moral exclusion, some gaps still remain. For instance, cognitive dissonance stemming from moral dilemmas has been grossly understudied (Graham, 2007), and cognitive restructuring from moral disengagement is moderated by the self-importance of one’s morality (Xu et al., 2019). Additionally, moral attitudes are stronger than non-moral attitudes (Skitka et al., 2005; Skitka, 2010),
suggesting that moral issues may lead to greater cognitive dissonance than nonmoral ones. Therefore, a shortcoming in the current literature on moral psychology exists in the gap in literature regarding the numerous factors involved in developing and maintaining moral attitudes, and how they might predict—or prevent—cognitive inconsistency.

In conclusion, Moral Disengagement Theory (Bandura, 1999) and Moral Exclusion Theory (Opotow, 1990) provide perpetrators with powerful tools to do great harm. Both revolve around the idea of a moral identity, where either changing one’s own identity or removing an identity from others is what enables harm. A key challenge in these theories is how they are cognitively inconsistent, which leaves individuals needing to restructure the issue or situation in order to still consider themselves as moral or upstanding. Bandura himself even describes this as “how people do harm while living with themselves” in the title of his textbook on moral disengagement (Bandura, 2016).

Identifying the causes of harmdoing leads to an important question: If these processes can make harming others so easy, who is there to stop them?

The Role of Bystanders

The answer to this question is bystanders. Bystanders are individuals or groups not implicated in a situation but who are “in a position to know that action is needed and in a position to take action” (Staub, 2015, p. 13). Bystanders can be a single person, an entire nation, or even larger, and bystanders can take on many roles. For instance, bystanders can be internal or external (i.e., within the society where harm is occurring or on the outside). They may also be active or passive and play a critical role in permitting or deterring destructive behavior caused by moral disengagement and exclusion that is
not restricted by their status an internal or external bystander. Passive bystanders are individuals, groups, or even nations that are in a position to act but remain complicit. Examples of passive bystanders are found in the complicity in genocide such in the Holocaust, Armenian Genocide, and Cambodian Autogenocide (Staub, 1989), but also in physical spaces and laboratory settings where responsibility is diffused (Bandura, 1990; Darley & Latané, 1968). Despite their lack of involvement, passive bystanders play an active role by allowing suffering to continue, as it reinforces the perpetrator’s faith in what they are doing (Staub, 1989). Because bystanders are often unaware of the influence they have, bystanders tend to reduce the significance of any help they would bring.

Active bystanders, meanwhile, are individuals, groups, or greater entities that choose to take action to improve the well-being of others. The most memorable examples of active helping are the heroic ones like responding to a person in distress (Darley & Latané, 1968; Latané & Rodin, 1969), but it can also apply to cases such as online activism and social justice (Chou et al., 2020; Kristofferson et al., 2013).

An important question in bystandership is understanding when and why a person or group will act. Despite bystanders having little to gain from helping others, they play an essential role in reducing violence and promoting reconciliation (Staub, 1989; 2011). However, not all bystanders choose to take action. One reason bystanders remain passive may be a belief in a just world, where any suffering is likely deserved (Lerner, 1980). Moral disengagement and moral exclusion can also lead to less helping, as passivity can be justified through the same mechanisms used to cause harm (Bandura, 1999; Leidner, 2015; Leidner et al., 2010; Staub, 1989). A third factor in that may inhibit helping is
perceptions of harm. In a meta-analysis on the bystander effect, Fischer et al. (2011) found that across 53 studies and 7,700 participants, bystanders were less likely to intervene in non-dangerous situations compared to dangerous ones.

There are also individual emotional differences that influence bystander actions. For instance, active bystandership is more common when the victim is in the ingroup (Levine et al., 2002) or when bystanders have a stronger social connection to the victim (Dessel et al., 2017). There may also be a greater likelihood to help when there is a strong emotional connection between an individual bystander and victims. For example, research has shown that creating an emotional connection to just a single victim leads to greater helping (Kogut & Ritov, 2005; Schelling, 1968; Västfjäll et al., 2014). The tendency to help the one over the many occurs because the emotional feeling of helping is highest when helping one individual and begins to blur as the number starts to become a statistic. This “psychic numbing” is the result of the human inability to have an emotional connection to victims as the number in need grows larger and eventually causes a total collapse of compassion (Slovic & Västfjäll, 2015). Ironically, the greater the number of individuals in need, the degree of compassion felt decreases.

Lastly, bystanders can also be the target of social influence. Developed from research on the bystander effect, Latané (1981)’s Social Impact Theory is a meta-theory of social influence between the source and the target. *Strength* refers to the power and intensity of the source, but ultimately refers to anything that makes the source more persuasive to the target. *Immediacy* is the closeness of the source to the target and can be composed of three different dimensions of social, temporal, and physical space (Perez-
Vega et al., 2016). *Number* is the quantity of sources (increasing impact) and targets (diffusing impact) of influence that are present. Number has a decreasing incremental effect on bystander behavior, such that the first few persons have the most impact. Strength, immediacy, and number affect influence multiplicatively across a number of types of situations (e.g., Asch, 1955; Sedikides & Jackson, 1990; Wolf & Bugaj, 1990). Per social impact theory, high-strength and high-immediacy victims would facilitate active bystandership, whereas high-number would differ based on the number of victims (sources) and the number of bystanders (targets).

**Ingroup Favoritism**

Another dimension that has great influence over whether a bystander will act is whether they share a social identity with the victims. For instance, in order to disengage or morally exclude, groups need a target to act against. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) holds that individuals create a self-concept from the groups they belong to and identify those outside their groups as outgroup members. Per Social Identity Theory, individuals make positive or negative evaluations of groups, creating intergroup biases and conflicts (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Because individuals strive to perceive their group in the greatest possible light, social comparisons between groups tend to reflect negatively on outgroups (Tajfel, 1974, cited in Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Indeed, even placing people into groups with minuscule, arbitrary differences can foster discrimination between groups (Tajfel, 1970). “Ingroup favoritism” arises from ingroups providing greater psychological well-being, resulting in familiarity and attachment (Allport, 1954).
High ingroup identification can have detrimental effects on intergroup relations. Because of the psychological benefit of ingroups, evidence of wrongdoing by the ingroup may evoke defensive behaviors such as minimizing the harm caused (Branscombe & Miron, 2004) or morally disengaging by displacing blame to outgroups (Bandura, 1999). For example, high group identifiers set higher standards for what constitutes an injustice, requiring greater evidence to prove harm was caused by their group (Miron et al., 2010). Individuals may also defend their group by discriminating against outgroups (Gagnon & Bourhis, 1996; Locksley et al., 1982) or blaming victims of the outgroup for their suffering (Tarrant et al., 2012).

High ingroup identifiers also differ in attitudes. There are individual differences in how people react to information that challenges their nation’s morality or past wrongs (Branscombe & Doosje, 2004). One approach focuses on a dual mechanism of ingroup attachment and ingroup glorification that creates one’s national identity (Roccas et al., 2006). Attachment is the strength with which someone identifies with their group. It is also twofold and contradictory, as highly attached individuals want to perceive their group in the greatest possible light (Staub, 1997), but are also more susceptible to feeling group-based guilt and having wishes to make amends (Branscombe & Doosje, 2004; Branscombe & Miron, 2004). In contrast, ingroup glorification is a type of identification where individuals view their group as superior to others, with a strong emotional attachment to symbolic elements like the flag or its political leaders (Roccas et al., 2006). Similar to the concept of blind patriotism (Schatz et al., 1999), glorifiers perceive their group as more worthy and feel insulted if their group is portrayed in an unfavorable light.
Ingroup glorification is especially problematic for intergroup relations because of its connection to moral disengagement (Leidner et al., 2010). Roccas and colleagues have used this dual model to propose how the interaction between attachment and ingroup glorification shape one’s identification with their group. For example, high attachment with low ingroup glorification was positively related to feelings of collective guilt for past transgressions (Roccas et al., 2006). However, attachment did not relate to group-based guilt for those also high in ingroup glorification, illustrating how the combination of high ingroup attachment and low ingroup glorification can act as a catalyst for group-based guilt (i.e., admitting to previous wrongdoing by the ingroup).

**Current Study**

Moral decision making plays a critical role in both day to day life and in a person’s life experience as a whole, and this is especially the case when groups are involved. Moral judgments happen both emotionally (Haidt, 2001) and rationally (Skitka, 2010), and differ based on numerous factors like attitude strength (Skitka et al., 2005) and perceptions of harm (Gray et al., 2014). The present study combines the theories of moral disengagement (Bandura, 1999), moral exclusion (Opotow, 2001), and group identification (Roccas et al., 2006) to predict the moral judgments of individual bystanders based on evaluations of “us vs. them” and the amount of harm in a distant, but very real, bystander situation.

Moral disengagement and moral exclusion are two theoretical concepts that share key similarities but are often not researched together. This study uses both approaches to examine how individuals will disengage from the issue, blame the victims, or blame the
focal bystander (e.g., the United States) for remaining passive. Additionally, this study examines how individual bystanders will respond when they glorify their own group, and how that affects their willingness to take or support prosocial action on behalf of the victims. Because bystanders are the best-equipped in a situation to deter destructive behavior (Staub, 1989), it remains an important aspect of this study to examine how the three mechanisms of disengagement, exclusion, and identity may predict positive responses that may lead to future active bystandership.

Liberman and Trope (2008) identified four types of psychological distance—spatial, interpersonal, temporal, and hypothetical—that may affect bystander action, at least three of whom are important in this study. Most previous research on bystanders (e.g., Fischer et al., 2011; Latané & Nida, 1981) has investigated bystander action in spatially proximal situations—where the bystander can see and/or hear the victim directly. In this study, in contrast, I examined reactions to a more distant victim, but compared reactions to inaction from a more (Australia) vs. less (United States) spatially proximate third party. Interpersonal distance is implicated as distant bystanders have greater interpersonal distance and are prone to the collapse of compassion (Leidner, 2015; Slovic & Västfjäll, 2015). Most participants will not have any social connection to the victims in the study. Lastly, hypothetical distance is invoked as participants may struggle to grasp the reality of a dangerous situation if they have never been in one themselves. A lack of contact, context, or exposure to the victims or their situation creates strong barriers where individuals may only perceive the situation very abstractly, which is less likely to lead to helping.
In this study, American participants evaluated the United States as the focal bystander to the ongoing crisis in Myanmar in Southeast Asia. Participants read one of four supposed news stories describing a situation in Myanmar. The news stories were adapted from a news article where condemnations and calls to action were issued. Two conditions focused on the real story where protestors were being killed by security forces (high-harm), whereas the other two instead described the situation as protestors being arrested (low-harm). Additionally, each condition implicated another country as the focal bystander (United States or Australia) who refused to intervene in the crisis, citing a high financial and political cost if they were to get involved. In each case, participants were informed that the situation was extremely dire, and the perpetrator (Myanmar’s government) was blocking all foreign aid coming into the country.

I also expected that individuals would morally disengage and morally exclude the victim more when the United States (the ingroup) was implicated, consistent with ingroup favoritism research (Branscombe & Miron, 2004; Miron et al., 2010; Roccas et al., 2006), and that this effect would be especially strong among glorifiers. Moral disengagement and moral exclusion of the victims was expected to be lower in the high-harm condition than in the low-harm condition, consistent with research on how danger motivates action (Fischer et al., 2011). Additionally, moral exclusion of the U.S. or Australia was expected to be higher in the high-harm condition. Specifically, I hypothesized that:
Hypothesis 1: Participants will morally disengage more (i.e., provide greater justifications, remove moral agency, shift blame to victims) from the U.S.’s role as a bystander (and thus justify the U.S.’s role) compared to when Australia is the bystander.

Hypothesis 2a: Participants in the protestors arrested (low-harm) conditions will morally disengage more (i.e., provide greater justifications, remove moral agency, shift blame to victims) than in the protestors killed (high-harm) condition, where moral disengagement will be lower.

Hypothesis 2b: Moral exclusion of the U.S. (i.e., United States being undeserving of its status) will be higher in the protestors killed (high-harm) condition than in the protestors arrested (low-harm) condition, whereas moral exclusion of Myanmar victims (i.e., them being undeserving of help) will be the opposite (higher in the protestors arrested [low-harm] than in the protestors killed [high-harm] condition.

Hypothesis 3a: High U.S. glorifiers will show higher levels of moral disengagement (i.e., provide greater justifications, remove moral agency, shift blame to victims) than low glorifiers when the U.S. is implicated, thus acting as a more passive bystander to the situation in Myanmar.

Hypothesis 3b: Low U.S. glorifiers will morally exclude the ingroup (United States being undeserving of its status) to a greater extent than high glorifiers, whereas high glorifiers will morally exclude the victims (Myanmar victims being undeserving of help) to a greater extent than low glorifiers, thus acting as a more active bystander to the situation in Myanmar.
PILOT STUDY

I conducted a pilot study with three goals. The first goal was to test reliability and internal consistency of author-adapted measures and reduce the number of items from each measure as needed. The second goal was to measure construct validity for the measures using a measure of prosocial behaviors for validation. Lastly, the pilot study was used to test the efficacy of the harm manipulation to test whether the two manipulations—as written in the pilot study—were different enough to have an effect.

Method

Participants

I recruited 63 participants through social media posts on Discord, Facebook, and Twitter. I excluded data from 18 participants for skipping measures or taking less than 120 seconds to complete the study (n = 17) or reporting dishonest responding in the honesty check (n = 1), leaving a final sample of 45 participants. Sixty-nine percent of participants identified as female, and 29% identified as male, and they were between 18 and 56 years in age (M = 26.69, SD = 7.29). Fifty-three percent had at least a bachelor’s degree, and 9%, at least a graduate degree. No participants (n = 0) reported to have ever lived in or traveled to Myanmar.

I conducted a sensitivity analysis on G*Power (Faul et al., 2009) to determine what size effect I could estimate at various levels of power. I used a .05 significance level for Pearson correlation tests. With 45 participants, I estimated that I could detect a $r$ of .15 at $\beta = 60$, a $r$ of .23 at $\beta = .80$, and a $r$ of .30 at $\beta = .90$. 

Procedure

Prospective participants recruited on social media clicked a link to begin the study. After providing informed consent, they read one of two randomly assigned manipulations of a real CNN news article (Gigova, 2021; Appendix A). The conditions were nearly identical with the exception of the amount of harm being experienced by the victims. Whereas the high-harm condition was the real story of protestors being killed by government security forces, the low-harm condition was instead a humanitarian crisis of food shortages. In both conditions the United States refused to directly aid the victims. After 30 seconds, a continue button appeared. Participants then completed measures in the following order: Moral Disengagement, Moral Exclusion of the Victim, Moral Exclusion of the Bystander, Ingroup Attachment and Glorification, and Prosocial Behaviors. Lastly, participants responded to three manipulation checks and a demographics questionnaire. At the end of the study, participants responded to a single honesty check and were debriefed on the purpose of the study and provided details on the actual CNN news article.

Measures

Moral Disengagement. I created 15 items to assess the extent that participants would morally disengage from the issue by supporting justifications, advantageous comparisons, and the disregard or distortion of consequences (Appendix B). I based the items off the Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement Scale (Bandura et al., 1996) that measures the different dimensions of moral disengagement in children ($\alpha = .82$). New items incorporated each major component of moral disengagement theory (i.e., cognitive
restructuring, diffusion/displacement of responsibility, distortion of consequences, dehumanization), and were focused either directly or indirectly on issues surrounding the crisis in Myanmar. Participants responded to each of the 15 statements on a 7-point Likert-style scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A sample item is “it is normal for some violence to break out in a poor country.” The reliability for all combined items was $\alpha = .85$, and the average inter-item correlation for all items was $r = .25$.

**Moral Exclusion of the Victim.** I created eight items to measure the extent that participants would morally exclude the victims in the manipulation by supporting statements that demean or disparage the victims (Appendix C). I created new items based off the Moral Inclusion/Exclusion of Other Groups (MIEG) Scale (Passini & Morselli, 2017), a scale that measures attitudes towards outgroups using statements that participants respond to on a semantic differential scale. Items in the original scale are not targeted towards any particular group. Participants responded to each of the eight statements on a 7-point semantic differential that ranged from a highly negative to a highly positive response. A sample item is “Burmese are only as valuable as they can offer” vs. “Burmese are very valuable as a group.” The reliability for all combined items was $\alpha = .86$, and the average inter-item correlation for all items was $r = .44$.

**Moral Exclusion of the Bystander.** I created 6 items to measure the extent to which participants would morally exclude the United States for refusing to help the victims (Appendix C). I created new items based off the Moral Inclusion/Exclusion of Other Groups (MIEG) Scale (Passini & Morselli, 2017). Participants responded to each
of the eight statements on a 7-point semantic differential that ranged from a highly negative to a highly positive response. A sample item is “America’s refusal to help is morally bankrupt” vs. “America’s refusal to help is not a moral issue.” The reliability for all combined items was $\alpha = .79$, and the average inter-item correlation for all items was $r = .37$.

**Ingroup Attachment and Glorification Scale.** The Ingroup Attachment and Glorification Scale (Roccas et al., 2006) measures national attachment and glorification in Israel. The scale was modified to apply to the United States (Appendix D). Ingroup attachment and glorification are two subscales of eight items each that are presented as a single 16-item scale. All 16 items are presented on a 5-point Likert-style scale with options ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The attachment subscale measured how much participants identified as an American (e.g., “Being an American is an important part of my identity”), whereas the glorification subscale measured how much participants glorified or held an unquestioning loyalty to the United States (e.g., “Other nations can learn a lot from the United States”). The reliability for all combined items was $\alpha_{attachment} = .90$, $\alpha_{glorification} = .77$, and the average inter-item correlation was $r = .52$ for attachment and $r = .31$ for glorification.

**Manipulation Checks.** Participants answered three questions about the story they read at the beginning of the study assessing dangerousness (“How dangerous do you feel it would be to be in Myanmar right now?”), urgency (“How urgent is it that the people in Myanmar are provided foreign aid?”) and whether the bystander should be punished (“To what extent should a country be punished for refusing to help the people in Myanmar?”).
All questions were on either a 4 or 5-point Likert-style scale, ranging from *not at all* to *extremely* or *severe* (Appendix E).

**Attention Checks.** Participants responded to three attention checks throughout the study (Appendix E).

**Prosocial Behaviors.** I measured prosocial behaviors using a scale based on actions participants could take to aid the victims (Appendix F). Each statement was a realistic action that could be taken today (e.g., “Talk to your friends or family about Myanmar”). Items were rated on a 7-point Likert-style scale based on the extent the participant perceived themselves as likely to engage in each behavior ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Participants also responded to a question on how many dollars they would be willing to donate to the victims that was not directly added to the scale. The reliability for all combined items was $\alpha = .88$, and the average inter-item correlation for all items was $r = .56$.

**Closeness Question.** Participants responded to a question measuring overall closeness to Myanmar (e.g., have you ever traveled to or lived in Myanmar?; Appendix F).

**Demographics.** Participants reported demographics of age, sex, gender, education level, and political orientation (Appendix G). Political orientation was measured with 3 items (social issues, foreign policy issues, economic issues) on a 5-point Likert-style scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The reliability for political orientation was $\alpha = .83$. 

Results and Discussion

I cleaned pilot data in Microsoft Excel and analyzed it with JASP (Version 0.16.0; JASP Team, 2021) and SPSS. The first objective was to test potential scales for reliability. All scales reported adequate levels of Cronbach’s alpha (Table 1). Whereas alpha suffers some problems as an imperfect measure of reliability (Sijtsma, 2009), it remains a trustworthy measure of internal consistency.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Before Modifications</th>
<th>After Modifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. Items</td>
<td>α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Disengagement</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Exclusion (Victim)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Exclusion (Bystander)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup Attachment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup Glorification</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosocial Behaviors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount Willing to Donate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I examined item-total correlations for each created measure to determine which items, if any, should be removed to strengthen the scale. I used $r = .40$ as a threshold, where any items below the threshold were excluded and thus not carried forward into the main study. Three items were removed from the Moral Disengagement Scale for this reason, bringing the total number of items down from 15 items to 12. Additionally, 1 item was removed from the Moral Exclusion of the Bystander Scale, reducing the number of
items from 6 to 5. I also decided to not use the Ingroup Attachment subscale in the main study, as it was not a part of any experimental hypotheses.

The second objective of the pilot study was to assess the construct validity of the newly created scales. I completed this using the “after modifications” measures from Table 1. As expected, the Moral Disengagement Scale was positively correlated with the Moral Exclusion of the Victim Scale, as both are measures of derogation towards the victims. Participants who reported higher levels of moral disengagement and exclusion of the victims were also less likely to exclude the focal bystander, and less likely to perceive themselves engaging in prosocial behaviors on behalf of the victims. In contrast, the Moral Exclusion of the Bystander Scale was positively correlated with the Prosocial Behaviors Scale, indicating that participants who blamed the bystander were, in general, more willing to help the victims (Table 2).

Table 2
Correlations for Pilot Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Moral Disengagement</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.60***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Moral Exclusion (Victim)</td>
<td>.60***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Moral Exclusion (Bystander)</td>
<td>- .83***</td>
<td>-.65***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ingroup Glorification</td>
<td>.62***</td>
<td>.37*</td>
<td>-.52***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Prosocial Behaviors</td>
<td>-.57***</td>
<td>-.64***</td>
<td>.61***</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Amount Willing to Donate</td>
<td>-.30*</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.34*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p < .001 *p < .05.
These results demonstrate a partial validation of the measures, where measurements that benefit, defend, or bolster the bystander had a consistent, positive relationship with blaming, excluding, and denying help to the victims. Another interesting finding was that the Ingroup Glorification subscale was highly and positively correlated with the Moral Disengagement Scale, providing early support for previous findings that higher ingroup glorifiers show greater apathy towards issues outside their country (Leidner, 2015). Lastly, Moral Disengagement and Moral Exclusion of the Bystander were highly and negatively correlated. This finding may suggest that either both scales are measuring the same construct, or that an individual cannot disengage to protect a group they are also actively blaming. Based on these findings, I used these newly revised scales in the main study.

The final objective of the pilot study was to verify a successful manipulation of harm using manipulation checks. Participants did not differ regarding the danger and urgency of the situation $t(43) = .06, p = .95, d = .02$ 95% CI $[-.35, .33]$; Table 3). These results led me to two conclusions. First, the manipulations themselves were likely too similar, which led participants to respond similarly. Second, the checks were not sufficiently relevant to harm, and were potentially subject to confounds (e.g., a response to if the bystander should be punished might be predicted more by their personal views on foreign policy than the issues presented in the manipulation). These results led me to make changes to the manipulations for the main study. I modified the news articles to have a more direct differentiation between high and low harm (protestors killed or arrested). Additionally, I modified all manipulation check items to focus on danger and
how devastating it would be if the situation went unchanged, along with more consistent wording and response options.

**Table 3**  
Table of Means by Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (Standard Deviation)</th>
<th>Effect Size (d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low-harm</td>
<td>High-harm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Manipulation Checks (Average)</td>
<td>3.14 (.512)</td>
<td>3.15 (.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How dangerous do you feel it would be to be in Myanmar right now?</em></td>
<td>4.38 (.97)</td>
<td>4.54 (1.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How urgent is it that the people in Myanmar are provided foreign aid?</em></td>
<td>3.33 (.66)</td>
<td>3.25 (.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>To what extent should a country be punished for refusing to help the people in Myanmar?</em></td>
<td>1.71 (.78)</td>
<td>1.68 (.70)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
METHOD

This study was pre-registered on the Open Science Framework (OSF) at https://osf.io/4z9pv/.

Participants

Four hundred and forty nine adult U.S. citizens were recruited over Prolific, an online participant recruitment service from the United Kingdom that specializes in research participation, between January and February 2022. The 429 participants who completed the study received $1.20 as compensation for approximately 8 minutes of their time. The remaining 20 were automatically rejected by Prolific and therefore received no compensation. In the paid sample of 429, seven participants were excluded based on timing ($n = 5$) or admission of dishonest responding in an honesty check ($n = 2$). All participants were American adults between 18 and 90 in age ($M = 35.48, SD = 14.33$), and 68% identified as female, 30% identified as male, and 5% further identified as transgender or gender non-conforming. Additionally, 66% reported having a liberal political orientation and 54% reported to have at least a bachelor’s degree. Only 1% of participants ($n = 4$) reported to have lived in ($n = 1$) or traveled to ($n = 3$) Myanmar. Prolific screening tools ensured that all participants met the pre-exclusion criteria of U.S. adult residents and citizens.

I conducted a power analysis for a 2 x 2 ANOVA on G*Power (Faul et al., 2009) that suggested 390 participants would be needed to detect an effect size of $\eta^2 = .20$ for a power of .90 at a significance level of .05. The chosen effect size of .20 was based on similar studies on moral psychology with $\eta^2$ ranging from .20 to as high as .55 (Leidner et
al., 2010; Mentovich et al., 2016). The final sample of 422 was well above the needed amount to reach the desired power.

Procedure

Prospective participants recruited on Prolific clicked on the study link and were redirected to Qualtrics. Participants provided informed consent based on a description of the study and a preview of the risks and benefits of participation. The informed consent explained that their participation was completely voluntary, and that they could exit the study at any time. After providing informed consent, participants were randomly assigned using Qualtrics’ randomizer function to read one of four news articles. Each article was manipulated to be either high-harm or low-harm and to identify either the United States or Australia as a focal bystander (Appendix H).

After 30 seconds, participants continued to the dependent measures. Participants completed measures in the following order: Moral Disengagement, Moral Exclusion of the Victim, and Moral Exclusion of the Bystander, and Ingroup Glorification. Participants then completed the Prosocial Behaviors exploratory measure, demographics, and the manipulation checks. Additionally, participants completed two attention checks in the middle of the study. At the end of the study, participants responded to a single honesty check and were debriefed on the purpose of the study and how the manipulation was a modification of a CNN news article. Participants were provided a link to the actual article before they were redirected back to Prolific.
Measures

Moral Disengagement Scale

I used the 12 items from the pilot study to create a Moral Disengagement Scale to again assess the extent to which participants would morally disengage from the issue by supporting justifications, advantageous comparisons, and the disregard or distortion of consequences (Appendix I). Participants reported their moral disengagement towards either the United States or Australia, depending on which condition they were assigned in the bystander manipulation. Statements were rated on a 7-point Likert-style scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, and a sample item is “It is normal for some violence to break out in a poor country.” The reliability for all combined items per bystander condition was $\alpha_{\text{United States}} = .91$, $\alpha_{\text{Australia}} = .85$.

Moral Exclusion of the Victim Scale

I used the 8 statements from the pilot study in this new scale to assess the extent to which participants would morally exclude the victims (Appendix J). All statements were on the same 7-point semantic differential scale that ranged from a very negative response to a very positive response. A sample item is “Burmese refugees would make the U.S. weaker” vs. “Burmese refugees would make the U.S./Australia stronger.” The reliability for all combined items per bystander condition was $\alpha_{\text{United States}} = .91$, $\alpha_{\text{Australia}} = .90$.

Moral Exclusion of the Bystander Scale

I used the 5 items from the pilot study measure the extent to which participants would morally exclude the bystander country (i.e., the United States or Australia,
depending on condition) for refusing to help the victims in the manipulation (Appendix K). All statements were on the same 7-point semantic differential scale that ranged from a very negative response to a very positive response. A sample item is “The American people’s apathy to Myanmar makes them partially responsible” vs. “The American people bear no responsibility for the ongoings in Myanmar.” The reliability for all combined items per bystander condition was $\alpha_{\text{United States}} = .90$, $\alpha_{\text{Australia}} = .90$.

**Ingroup Glorification Scale**

I again used the 8-item Ingroup Glorification Scale (Roccas et al., 2006) to measure glorification towards the United States (Appendix L). Statements were on a 7-point Likert-style scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, and a sample item is “Other nations can learn a lot from the United States.” The reliability of this scale was $\alpha = .86$.

**Prosocial Behaviors Scale**

I used all six prosocial behavior items from the pilot study as a scale for the main study (Appendix M). Items were on a 7-point Likert-style ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* (e.g., “Join a humanitarian organization actively providing aid in Myanmar”). The reliability of this scale was $\alpha = .92$.

**Closeness Questions**

The question asking if participants had lived in or traveled to Myanmar was carried forward into the study (Appendix M). Additionally, participants reported if they knew anybody who identified as Burmese.
Manipulation & Attention Checks

Three manipulation checks assessed the degree participants perceived the manipulation as harmful (Appendix N). Additionally, two attention checks were dispersed in the survey. All manipulation checks were presented on a 5-point Likert-style scale that ranged from not at all to extremely. A sample item is “Based on the article, how devastating would it be if the world did nothing about the situation in Myanmar?” The reliability of all manipulation checks was $\alpha = .87$.

Demographics

Participants provided their age, gender identity, education level, and citizenship and rated their political orientation on a single five-point scale from very conservative to very liberal (Appendix O).
RESULTS

Initial Analyses

Data cleaned in Microsoft Excel were analyzed using JASP (Version 0.16.0; JASP Team, 2021) and SPSS. Confidence intervals for eta squared were calculated using MOTE (Buchanan et al., 2017). The 422 participants were roughly equally distributed across the four conditions (\( n = 107; 109; 105; 101 \)). One participant (\( n = 1 \)) did not finish one scale, but their data were retained for other analyses. I conducted chi squared and ANOVA tests with the harm and identity of the bystander variables with demographics on age, sex, education, and political orientation to assess whether there were any differences by condition. There was no observed effect from the variables, suggesting randomized sampling was successfully achieved (Table 4). Lastly, participants who provided extreme answers for the amount of money they were willing to donate (greater than or equal to $100,000) were excluded from the donation measurement (\( n = 7 \)).

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Effect Size (( \eta^2 ))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High-harm</td>
<td>Low-harm</td>
<td>High-harm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>( M = 36.7 )</td>
<td>( M = 35.2 )</td>
<td>( M = 33.1 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex^*</td>
<td>69% F</td>
<td>66% F</td>
<td>70% F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education^</td>
<td>39% BA</td>
<td>37% BA</td>
<td>31% BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>( M = 2.24 )</td>
<td>( M = 2.16 )</td>
<td>( M = 2.31 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( N = 418-422 \). ^ = Cramer’s V from a Chi-Squared Test. *1 = Male, 2 = Female.

After assessing the sample distributions and making exclusions, I assessed the normality, linearity, and homogeneity of the sample (homogeneity is discussed under Hypothesis 1 & 2a and Hypothesis 2b). Data followed a normal distribution for Moral
Disengagement ($W = .996, p = .327$) but not for Moral Exclusion of the United States ($W = .977, p = .002$), Moral Exclusion of the Victim ($W = .960, p < .001$), or Ingroup Glorification ($W = .981, p < .001$). Moral Exclusion of the Victim and Ingroup Glorification had a positive skew; however, the mean values were only marginally above the median for both Exclusion of the Victim ($M = 2.75, Mdn = 2.63$) and Ingroup Glorification ($M = 2.37, Mdn = 2.38$). In contrast, Moral Exclusion of the United States was more evenly distributed but platykurtic (Appendix P). While several scales had abnormal distributions of responses, some skewness was to be expected based off the intense nature of scales that focus on removing individuals from one’s moral community.

I assessed linearity with Q-Q Plots of study variables (Appendix Q). The plots suggested that all scales were fairly linear, with few outliers. Additionally, while violations are not uncommon—especially in tests of homogeneity (Blanca et al., 2017)—there are two ways that violations have been addressed in the data. First, I conducted data log-transformations for Moral Exclusion of the Bystander, Moral Exclusion of the Victim, and Ingroup Glorification in RStudio using the `psych` and `tidyverse` packages (Table 5). However, I continued with the untransformed data after concluding the transformations did not make a discernable difference in Shapiro-Wilk Tests of normality. Second, my cell sizes were very close to equal, which makes ANOVA tests more robust to homogeneity violations (Wilcox, 1993). ANOVA tests are generally robust to violations in Shapiro-Wilk Tests of normality and tests of homogeneity such as Levene’s (Wilcox, 1993).
I analyzed the harm manipulation checks. Participants rated the harmfulness of the situation as higher in the high-harm condition than in the low-harm condition, providing support for the harm manipulation, both for the combined harm scale and for the items individually (Table 6). However, the three combined manipulations checks were not normally distributed before ($W = .939, p < .001$) or after log transformations ($W = .898, p < .001$).
### Table 6
**Results of Harmfulness Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>High Harm</th>
<th>Low Harm</th>
<th>t(420)</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All harm questions</td>
<td>3.87 (.85)</td>
<td>3.50 (.89)</td>
<td>4.440</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How life-threatening does the situation appear to be?</td>
<td>4.02 (.90)</td>
<td>3.40 (.95)</td>
<td>6.944</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How urgently does Myanmar require aid or assistance?</td>
<td>3.96 (.90)</td>
<td>3.69 (.90)</td>
<td>2.998</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How devastating would it be if the world did nothing about the situation in Myanmar?</td>
<td>3.64 (1.05)</td>
<td>3.41 (1.08)</td>
<td>2.198</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Effect size results are from a t-test of low-harm and high-harm for each variable.

### Hypothesis 1 & 2a

I tested Hypothesis 1 and 2a with a 2 x 2 ANOVA with Moral Disengagement as the dependent variable with harm (low, high) and identity of the bystander (U.S., Australia) as the independent variables (Table 7). A Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variances found that the model was not homogenous \(F(2, 418) = 5.021, p = .007\), indicating that error variance was uneven across groups. Although ANOVA is fairly robust to this violation—especially at large sample sizes—this violation should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results (Table 7).

Hypothesis 1 stated that participants would morally disengage more (i.e., provide greater justifications, remove moral agency, shift blame to victims) from the U.S.’s role as a focal bystander (and thus justify America’s role) compared to when Australia is the focal bystander. I tested Hypothesis 1 in the 2 x 2 ANOVA with the Identity of the Bystander main effect, which was not statistically significant, \(F(1,418) = 2.049, p = .153, \eta^2 = .005, 90\% CI [.00, .02]\). In other words, participants did not morally disengage more when the U.S. was the focal bystander than when Australia was.
Hypothesis 2a stated that participants in the protestors arrested (low-harm) condition would morally disengage more (i.e., provide greater justifications, remove moral agency, shift blame to victims) than in the protestors killed (high-harm) condition, where moral disengagement would be lower. I tested Hypothesis 2 in the 2 x 2 ANOVA with the Harm main effect, which was not statistically significant, $F(1,418) = 1.183, p = .277, \eta^2 = .003, 90\% \text{ CI } [.00, .02]$. Hypothesis 2a was not supported (Table 7). In other words, low-harm situations did not produce significantly higher levels of moral disengagement.

I also tested the interaction of Bystander and Harm. The test was also not significant, $F(1,418) = 1.309, p = .253, \eta^2 = .003, 90\% \text{ CI } [.00, .02]$. Levels of disengagement by harm were similar regardless of whether the U.S. or Australia was the bystander.

**Hypothesis 2b**

I tested Hypothesis 2b with a 2 x 2 mixed ANOVA with Moral Exclusion of the Victim and Moral Exclusion of the United States as within-participants factors and harm
as the between-participants factor (Table 7) using only data from conditions implicating the United States as the focal bystander. A Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variances found that the model was homogenous for both Moral Exclusion of the Victim $F(1, 213) = .583, p = .446$, and Moral Exclusion of the United States, $F(1, 213) = .366, p = .546$, indicating that error variance was equivalent across groups. Hypothesis 2b stated that moral exclusion of the U.S. (i.e., United States being undeserving of its status) would be higher in the protestors killed (high-harm) condition than in the protestors arrested (low-harm) condition, whereas moral exclusion of Myanmar victims (i.e., them being undeserving of help) will be the opposite (higher in the protestors arrested [low-harm] than in the protestors killed [high-harm] condition).

I tested Hypothesis 2b with the 2 x 2 Mixed ANOVA’s interaction of the target and harm (Table 8). The interaction was not statistically significant, $F(1,213) = .577, p = .448, \eta^2 = .002, 90\% CI [.00, .03]$, which suggests harm did not affect the interaction between excluding the victim or excluding the United States. However, an interaction of the target (Moral Exclusion of the Victim and Moral Exclusion of the United States as the Bystander) was statistically significant, $F(1,213) = 75.799, p < .001, \eta^2 = .213, 90\% CI [.18, .35]$, as participants morally excluded the United States more than they morally excluded the victims. However, exclusion did not differ based on harm, $F(1,213) = 3.76, p = .054, \eta^2 = .003, 90\% CI [.00, .06]$, demonstrating again that harm did not have an impact on participant responses.
Table 8
Mixed ANOVA Statistics for Moral Exclusion of the Bystander and Victim by Harm in United States Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>High-harm</th>
<th>Low-harm</th>
<th>ANOVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion of the U.S.</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>4.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion of the Victim</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 213. ***p < .001. T = target; H = harm.

Hypothesis 3

I tested Hypothesis 3a and 3b with Pearson correlations of Ingroup Glorification, Moral Disengagement, Moral Exclusion of the Victim, and Moral Exclusion of the United States (Table 9). All analyses used only the two U.S. conditions (n = 213). As expected, high glorifiers of the United States were higher in moral disengagement and were more likely to morally exclude the victims but showed less willingness to morally exclude the United States as the bystander.

Because ingroup glorification was not affected by the manipulations, I combined ingroup glorification for both U.S. harm conditions to test Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 3a stated that high U.S. glorifiers would show higher levels of moral disengagement (i.e., provide greater justifications, remove moral agency, shift blame to victims) than low glorifiers when the U.S. is implicated, thus acting as a more passive bystander to the situation in Myanmar. Hypothesis 3b, meanwhile, stated that low U.S. glorifiers would morally exclude the ingroup (United States being undeserving of its status) to a greater extent than high glorifiers, whereas high glorifiers would morally exclude the victims (Myanmar victims being undeserving of help) to a greater extent than low glorifiers.
Pearson correlations of Ingroup Glorification, Moral Disengagement, Moral Exclusion of the Victim, and Moral Exclusion of the United States found support for both Hypothesis 3a and 3b. Participants higher in ingroup glorification reported greater levels of moral disengagement, and reported greater levels of moral exclusion of the victim and lower levels of moral exclusion of the U.S. In contrast, participants lower in ingroup glorification reported lower levels of moral disengagement, lower levels of moral exclusion of the victims, and greater moral exclusion of the U.S. A 2 x 2 ANOVA of glorification by identity of the bystander and harm found no differences in ingroup glorification by identity of the bystander ($\eta^2 < .001, p = .726$), harm ($\eta^2 < .001, p = .583$), or their interaction ($\eta^2 < .001, p = .981$). The scatterplots I created when checking assumptions showed few outliers (Appendix R).
Table 9
Correlations for Moral Disengagement, Moral Exclusion, and Ingroup Glorification among United States Condition Participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Moral Disengagement</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Moral Exclusion (U.S.)</td>
<td>-.78***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Moral Exclusion (Victim)</td>
<td>.62***</td>
<td>-.54***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ingroup Glorification</td>
<td>.46***</td>
<td>-.47***</td>
<td>.41***</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 215-216. ***p < .001.*

Exploratory Analyses

For my first exploratory analysis, I conducted Pearson correlations of moral disengagement, moral exclusion of the victim, moral exclusion of the bystander, and ingroup glorification within the Australian bystander conditions to assess how the results generalize to other Anglo-European countries (Table 10). In general, the results replicated in the Australia conditions, with the exception of ingroup glorification, which seems appropriate as it is measuring glorification of the United States across all four conditions.
Table 10
Correlations for Moral Disengagement, Moral Exclusion, and Ingroup Glorification among Australia Condition Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Moral Disengagement</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Moral Exclusion (Australia)</td>
<td>-.70***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Moral Exclusion (Victim)</td>
<td>.60***</td>
<td>-.46***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ingroup Glorification</td>
<td>.41***</td>
<td>-.36***</td>
<td>.27***</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 206. ***p < .001

I also conducted exploratory Pearson correlations of moral disengagement, moral exclusion, glorification, and prosocial behaviors with demographics of age, sex (Male and Female only), and conservativism (political orientation) as variables for the United States conditions (Table 11) and Australia conditions (Table 12). Because harm had no effect on other variables, I did not do separate sets of correlational analyses by harm condition. Generally speaking, conservatives were more likely to morally disengage and blame the victims and were less likely to blame the ingroup. The pattern of the results remained consistent across the U.S. and Australian conditions. Prosocial behaviors were tailored towards U.S. participants and thus did not have an effect with the dependent measures, or with the amount of money participants were willing to donate. Younger participants were more likely to morally exclude the focal bystander, whereas older participants reported greater levels of ingroup glorification and moral disengagement. Moral exclusion of the focal bystander and prosocial behavior endorsement were higher
among women, whereas moral disengagement and moral exclusion of the victim was higher among men in the U.S. conditions.

Table 11
Correlations for Exploratory Variables for United States Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Moral Disengagement</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Moral Exclusion of Bystander</td>
<td>-.78***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Moral Exclusion of Victim</td>
<td>.62***</td>
<td>-.54***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ingroup Glorification</td>
<td>.46***</td>
<td>-.47***</td>
<td>.41***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Prosocial Behaviors</td>
<td>-.53***</td>
<td>.54***</td>
<td>-.43***</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Amount Willing to Donate</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Age</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td>-.25***</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sex^</td>
<td>-.32***</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>-.30***</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>.21***</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Conservatism</td>
<td>.58***</td>
<td>-.59***</td>
<td>.48***</td>
<td>.48***</td>
<td>-.38***</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>-.26***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 205-216. ***p < .001 **p < .01 *p < .05. ^1 = Male, 2 = Female.
Table 12
Correlations for Exploratory Variables for Australia Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Moral Disengagement</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Moral Exclusion of Australia</td>
<td>-.70***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Moral Exclusion of Victim</td>
<td>.60***</td>
<td>-.46***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ingroup Glorification</td>
<td>.41***</td>
<td>-.36***</td>
<td>.27***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Prosocial Behaviors</td>
<td>-.45***</td>
<td>.54***</td>
<td>-.39***</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Amount Willing to Donate</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.40***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Age</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sex^1 = Male, 2 = Female</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.27***</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.29***</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Conservativism</td>
<td>.46***</td>
<td>-.42***</td>
<td>.45***</td>
<td>.47***</td>
<td>-.38***</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>-.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 202-206. ***p < .001 **p < .01 *p < .05. 1 = Male, 2 = Female.

DISCUSSION

In this study, participants completed measures of moral disengagement and moral exclusion of bystanders and victims based on the ongoing civil unrest in Myanmar. Participants reviewed either a situation where Myanmar government forces were killing (high-harm) or arresting (low-harm) civilians. Additionally, either the United States or Australia was implicated as an external bystander to the situation. Participants morally disengaged to a modest degree; however, neither disengagement nor moral exclusion differed based on how harmful the situation was perceived to be or the identity of the focal bystander. One important finding was that the U.S. was morally excluded to a
greater extent than the victims by U.S. participants. This finding is in contrast to traditional ingroup defense interpretations, providing a potential path to address future crises that may implicate the U.S. Lastly, participants who glorified the United States to a greater extent were much more likely to morally exclude the victims and refuse to exclude the United States.

An unexpected finding was how perceptions of harm shaped responses. While harm was successfully manipulated, the level of perceived harm did not cause differences in moral disengagement or moral exclusion of victims or the focal bystander. There are several potential reasons for why harm had little impact. While a dilemma involving the loss of human life should mobilize a response, often this is not the case (Power, 2013; Staub, 2011). Previous research has shown that barriers such as national attachment (Leidner, 2015; Leidner et al., 2010) and a loss of empathy from numbers blurring together (Slovic & Västfjäll, 2015) facilitate a loss of interest in suffering. Factors such as psychic numbering and the collapse of compassion can occur whether harm is high or low, as demonstrated in genocides like the Holocaust. This problem of empathy may have been reinforced in this study, where harm was presented as merely a statistic, which reduces empathy (Kogut & Ritov, 2005; Schelling, 1968; Västfjäll et al., 2014).

Unexpectedly, moral disengagement was not greater when the U.S. was implicated as a passive bystander than when Australia was implicated instead. This result may be due to several possible reasons. First, there was an insufficient threat to social identity, where the U.S. being implicated was not perceived as negative enough. This lack of threat meant that an “ingroup defense” did not develop that may have facilitated
greater levels of moral disengagement. Second, participants within the United States may not have identified the U.S. Government as part of their social identity as an American. Whereas U.S. citizens likely perceive other citizens as part of their ingroup, this identification is not necessarily extended to the U.S. government. Lastly, it is also possible that psychological distance was so high than there was no reason for an ingroup defense to develop. A threat coming from a situation far away where participants not only have no contact with victims but where the outcome does not affect them in any way ensures that the status quo is at least tolerable. This has very much been the case in previous crises, where U.S. government officials repeatedly avoided using the word genocide to avoid creating a moral imperative to act (Power, 2013). A problem shared between previous examples and in this study is there was no internal (i.e., within the country) or external (i.e., outside the country) pressure on the bystander country to act. If accountability had been a factor at any stage, a threat may have developed as a need to protect the positive image of the ingroup or to confirm patriotic beliefs of American exceptionalism. Instead, the bystander was morally excluded to a much greater extent than the victim, signifying that blaming one’s own group may be more likely when there is no social identity threat present.

A question to ask is how these results relate to the bystander effect. This comparison is slightly complicated by the study having two potential bystanders--the implicated bystander in the manipulation (i.e., United States or Australia), and the participant themselves as an external, individual bystander. Previous research has consistently found that dangerous situations elicit a greater response (Fischer et al.,
however differences in harm did not have an effect on general willingness to take action. This result does not necessarily suggest a contradiction of previous research on bystanders. For instance, the meta-analysis by Fischer and colleagues (2011) focused entirely on physically-proximate situations that were not impacted by distance and the problems that come with it. The greater psychological distance by way of physical and interpersonal distance may make it easier to diffuse and displace responsibility, and the amount of harm may be less important because bystanders cannot immediately insert themselves into the situation. Further, high glorifiers may have perceived the crisis in Myanmar as “Not Our Problem.”

Another factor in participant responses is how much connection participants had to the victims. Psychological distance—especially interpersonal and spatial distance—further complicates the situation, as all participants were distant (both socially and physically) from the victims. This lack of connection is also a problem thanks to the relative scarcity of information surrounding Myanmar, a country with little to no strategic value or importance to the United States. This lack of importance may also facilitate motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990) and beliefs of a just world (Lerner, 1980), where the bystanders should not need to worry and that the victims got what they probably deserved. The findings may also be the result of something far simpler—participants may have not read too much into the situation or simply did not care enough, and it was shown in their responses. This apathy may explain why the averages of moral disengagement laid somewhere in the middle, suggesting that while participants were not overly
concerned about the situation, they also did not disengage to a great degree, which would have signified putting greater cognitive effort into the situation as a whole.

The hypothesis that received the most support was how ingroup glorification shaped moral disengagement and moral exclusion. Individuals who were higher glorifiers of the United States were more likely to morally disengage and blame the victims regardless of the situation when the U.S. was implicated. Additionally, high glorifiers were less willing to morally exclude the United States, but not Australia, demonstrating that individual differences—not the situation—facilitated the ingroup defense. This key difference between situational and dispositional measurements suggests that individual differences may be an important factor in predicting the shifting of one’s moral identity or in removing a moral identity from others. High glorifiers of the United States were more likely to disengage, blame the victims, and refuse to blame the U.S. for failing to act. The relationship between ingroup glorification, disengagement, and exclusion of the victim relates to established research on ingroup favoritism and patriotism (Roccas et al., 2006; Schatz et al., 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) where individuals put the group above the issue.

The findings from this study support and develop current understanding in several ways. The findings are consistent with previous research on moral disengagement, where patriotism, ingroup glorification, and ingroup favoritism predict a relaxing of morals to bolster self-serving motives (e.g., Bandura, 1986; Leidner et al., 2010; Leidner, 2015; Miron et al., 2010; Staub, 1989). An interesting finding for moral exclusion is how participants were generally more willing to morally exclude their own group (the U.S.)
than the victim outgroup. This contrasts with research on moral exclusion where individuals believe that victims have taken steps to deserve their own suffering (Lerner, 1980; Martin-Peña & Opotow, 2011; Opotow, 1990) and where the ingroup is not a target of moral exclusion (e.g., (Mentovich et al., 2016). This exception may be due to social desirability, a prosocial value orientation (Staub, 2015), or the aforementioned lack of social identity threat, where the cognitive cost of siding with the victims remained low. A final note is how the dependent variables performed between the U.S. and Australian conditions. Moral disengagement, moral exclusion of the focal bystander, and moral exclusion of the victim all correlated with each other but did not differ based on harm or which country was implicated as the focal bystander. Prosocial behaviors correlated with the majority of tested scales, however the amount a participant was willing to donate was not associated with prosocial behavior endorsement among U.S. condition participants. This inconsistency may have a few root causes. On the one hand, making a charitable donation is a form of prosocial behavior. On the other hand, it is a financial cost to helping, whereas sharing social media posts or attending a demonstration do not. Another potential explanation is that participants who were high and low in prosocial behavior endorsement reported comparable donation amounts, where a small sum of money was seen as a good deed regardless of what actions they supported taking.

**Strengths**

One strength of this study is that it integrates the literatures on moral disengagement and moral exclusion. While the two theories are sometimes mentioned together (e.g., Haslam, 2006), the two approaches are typically not examined together in
a single study. While the two theories have similarities (e.g., dehumanization of victims), moral disengagement focuses mainly on individuals and moral exclusion focuses mainly on relationships between groups. Additionally, the majority of moral exclusion research has been conducted in central and eastern Europe (e.g., Hadarics & Kende, 2018; Passini & Morselli, 2017). In contrast, moral disengagement is largely studied in American workplaces and schools/universities (e.g., Bandura et al., 1975; Bandura et al., 1996; Hinrichs et al., 2012). What this review demonstrated is that the two theories are indeed similar, as both measures correlated with each other despite their different approaches.

This study takes a new approach to research on when people might help in a humanitarian crisis. Whereas previous research has found that human disasters lead to helping (e.g., Piferi et al., 2006; Vollhardt & Staub, 2011), a great deal of existing research focuses on shared experiences, trauma, or altruism born of suffering (Staub, 2015). These cases of shared experiences and trauma have one thing this study does not—closeness. Psychological distance remains an important determinant in an individual’s willingness to help, where factors such as ingroup glorification facilitate bystander apathy (Leidner et al., 2010; Leidner, 2015). It is problematic that strong patriotic feelings lead individuals to stay on the sidelines in a crisis. It also appears in some ways to be paradoxical—high glorifiers want to represent their nation in the greatest possible light, however passivity in a human disaster or a genocide seems to contradict that belief. Because of the role empathy plays in psychic numbing and the collapse of compassion, perhaps a greater understanding of individual differences that relates to both ingroup glorification and psychological distance is necessary, as active
bystandership will remain a very difficult challenge without a strong social and emotional connection to victims or potential victims.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations to the findings in this study. One potential issue in this study is with the manipulations themselves. The manipulation was a three paragraph news story that condensed a great deal of information. The intention of a condensed manipulation is that it is fully read and understood, but it is far from guaranteed. In the case of a string of atrocities against a civilian population, reading the manipulation in full was important. Participants may have never heard of Myanmar, nor know many details about what spurred the protests, meaning any judgments on the situation were made on the spot. This type of responding is challenging to participants, who may have struggle to give an honest response from having to respond to new information immediately.

There are some additional thoughts to consider. First is that the belief that one’s government should act is not necessarily related to social identity threat. Whereas the government is part of their daily lives, they do not make up the “us” that is ordinarily attributed in the “us vs. them” debate in intergroup conflicts. Indeed, identifying as a U.S. citizen does not equate to identifying as with or part of the U.S. government. Second, the U.S. or Australia not acting does not necessarily mean the other was not either. Whereas the moral disengagement scale has an item describing how a nation does not need to act if no one else is, the manipulation does feature a joint-condemnation of the Myanmar Military Junta by the U.S., Australia, and several other nations, suggesting that foreign observers did take interest at the time the CNN article was written.
Another limitation in this study is how the timing affected responses. Data were collected about a year after the crisis started in Myanmar, whereas media coverage of the situation had largely run its course. This time delay likely affected how participants responded, consistent with how greater temporal distance affects perception and judgments (Liberman & Trope, 2008). Additionally, the rise of new threats (e.g., COVID-19, Ukraine War) may have further distanced observations of Myanmar from the minds of participants.

Some additional concerns are potential response bias and threats to internal validity. This limitation largely focuses on the collection method and context of the instruments themselves, where it is not socially desirable to blame victims. Another threat to internal validity is the order of the measurements within the design. For instance, participants responded to each scale in the same order, but with a randomized order of questions within each scale. The consistent scale order means that ingroup glorification was always collected last, meaning responses to this scale were subject to participant bias based on exposure to the manipulation and other dependent measures. Initial analyses found that ingroup glorification did not differ between conditions, but without measuring it before and after the other dependent measures, it is impossible to know the extent to which one measure affected the other.

Another concern in the sampling is in the quality of responses. Whereas tools like Prolific allow for the filtering of participant demographics, it remains a continuous struggle to make self-report resistant to attrition and careless responding (Dillman et al., 2014). While online data collection through services like Prolific provide access to
greater statistical power—thus less likelihood of false positive findings—such services have problems with authentic responses (Necka et al., 2016). These services also struggle with generalizability, as respondents are overwhelmingly from WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) populations (Henrich et al., 2010). While WEIRD samples do have issues with generalizability, this study still provides a more diverse sample than what would be found in university convenience samples. This problem of generalizability remains a concern with this study as well; however, previous research that established a link between moral disengagement and ingroup glorification (Leidner et al., 2010; Leidner, 2015) does provide some evidence for generalizability.

**Future Directions for Research**

This study opens the door for several lines of research. While previous research has examined the role of individual factors like ingroup favoritism or group-based emotions (e.g., Branscombe & Miron, 2004), this study evaluated these variables through the lens of countries as a focal bystander to the situation. The key difference from previous bystander research is that U.S. participants are external individuals with very little, if any, social connection to the perpetrators and the victims. How would this approach apply to closer situations like the detainment of migrants and forced separations at the U.S.-Mexico border? Or how would moral disengagement and blame affect how Americans perceive a genocide by China, their greatest foreign rival? While the present research did not find support for the manipulated aspects of the situation influencing moral disengagement or exclusion, a situation much closer to home would implicate the
U.S. to an extent far greater than simply refusing to send aid in a crisis that many participants had likely never seen or heard about.

Additionally, future research on moral exclusion should place greater focus on the context of moral exclusion. Staub (1989) and Opotow (1990) describe the concept of moral exclusion in detail; however, neither provide much explanation on what comes immediately before or after the process of excluding. Both authors posit that moral exclusion—much like moral disengagement—is a gradual process, where an individual does not go from perceiving a group as civil to a disease overnight. Staub (1990) depicts moral exclusion as a “bridge” to greater destructive behavior, in that it enables future harmdoing because it is easier to cause harm when your target is not seen as human. Despite these claims, it is difficult to draw conclusions on where exactly moral exclusion rests as a drawn-out process. Does high moral exclusion on a questionnaire signify the participant is ready to go and harm others? What is the difference between a 3 and a 4 on a 7-point scale, measured at one point in time? These questions need to be addressed in order for moral exclusion theory to be more accurate when addressing the extent to which the participant would prefer to see a group removed from existence.

An important future direction with this research is found in current understanding of the bystander effect. The vast majority of research on the bystander effect has evaluated were laboratory and field settings. This study is the first step in examining how individuals think and feel when they have the opportunity to act but have absolutely no social connection to the victims. Further research on the intersection of these theoretical concepts could tremendously expand understanding on concepts ranging from political
infighting to dehumanization. Samantha Power (2013) reminds readers that the United States had the power to prevent countless genocides but repeatedly failed to do so, representing a failure in creating active bystander intervention. Addressing this greater form of bystander apathy could provide evidence on more effective means on preventing great harm, whether it be in preventing genocide, reducing sexual violence, or ending the climate crisis.

Implications

The results of this study have several theoretical implications. Moral disengagement research has—much like research on the bystander effect—been primarily focused on situations where individuals have a close connection to the target (Bandura et al., 1975; Bandura et al., 1996; Thiel et al., 2021), and has tended to not focus on situations with greater psychological distance. Additionally, a great deal of research on moral exclusion evaluates the attitudes of internal (within the society of the perpetrator) bystanders (e.g., Gheorghiu et al., 2021; Mentovich et al., 2016; Passini, 2008; Passini & Morselli, 2016). Despite their similarities, moral disengagement and moral exclusion are two enormous bodies of research that are rarely used together.

This separation is likely intentional. As detailed earlier in the paper, moral disengagement and moral exclusion are similar concepts that both focus on perpetration of harm. Whereas moral disengagement appears to be more testable in psychological studies, testing moral exclusion is more challenging. This difference occurs because while moral disengagement can occur at a very introductory level (e.g., wasting time at work), moral exclusion is more extreme. However, because moral disengagement is more
cognitive, it is more difficult to examine a real-world situation (e.g., Myanmar’s coup and subsequent protest) and be certain that moral disengagement took place. Indeed, moral disengagement is found in the words they use to justify their actions.

In contrast, moral exclusion is more noticeable because it is less cognitive and more extreme. The extreme nature of excluding others as vermin, pest, or a parasite leaves little room for doubting the perpetrator’s intentions. An advantage for when these theories are studied together the dual approach provides needed context for the order in which they occur, and how one might lead to the other.

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, the lack of evidence of for moral disengagement and moral exclusion in this study is a positive sign. When presented with the opportunity to protect the ingroup in the face of a human crisis, participants chose not to. Despite the distance, most participants took the side of the victims. The notable exception to this outcome, of course, was high glorifiers of the United States, who were more willing to blame the victims and less willing to blame the United States. High glorifiers demonstrated that barriers still exist to fighting for universal human rights, and that intergroup factors still shape individual attitudes. This result should not be surprising. Glorifiers tend to be higher in Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation (Roccas et al., 2006), and both are associated with greater moral exclusion (Passini, 2008). This barrier may be overcome by promoting that people of all groups are part of a greater community. This will reduce moral disengagement and exclusion by humanizing—rather than dehumanizing—the victims. As Bandura (1999, p. 10) said, “people’s recognition of the
social linkage of their lives and their vested interest in each other’s welfare help to support actions that instill them with a sense of community. The affirmation of common humanity can bring out the best in others.”
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The killing of at least 114 civilians Saturday in Myanmar, according to a tally by the independent Myanmar Now news outlet, has led to calls for the international community to take action against the Myanmar military junta.

United Nations Special Rapporteur for human rights in Myanmar Tom Andrews said in a statement that “words are not enough” to protect people’s lives.

“Words of condemnation or concern are frankly ringing hollow to the people of Myanmar while the military junta commits mass murder against them,” he said. “The people of Myanmar need the world’s support.”

The killings in 44 towns and cities across the country represent the bloodiest day of protests since a military coup last month.

Among those killed is reportedly a 13-year-old girl, who was shot in her house after the junta’s armed forces opened fire in residential areas of Meikhtila, in Mandalay region, according to Myanmar Now. She is among 20 minors killed since the start of the protests, Myanmar Now reported.

CNN has been unable to independently confirm the number of people killed.

The lethal crackdown came on the country’s Armed Forces Day. Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the junta leader, said during a parade in the capital Naypyitaw to mark the event that the military would protect the people and strive for democracy, Reuters reported.

State television had said on Friday that protesters risked being shot “in the head and back.” Despite this, demonstrators against the February 1 coup came out on the streets of Yangon, Mandalay and other towns.

According to the latest tally by the nonprofit Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, at least 423 people have been killed in Myanmar since the military coup on February 1.

A boy reported by local media to be as young as 5 was among at least 29 people killed in Mandalay. At least 24 people were killed in Yangon, Myanmar Now said, according to Reuters.

“Today is a day of shame for the armed forces,” Dr. Sasa, a spokesman for CRPH, an anti-junta group set up by deposed lawmakers, told an online forum.

Sasa called his country’s military leaders “murderers” and begged the international community to take “real action” against the military junta.

“They [military] should not have access to the international arms market, to financial institutions nor development assistance. Please, do all in your power to block all funding, business and access to financial markets in your jurisdiction,” he said.

“How many more of us need to die before you turn from your incremental response to real action?”

Meanwhile, one of Myanmar’s two dozen ethnic armed groups, the Karen National Union, said it had overrun an army post near the Thai border, killing 10 people – including a lieutenant colonel – and losing one of its own fighters, Reuters reported.
A military spokesman did not respond to calls from the news agency seeking comment on the killings by security forces or the insurgent attack on its post.

“They are killing us like birds or chickens, even in our homes,” said Thu Ya Zaw in the central town of Myingyan, where at least two protesters were killed, according to Reuters. “We will keep protesting regardless … We must fight until the junta falls.”

The US Embassy in Myanmar joined the European Union and United Kingdom embassies in condemning killings by security forces in Myanmar on Saturday and calling for an end to the violence.

“On Myanmar’s Armed Forces Day, security forces are murdering unarmed civilians, including children, the very people they swore to protect. This bloodshed is horrifying,” Thomas Vajda, US Ambassador to Myanmar, said in a statement.

“These are not the actions of a professional military or police force. Myanmar’s people have spoken clearly: they do not want to live under military rule,” he added.

“This 76th Myanmar armed forces day will stay engraved as a day of terror and dishonor,” the EU delegation to Myanmar said. “The killing of unarmed civilians, including children, are indefensible acts.”

News reports cited by Reuters said there were deaths in the central Sagaing region, Lashio in the east, in the Bago region, near Yangon, and elsewhere. A 1-year-old baby was hit in the eye with a rubber bullet.

In Naypyitaw, Min Aung Hlaing reiterated a promise to hold elections, without giving any time frame, Reuters reported.

“The army seeks to join hands with the entire nation to safeguard democracy,” he said in a live broadcast on state television. “Violent acts that affect stability and security in order to make demands are inappropriate.”

The military has said it took power because November elections won by Aung San Suu Kyi’s party were fraudulent, an assertion dismissed by the country’s election commission.

Suu Kyi, the elected leader and the country’s most popular civilian politician, remains in detention at an undisclosed location. Many other figures in her party are also being held in custody.

The defense chiefs from Australia, Canada, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the US issued a joint statement condemning “the use of lethal force against unarmed people.”

“A professional military follows international standards for conduct and is responsible for protecting – not harming – the people it serves. We urge the Myanmar Armed Forces to cease violence and work to restore respect and credibility with the people of Myanmar that it has lost through its actions,” the statement read.

Russia ‘a true friend’

In its warning on Friday evening, state television said protesters were “in danger of getting shot to the head and back.” It did not specifically say security forces had been given shoot-to-kill orders, and the junta has previously suggested some fatal shootings have come from within the crowds.
International pressure on the junta increased this week with new US and European sanctions. But Russia’s deputy defense minister Alexander Fomin attended the parade in Naypyitaw, having met senior junta leaders a day earlier, Reuters reported. “Russia is a true friend,” Min Aung Hlaing said.

Diplomats told Reuters that eight countries – Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand – sent representatives, but Russia was the only one to send a minister.

Support from Russia and China, which has also refrained from criticism, is important for the junta as those two countries are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and can block potential UN actions.

Armed Forces Day commemorates the start of the resistance to Japanese occupation in 1945 that was orchestrated by Suu Kyi’s father, the founder of the military.

Gunshots hit the US cultural center in Yangon on Saturday, Reuters reported, but nobody was hurt and the incident was being investigated, US Embassy spokesperson Aryani Manring said.

Protesters have taken to the streets almost daily since the coup that derailed Myanmar’s slow transition to democracy.

General Yawd Serk, chair of the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army - South, one of the ethnic armies in the country, told Reuters in neighboring Thailand: “If they continue to shoot at protesters and bully the people, I think all the ethnic groups would not just stand by and do nothing.”

Author and historian Thant Myint-U wrote on Twitter: “A failed state in Myanmar has the potential to draw in all the big powers – including the US, China, India, Russia, and Japan – in a way that could lead to a serious international crisis (as well as an even greater catastrophe in Myanmar itself).”

U.S./High-harm

UN officials are urging the world to act after at least 114 civilians were killed in one day in Myanmar. United Nations Special Rapporteur for human rights in Myanmar Tom Andrews said in a statement that "words are not enough" to protect people's lives. "Words of condemnation or concern are frankly ringing hollow to the people of Myanmar while the military junta commits mass murder against them," he said. "The people of Myanmar need the world's support." Civilian protesters have been continuously subject to public torture, rape, and killings by police and military forces across the country. Friday marks the bloodiest day of protests since a military coup that overthrew the democratically-elected National League for Democracy (NLD) Party in February. The situation is further complicated by a lockdown of the nation’s ports and roads, rendering foreign aid nearly impossible.

The reported killings, and the arrests of several demonstrators in Aungban, occurred as protesters again took to the streets there and elsewhere, including the cities of Yangon and Mandalay, and the towns of Myingyan, Katha and Myawaddy, according to witnesses and media reports. Developments in Myanmar, which is also known as Burma,
are becoming more difficult to confirm after authorities restricted the internet, which
demonstrators use to organize and disseminate information. The group, which has been
monitoring the violence, said Monday’s toll brings the total number of deaths since the
February 1 coup to at least 510. Defense chiefs from a dozen countries, including the
United States, Japan, and Australia issued a rare joint statement Saturday condemning
Myanmar’s use of lethal force against unarmed people.

The National Unity Government of Myanmar, the NLD’s Government-in-exile, made an
official appeal last month to the United States to intervene in Myanmar. Prime Minister
Mahn Winn Khaing Thann met with U.S. lawmakers in the capital, requesting military
aid to end the ongoing crisis in Myanmar. Congress appears to have refused their request.
“The United States has decided not to help us. The president offered us blankets, but
blankets do not stop the suffering of my people” the prime minister said in a statement.

U.S./Low-harm

UN officials are urging the world to act to combat widespread food and water shortages
in Myanmar since the military coup that overthrew the democratically-elected National
League for Democracy (NLD) Party in February. Since February, Myanmar has been in a
constant state of unrest. Hundreds of thousands have been removed from their homes,
creating a refugee crisis in neighboring Bangladesh. Economic sanctions by the more
than 23 nations has crippled the country’s economy, leading to famine-like conditions.

United Nations Special Rapporteur for human rights in Myanmar Tom Andrews said in a
statement that "words are not enough" to protect people's lives. "Words of concern are
frankly ringing hollow to the people of Myanmar while the military junta does nothing to
provide even the most basic needs," he said. The situation is further complicated by a
lockdown of the nation’s ports and roads, rendering foreign aid nearly impossible.

Developments in Myanmar, which is also known as Burma, are becoming more difficult
to confirm after authorities restricted the internet, which demonstrators use to organize
and disseminate information. Heads of state from a dozen countries, including the United
States, Japan, and Australia issued a rare joint statement Saturday condemning the
humanitarian situation there as “dire”, and urged the military junta to resume “life-saving
services without discrimination”.

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us blankets, but blankets do not stop the suffering of my people” the prime minister said
in a statement.
APPENDIX B
MORAL DIENGAGEMENT SCALE (PILOT)

After reading the article, please respond to the questions below.

1. It’s normal for some violence to break out in a poor country.
2. The story of what’s happening in Myanmar seems overblown.
3. The U.S. already does more to protect human rights than any other country.
4. **Myanmar’s government has a right to its national security.**
5. The political and financial cost of intervention is too high for the U.S. to get involved.
6. **The U.S. choosing to do nothing makes us responsible for the horrors in Myanmar.**
7. Sending aid to Myanmar is expensive and won’t matter in the long run.
8. **Countless foreign nations are doing the same things as Myanmar’s government.**
9. The problems in Myanmar will eventually sort itself out.
10. The U.S. shouldn’t feel obligated to help if no one else is.
11. The U.S. has a moral obligation to intervene in Myanmar.
12. To say the United States is at fault is unjustified.
13. Rioting is often violent so it’s no wonder that some people are suffering.
14. We shouldn’t blame the entire government over a few bad actors.
15. This a problem between Myanmar’s people and its government.

**Note.** * = reversed; moral justification = 5, 6, 11, euphemistic labelling = 4, 13, advantageous comparison = 3, 8, displacement of responsibility = 14, 15, diffusion of responsibility = 8, 10, 12, distortion of consequences = 1, 2, 7, 9. **Bold** items were excluded items after the pilot study.
### APPENDIX C

**MORAL EXCLUSION SCALE (PILOT)**

#### Moral Exclusion of the Victim

*Note.* Burmese refers to the residents, ethnic groups, and inhabitants of Myanmar.

| Burmese are only as valuable as what they can offer. | Burmese are very valuable as a group. |
| The U.S./Australia should not concern itself with the affairs of third-world countries. | The U.S./Australia should concern itself with the affairs of all countries. |
| The Burmese people can only blame themselves. | The Burmese people are not at fault. |
| Sometimes people get what they probably deserved. | Suffering is never deserved. |
| Burmese people contribute nothing to the world. | Burmese people make the world a better place. |
| Burmese people are an uncivilized lot. | Burmese people are very civilized. |
| The U.S./Australia should avoid contact with Burmese people. | The U.S./Australia should strive to make meaningful connections with Burmese people. |
| Burmese refugees would make the U.S./Australia weaker. | Burmese refugees would make the U.S./Australia stronger. |

#### Moral Exclusion of the Bystander (U.S.)

| America’s refusal to help is morally bankrupt. | America’s refusal to help is not a moral issue. |
| Doing nothing makes America responsible for deaths it has not directly caused. | America is not responsible for deaths it has not itself caused. |
| The American people’s apathy to Myanmar makes them partially responsible. | The American people bear no responsibility for the ongoings in Myanmar. |
| The U.S. Government deserves much of the blame for not intervening in Myanmar. | The U.S. Government deserves none of the blame for not intervening in Myanmar. |
| **Not** intervening in Myanmar would weaken the United States. | Intervening in Myanmar would weaken the United States. |
| It’s patriotic for Americans to support helping in a foreign crisis. | It’s patriotic for Americans to support their government’s decision. |
APPENDIX D

INGROUP ATTACHMENT AND GLORIFICATION SCALE (PILOT)

Next, we have a few questions relating to how you identify as an American.

**Attachment Subscale**

1. I love the United States.
2. Being an American is an important part of my identity.
3. It is important that I contribute to my nation.
4. It is important to me to view myself as an American.
5. I am strongly committed to my nation.
6. It is important that everyone sees me as an American.
7. It is important for me to serve my country.
8. When I talk about Americans I usually say “we” instead of “they.”

**Glorification Subscale**

1. Other nations could learn a lot from the United States.
2. In today’s world, the only way to know what to do is to rely on our nation’s leaders.
3. The U.S. Military is the best in the world.
4. Relative to other nations, the United States is a very moral nation.
5. One of the important things we have to teach children is to respect the leaders of our nation.
6. It is disloyal for Americans to criticize the United States.
7. The United States is better than other nations in all respects.
8. There is generally a good reason for every rule and regulation made by our national authorities.
APPENDIX E

MANIPULATION / ATTENTION / HONESTY CHECKS (PILOT)

Manipulation checks

1. How distant is the country Myanmar from where you live?
2. To what extent should the U.S./Australia be punished for their response?
3. How urgent is it that the people in Myanmar are provided foreign aid?

Attention checks

1. Thank you for your answers this far. You are almost at the end of the survey. To know you are paying attention, please select Not Listed.
2. Select Somewhat Disagree.
3. Select Agree.

Honesty check

Sometimes participants take their survey participation very seriously and sometimes less so, instead providing humorous or insincere answers to some or all questions. Completing this survey today, how seriously would you say you responded to the questions?

1. Rarely or never gave a serious response
2. Gave a serious response to some of the questions
3. Gave a serious response to about half of the questions
4. Gave a serious response to most of the questions
5. Gave a serious response to all or almost all of the questions
APPENDIX F

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIORS SCALE AND CLOSENESS QUESTION (PILOT)

How likely would you be to engage in these behaviors? (1-7 Likert-style scale, with a N/A option)

1. Write a letter or send an email to your local representative
2. Talk to your friends or family about Myanmar
3. Make or share posts about Myanmar on social media
4. Attend public demonstrations related to Myanmar
5. Sign up for any newsletters about Myanmar
6. Join a humanitarian organization actively providing aid in Myanmar

How much money (in U.S. Dollars) would you be willing to donate to aid the Burmese people? __________

Have you ever traveled to or lived in Myanmar?

1. No, never traveled to or lived in
2. Yes, traveled once
3. Yes, traveled more than once
4. Yes, lived there for under a year
5. Yes, lived there for more than a year
APPENDIX G

DEMOGRAPHICS (PILOT)

The final set of questions is about your background.

1. What is your current age? ____

2. What Sex were you assigned at birth?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Intersex
   d. Prefer not to say

3. Some people describe themselves as transgender when they experience a different gender identity from their sex at birth. For example, a person born in a male body, but who feels female or lives as a woman. Do you consider yourself to be transgender?
   a. Yes, transgender, male to female
   b. Yes, transgender, female to male
   c. Yes, transgender, non-conforming
   d. No

4. Are you a U.S. Citizen?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. What is your highest level of education completed?
   a. Some high school
   b. High school diploma or equivalent
   c. Some college
   d. Associate’s degree (e.g., AA, AE, AFA, AS, ASN)
   e. Bachelor’s degree (e.g., BA, BBA, BFA, BS)
   f. Some post undergraduate work
   g. Master’s degree (e.g. MA, MBA, MFA, MS, MSW)
   h. Greater than master’s degree

6. Regarding economic issues (e.g., taxation, public spending) I am...
7. Regarding social issues (e.g. LGBT rights, multiculturalism) I am...
8. Regarding foreign policy (e.g., foreign aid, foreign intervention) I am...
UN officials are urging the world to act after at least 114 protestors were killed in one day in Myanmar. Civilian protesters have been continuously subjected to public torture, rape, and killings by police and military forces across the country. Friday marks the bloodiest day of protests since a military coup that overthrew the democratically-elected National League for Democracy (NLD) Party in February. United Nations Special Rapporteur for human rights in Myanmar Tom Andrews said in a statement that "words are not enough" to protect people's lives. "Words of condemnation or concern are frankly ringing hollow to the people of Myanmar while the military junta commits mass murder against them," he said. "The people of Myanmar need the world's support." The situation is further complicated by a lockdown of the nation’s ports and roads, rendering foreign aid nearly impossible.

The reported killings, and the arrests of several demonstrators in Aungban, occurred as protesters again took to the streets there and elsewhere, including the cities of Yangon and Mandalay, and the towns of Myingyan, Katha and Myawaddy, according to witnesses and media reports. Developments in Myanmar, which is also known as Burma, are becoming more difficult to confirm after authorities restricted the internet, which demonstrators use to organize and disseminate information. The UN Human Rights Office, which has been monitoring the violence, said Monday’s toll brings the total number of deaths since the February 1 coup to at least 510. Defense chiefs from a dozen countries, including Australia, Japan, and the United States issued a rare joint statement Saturday condemning Myanmar’s use of lethal force against unarmed people.

The National Unity Government of Myanmar, the NLD’s Government-in-exile, made an official appeal last month to the United States to intervene in Myanmar. Prime Minister Mahn Winn Khaing Thann met with U.S. lawmakers in the capital, requesting military aid to end the ongoing crisis in Myanmar. Congress appears to have refused their request. “The United States has decided not to help us. The President offered us blankets, but blankets do not stop the suffering of my people,” the Burmese prime minister said in a statement.

UN officials are urging the world to act after at least 114 protestors were arrested in one day in Myanmar. Demonstrators have gathered in the streets of Naypyidaw, Rangoon, and several other major cities in protest of the detainment of the democratically-elected government and suppression of free speech rights. Friday marks the largest day of protests since a military coup that overthrew the democratically-elected National League
for Democracy (NLD) Party in February. United Nations Special Rapporteur for human rights in Myanmar Tom Andrews said in a statement that "words are not enough" to protect people's freedom. "Words of condemnation or concern are frankly ringing hollow to the people of Myanmar while the military junta continues to suppress free speech," he said. "The people of Myanmar need the world's support." The situation is further complicated by a lockdown of the nation’s ports and roads, rendering foreign aid nearly impossible.

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**Australia-High-harm**

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**Australia/Low-harm**

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APPENDIX I

MORAL DIENGAGEMENT SCALE (PILOT)

After reading the article, please respond to the questions below.

1. It’s normal for some violence to break out in a poor country.
2. The story of what’s happening in Myanmar seems overblown.
3. The U.S. already does more to protect human rights than any other country.
5. The political and financial cost of intervention is too high for the U.S. to get involved.
7. Sending aid to Myanmar is expensive and won’t matter in the long run.
9. The problems in Myanmar will eventually sort itself out.
10. The U.S. shouldn’t feel obligated to help if no one else is.
11. The U.S. has a moral obligation to intervene in Myanmar.*
12. To say the United States is at fault is unjustified.
13. Rioting is often violent so it’s no wonder that some people are suffering.
14. We shouldn’t blame the entire government over a few bad actors.
15. This a problem between Myanmar’s people and its government.

Note. * = reversed; moral justification = 5, 6, 11, euphemistic labelling = 4, 13, advantageous comparison = 3, 8, displacement of responsibility = 14, 15, diffusion of responsibility = 8, 10, 12, distortion of consequences = 1, 2, 7, 9.
APPENDIX J

MORAL EXCLUSION OF THE VICTIM SCALE

Moral Exclusion of the Victim

*Note.* Burmese refers to the residents, ethnic groups, and inhabitants of Myanmar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burmese are only as valuable as what they can offer.</th>
<th>Burmese are very valuable as a group.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The U.S./Australia should not concern itself with the affairs of third-world countries.</td>
<td>The U.S./Australia should concern itself with the affairs of all countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Burmese people can only blame themselves.</td>
<td>The Burmese people are not at fault.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes people get what they probably deserved.</td>
<td>Suffering is never deserved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese people contribute nothing to the world.</td>
<td>Burmese people make the world a better place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese people are an uncivilized lot.</td>
<td>Burmese people are very civilized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The U.S./Australia should avoid contact with Burmese people.</td>
<td>The U.S./Australia should strive to make meaningful connections with Burmese people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese refugees would make the U.S./Australia weaker.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Moral Exclusion of the Bystander (U.S.)

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Next, we have a few questions relating to how you identify as an American.

1. Other nations could learn a lot from the United States.
2. In today’s world, the only way to know what to do is to rely on our nation’s leaders.
3. The U.S. Military is the best in the world.
4. Relative to other nations, the United States is a very moral nation.
5. One of the important things we have to teach children is to respect the leaders of our nation.
6. It is disloyal for Americans to criticize the United States.
7. The United States is better than other nations in all respects.
8. There is generally a good reason for every rule and regulation made by our national authorities.
APPENDIX M

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIORS AND CLOSENESS QUESTIONS

There are numerous ways that individuals can take action. To what extent are you willing to do each of these actions? (1-7 Likert-style scale, with a N/A option)

1. Write a letter or send an email to your local representative
2. Talk to your friends or family about Myanmar
3. Make or share posts about Myanmar on social media
4. Attend public demonstrations related to Myanmar
5. Sign up for any newsletters about Myanmar
6. Join a humanitarian organization actively providing aid in Myanmar

How much money (in U.S. Dollars) would you be willing to donate to aid the Burmese people? __________

Have you ever traveled to or lived in Myanmar?

1. No, never traveled to or lived in
2. Yes, traveled once
3. Yes, traveled more than once
4. Yes, lived there for under a year
5. Yes, lived there for more than a year

Do you have any friends or know anybody who is Burmese?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure
APPENDIX N

MANIPULATION / ATTENTION / HONESTY CHECKS

Manipulation checks

1. Based on the article, how life-threatening, if at all, does the situation in Myanmar appear to be?
2. Based on the article, how urgently, if at all, does Myanmar require aid or assistance?
3. Based on the article, how devastating would it be if the world did nothing about the situation in Myanmar?

Attention checks

1. Select Somewhat Disagree.
2. Select Agree.

Honesty check

Sometimes participants take their survey participation very seriously and sometimes less so, instead providing humorous or insincere answers to some or all questions. Completing this survey today, how seriously would you say you responded to the questions?

1. Rarely or never gave a serious response
2. Gave a serious response to some of the questions
3. Gave a serious response to about half of the questions
4. Gave a serious response to most of the questions
5. Gave a serious response to all or almost all of the questions
APPENDIX O

DEMOGRAPHICS

The final set of questions is about your background.

1. What is your current age, in years? (18-99)

2. What Sex were you assigned at birth?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Intersex
   d. Prefer not to say

3. Some people describe themselves as transgender when they experience a different gender identity from their sex at birth. For example, a person born in a male body, but who feels female or lives as a woman. Do you consider yourself to be transgender?
   a. Yes, transgender, male to female
   b. Yes, transgender, female to male
   c. Yes, transgender, non-conforming
   d. No

4. Are you a U.S. Citizen?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. What is your highest level of education completed?
   a. Some high school
   b. High school diploma or equivalent
   c. Some college
   d. Associate’s degree (e.g., AA, AE, AFA, AS, ASN)
   e. Bachelor’s degree (e.g., BA, BBA, BFA, BS)
   f. Some post undergraduate work
   g. Master’s degree (e.g. MA, MBA, MFA, MS, MSW)
   h. Greater than master’s degree

6. Overall, how liberal or conservative are your political views?
APPENDIX P

DISTRIBUTION PLOTS FOR STUDY VARIABLES

Moral Disengagement

Ingroup Glorification

Moral Exclusion of the Victim

Moral Exclusion of the U.S.
APPENDIX Q

Q-Q PLOTS FOR STUDY VARIABLES

Moral Disengagement

![Moral Disengagement Q-Q Plot](image1)

Ingroup Glorification

![Ingroup Glorification Q-Q Plot](image2)

Moral Exclusion of the Victim

![Moral Exclusion of the Victim Q-Q Plot](image3)

Moral Exclusion of the U.S.

![Moral Exclusion of the U.S. Q-Q Plot](image4)
APPENDIX R

HYPOTHESIS 3 SCATTER PLOTS

[Scatter plots showing the relationship between moral disengagement (US), moral exclusion (US), moral exclusion victim (US), and glorification (US).]