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I'm Dirty Therefore I Am: The Impact of Cleanliness On Morality

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Metaphors associating cleanliness with morality are abundant (e.g., "Cleanliness is next to godliness"). The association between being clean and pure being regarded as higher rank in society can be seen in many cultures around the world. This project will examine the relationship between physical cleanliness (i.e., purity mindset or cleanliness mindset) and moral judgments. Past research has found that priming physical cleanliness led to moral purity and therefore resulted in harsher moral judgments. The participants in the "dirty prime" and control group were less harsh in their moral judgments when compared to the "clean prime" group. Whereas, participants who were primed with the clean prime were harsher in their moral judgment. In general, studies on the cleanliness-moral purity link have examined reactions to controversial issues such as abortion, adultery, and pornography. This study will examine which of the five moral dimensions (i.e., harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, in-group/loyalty, authority/respect, purity/sanctity) are influenced by priming cleanliness. If data analysis reveals a significant relationship between being primed for cleanliness and moral judgment, then this study will bolster the findings of previous studies. Further, we will be able to determine exactly which moral dimensions are influenced by feeling clean and morally pure. Data for this study will be collected via the Qualtrics survey. Participants will be told that they are completing several unrelated tasks that will ask them to imagine different things and then to answer questions about them. They will then be primed with either cleanliness or being dirty and answer thirty questions from an adapted Moral Foundations Questionnaire. Finally, we will gather demographic information including; gender, age, ethnicity, conservatism-liberalism, and a single-item self-esteem measure.