Excuse Validation: A Cross-cultural Study*

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Abstract: If someone unintentionally breaks the rules, do they break the rules? In the abstract, the answer is obviously "yes." But, surprisingly, when considering specific examples of unintentional, blameless rule-breaking, approximately half of people judge that no rule was broken. This effect, known as *excuse validation*, has previously been observed in American adults. Outstanding questions concern what causes excuse validation, and whether it is peculiar to American moral psychology or cross-culturally robust. The present paper studies the phenomenon cross-culturally, focusing on Korean and American adults, and proposes a new explanation of why people engage in excuse validation, in terms of competing forces in human norm-psychology. The principal findings are that Americans and Koreans engaged in excuse validation at similar levels, and older adults were more likely to engage in excuse validation.

Keywords: rules; moral psychology; excuse validation; punishment; blame

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Introduction

Rules, punishment, and forgiveness

Rules are a universal feature of human culture (Sripada and Stich 2006). They help facilitate social life by coordinating expectations, preferences, and behavior. The ethnographic record suggests that, at some level of generality, rules pertaining to violence, mate selection, and resource allocation might be present in all human cultures (Brown 2017). With respect to rules regarding violence, the ethnographic record is corroborated by results from psychological studies revealing a widespread cross-cultural tendency to disapprove of direct physical violence (e.g. Hauser et al. 2007; Moore et al. 2011), although the popularity of violent sports and the representation of extreme violence in entertainment is evidence that such disapproval can be narrow and defeasible. With respect to norms of resource allocation, the ethnographic record is corroborated by results from experimental economics providing evidence of a cross-cultural tendency to avoid maximizing one's own gains in favor of decisions that also benefit others (e.g. Henrich et al. 2005; Oosterbeek, Sloof, and Kuilen 2004), although again there are exceptions. Of course, there is considerable cross-cultural variation in rules and associated behaviors (Benedict 1934; Graham et al. 2016), and further research might reveal that, upon closer analysis, no rule is culturally universal. But even if no specific rule is culturally universal, it still remains true that all human cultures espouse some set of rules or other. This might be due to an innate, species-typical module that causes us to formulate and follow rules (Sripada and Stich 2006; DeScioli and Kurzban 2009; Chudek and Henrich 2011). Or it might be due to the fact that rules are an optimal solution to coordination problems faced by people in all cultures, and over time our domain-general intel-

ligence, aided by repurposing some pre-existing cognitive mechanisms, ultimately leads all cultures to adopt them (Buckholtz and Marois 2012).

If rules are a universal feature of human culture, then, human nature being what it is, it follows that rule-breaking is too. When we observe rule-breaking, it often elicits an immediate negative emotional response (Haidt and Joseph 2004), which can motivate us to punish the transgressor (Fehr and Gächter 2002). And, as it turns out, punishment also appears to be a cultural universal, although willingness to punish and its severity varies across cultures (Henrich et al. 2006). Reflecting its social importance, punishment has long been studied by philosophers (e.g. Mill 1979; Feinberg 1970), theologians (e.g. Aquinas 1273), and social scientists (e.g. Bowles and Gintis 2004; Cushman 2008). Convergent evidence from economics and psychology supports the hypothesis that the evolution of punitive instincts was critical to the emergence of modern human prosociality and large-scale cooperation (Chudek and Henrich 2011). From an early age, humans are intrinsically motivated to punish rule-breakers (Rakoczy, Warneken, and Tomasello 2008; McAuliffe, Jordan, and Warneken 2015), and a range of theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that the internalization of social norms and a corresponding unselfish willingness to punish rule-breakers are critical in stabilizing cooperative social norms (Boyd and Richerson 1992; Fehr and Fischbacher 2004; Gintis 2011; Gavrilets and Richerson 2017).

But our punitive dispositions are not immutable. We don't always punish rule-breaking. Sometimes we forgive or excuse transgressions (Brandt 1969; Tetlock, Self, and Singh 2010). Mitigating circumstances and the agent's capabilities or state of mind can prompt forgiveness (e.g. Cushman 2008; Buckwalter and Turri 2015; for a review, see Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe 2014). Reflecting these intuitions, the legal system also gives these factors weight when determining guilt and punishment (Barnett, Brodsky, and Davis 2004; Shen et al. 2011; MacLeod

2016), and someone who habitually ignored them could be viewed as insensitive, perhaps even cruel. Indeed, the very same evolutionary logic that produced punitive instincts can also produce contrary instincts. For although punishment obviously costs the punished, it also costs the punisher. Remaining vigilant to detect rule-breaking requires effort and depletes cognitive resources. Perhaps more importantly, imposing punishment can invite retribution from the punished or their allies. These costs create an incentive to opt out of enforcement.

Why not leave the heavy punitive lifting to others, thereby conserving more resources for the direct betterment of you and your family? This inducement of *second-order free-riding* — i.e. benefitting from a punishment regime without contributing to it — creates a need for "punishment stabilization mechanisms" to disincentivize opting out (Boyd and Richerson 1992). It thus becomes advantageous to not only follow the rules oneself, but to signal to others that one is willing to do one's part in policing the social order (Gintis, Smith, and Bowles 2001; Jordan et al. 2016). This could help to explain some people's tendency to showcase not only their commitment to follow prevalent group norms, but also their commitment to condemn violations.

Competitive conflict and excuse validation

One interpretation of existing evidence is that the evaluation of rule-breaking has the potential to pit powerful psychological forces against one another. On the one hand, we have evolved a norm-psychology that motivates us to follow rules, punish rule-breaking, and appear to others that we have these motivations; these factors incline us toward punishment. On the other hand, we also want to avoid appearing insensitive, and self-interest induces us to let others bear the cost of policing norms; these factors can incline us against punishment. In light of this, one might predict an unsettled corner of our moral psychology dealing with rule-breaking. In particular, one

might expect to find sharp disagreement over cases that trigger these contrary impulses (compare Cushman and Greene 2012 on the psychological and neuroscientific relevance of longstanding moral dilemmas from the philosophical literature). The natural place to look for evidence of this competitive conflict would be cases of *blameless rule-breaking*. And given that the competing psychological forces are posited to be deep features of human psychology, implicated in the emergence of prosociality and cooperation in the ancestral population, we should expect to find evidence of this conflict across cultures.

Existing research supports the prediction with respect to adult residents of the United States. Cases of blameless rule-breaking give rise to disagreement and peculiar patterns among Americans. When considering cases of blameless rule-breaking, approximately half of Americans claim that no rule was broken at all (Turri 2013; Turri and Blouw 2015). Nevertheless, many of these same participants also claim that a rule was unintentionally broken. This phenomenon, known as *excuse validation*, is best illustrated with an example.

Consider Brenda, who is participating in a natural baking contest. Contest rules state that only natural sugar may be used as a sweetener, so Brenda was careful to buy only sweetener clearly labeled "natural sugar." But the label on the package is wrong because there was a mix-up at the factory: an artificial sweetener that looks just like sugar was accidentally packed in a package labeled "natural sugar" without anybody noticing. Brenda is not aware that this happened and, as a result, she uses artificial sweetener. Obviously, Brenda is breaking the contest rules, but when asked, "Did Brenda break the rules?" roughly half of American participants answered "No." By contrast, if instead of asking whether the agent "broke the rules," researchers asked whether the agent "unintentionally broke the rules," then a significantly different pattern emerged. A strong majority now answered "Yes." Moreover, when participants answered both

versions of the question (within-subjects), the most frequent combination of answers was "No she didn't break the rules" along with "Yes she unintentionally broke the rules" (Turri and Blouw 2015: experiment 6). But unintentionally breaking the rules entails breaking the rules, so this combination is inconsistent.

The finding is both limited and robust in instructive ways that begin ruling out a number of hypotheses. In control conditions where participants were not given specific exculpatory information, nearly everyone answered "Yes" to an unadorned rule-breaking attribution (i.e. "Did she break the rules?"), ruling out the hypothesis that many people are reluctant to identify rule-breaking as such, whether blameworthy or not. The same basic pattern occurred for scenarios involving many different kinds of activity, including farming, driving, chess, entertaining guests, and naval aviation, ruling out the hypothesis that it is incidental to a particular activity (Turri 2013: experiment 5; Turri and Blouw 2015: experiment 1). The same basic pattern occurred when using different terminology to probe for transgressions — "is there a sense in which it was incorrect for Brenda to use that sweetener?" — which addresses the concern that the finding is due to the semantics of "broke" or some other peculiar feature of that verb (Turri 2013: experiment 5; Turri and Blouw 2015: experiment 1).

Researchers offered the following explanation for this surprising pattern, in terms of the pragmatics of indirect speech acts (Turri and Blouw 2015). When exculpatory information is present, the question "Did she break the rules?" forces a choice between fairness and accuracy. People who answer "Yes" prioritize accuracy. People who answer "No" prioritize fairness. In particular, they want to avoid indirectly blaming a blameless agent. So their "No" means roughly "No, I'm not going to blame her." By contrast, the question "Did she unintentionally break the rules?" does not force a choice between fairness and accuracy. The adverb "unintentionally" can

be used to indicate that the agent should not be blamed for a bad outcome (Turri and Blouw 2015: Experiments 4 and 5). Instead, by agreeing that the agent unintentionally broke the rules, people can simultaneously accurately identify the rule-breaking *and* excuse it.

A complementary but different explanation suggests itself, in terms of competing forces in our evolved norm psychology, identified above. The question "Did she break the rules?" forces a choice, but not necessarily between accuracy and fairness. People who answer "Yes" are advertising their quality as social partners. They do this by demonstrating their commitment to calling out rule-breaking, a social good, even if it comes across as insensitive. This signal of quality carries weight because it risks a potential reputational cost (Gintis, Smith, and Bowles 2001). People who answer "No" recognize that the agent shouldn't be blamed and don't want to appear insensitive, but neither do they want to appear "soft on rule-breaking." How can these preferences be reconciled? Excuse validation provides a solution: no blame is warranted because she didn't even break the rules.

The two explanations just canvassed are not mutually exclusive. Both could capture part of the truth. One reason to think that the pragmatic explanation is incomplete, however, comes from some findings on the attribution of unintentional rule-breaking (i.e. answering "Yes" to "Did she unintentionally break the rules?"). In some samples, over 90% of participants attributed unintentional rule-breaking, but as few as 68% did so in other samples (Turri and Blouw 2015: experiment 6, the "insignificant harm" condition, p. 626). Overall, the evident central tendency is to attribute unintentional rule-breaking. But in light of all the current evidence, a reasonable estimate is that perhaps one-quarter of people still deny it. The pragmatic account does not explain why so many people do this.

But the norm-psychological account can explain it. Computational biology models predict the existence of some "undersocialized" individuals who cannot internalize social rules (e.g. psychopaths), alongside some "oversocialized" individuals who deeply internalize costly social rules (Gavrilets and Richerson 2017). Some oversocialization manifests in extraordinary personal sacrifice for a social cause, such as suicide bombers who kill themselves in the process of punishing opponents. Oversocialization can also manifest in other ways. For instance, consider someone who has so deeply internalized the norm *punish rule-breakers* that he cannot openly acknowledge blameless rule-breaking. The deeply internalized norm brooks no compromise and he cannot overcome this psychological hurdle. Such a person would be disposed to deny that even unintentional rule-breaking had occurred. In order to avoid unfairly condemning, he feels compelled to distort what is, to many of us, an evident truth.

Goals and preview of the experiment

The present research has two goals. On the one hand, it is the first cross-cultural study of excuse validation. As indicated above, my interpretation of findings from biology, anthropology, psychology, and economics predicts that excuse validation will occur across cultures, rather than being a curiosity of American moral psychology. To begin testing this prediction, I compared responses from Americans and Koreans. Americans were tested in American English and Koreans in Korean. English is an Indo-European language. I chose Korean because it provides a strong initial test of the cross-cultural prediction: it is a non-Indo-European language (Mallory and Adams 2006: 84) and a language isolate (Song 2005: 15). These features make it unlikely that observed similarities are based on superficial verbal associations due to recent historical relatedness of the languages. Aside from culture, two other demographic variables of potential in-

terest are biological sex and age, both of which can affect moral judgment (Friesdorf, Conway, and Gawronski 2015; Cheng and Yim 2008). Previous research on excuse validation did not find an effect of sex, but the studies were not highly powered, so we should cautiously interpret this null finding. Previous research did not examine the potential effect of age on excuse validation.

On the other hand, the present research aims for a more reliable estimate of the percentage of people who deny unintentional rule-breaking, which is relevant to assessing the respective merits of the two explanations of excuse validation already discussed (the pragmatic explanation, in terms of indirect speech acts, and the norm-psychology explanation, in terms of oversocialization). As mentioned above, most participants in previous studies attributed unintentional rule-breaking, but the percentage of participants who denied it varied from approximately 10% to over 30%. The higher the percentage who deny it, the more incomplete the pragmatic explanation of excuse validation appears. To help better estimate the true percentage, the present study is much more highly powered than previous research on excuse validation.

American and Korean participants read one of several scenarios adapted from previous research on excuse validation. The key feature of the scenarios tested is that an agent reasonably believes that he is following a salient rule, but he isn't actually following the rule, due to factors outside of his awareness and control. Participants then rated whether the agent broke the rule, unintentionally broke the rule, and was blameworthy. All experimental stimuli were translated into Korean, discussed with Korean-speaking informants, and then backtranslated into English by a bi-linguial research assistant. An appendix includes all the stimuli used in this experiment.

The results replicated the basic pattern observed in previous research: low blame attribution, chance rates of rule-breaking attribution, and high unintentional rule-breaking attribution. This same pattern occurred for both Koreans and Americans. In comparison to previous findings,

slightly more people were willing to deny unintentional rule-breaking and to attribute blame. As in previous research, participant sex did not affect any judgments. But, unexpectedly, participant age affected attributions of rule breaking, with older participants being more likely to engage in excuse validation.

Methods

I determined sample size with a power analysis for one-sample proportion tests. The analysis assumed a small effect size (h = 0.2), used an alpha level of 0.05, and achieved power of 0.95. A sample size of 325 satisfied these constraints. As a precaution against attrition and comprehension failure, I recruited some extra participants, for a total of 360. Below I report all exclusion criteria, manipulations and measures used in the study. I used R 3.5.2 for all analyses (R Core Team 2018). All experimental stimuli, translations, data, and analysis code are available at the Open Science Foundation project for this paper (osf.io/8juyc).

Participants

Three hundred sixty people were recruited for the study. Of these, 6 did not consent and were not tested. Of the 354 people who were tested, 25 failed a comprehension question and were excluded from analysis, so the final sample included 329 participants. Their mean age was 38.33 years (range = 20-71, sd = 10.58), and 53% (173 of 329) were female. Korean participants were recruited and tested using an online platform provided by DooIt (http://www.dooit.co.kr), a research firm based in Seoul, South Korea. American participants were recruited and tested using an online platform of Amazon Mechanical Turk (https://www.mturk.com) and Qualtrics (https://www.qualtrics.com).

Materials and procedure

Participants first read a scenario about an agent who breaks a salient rule. Then they answered three questions regarding whether the agent broke the rule, unintentionally broke the rule, and can be blamed. These questions appeared on separate screens, in a fixed order, and with the story visible above. Response options for the questions were "Yes/No" (rotated randomly). Participants then went to a new screen and answered a comprehension question. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three structurally similar scenario conditions. The scenarios differed in the type of activity that the agent was engaged in (driving, baking, or playing a board game). The scenario factor was not of independent theoretical interest and was included to support generalization of the results beyond the specific stimuli studied here (Clark 1973; Baayen, Davidson, and Bates 2008; Judd, Westfall, and Kenny 2012). All stimuli used in this study (English and Korean) are available at the OSF project for this paper (osf.io/8juyc). To give readers a sense of the materials, I include one scenario and the questions here.

> Driving
>
> Shawn just had his car serviced and is driving home from the mechanic's shop. He wants to get home without unnecessary delay, but he does not want to break any traffic laws.
>
> According to the law, the maximum speed is 60 miles per hour. Shawn checks his speedometer. The speedometer says that he is going 60 miles per hour.
>
> But the mechanic intentionally tampered with a setting on the speedometer, so that it doesn't always reliably measure the car's speed. Shawn isn't aware that the mechanic did that. As a result, Shawn is actually driving 65 miles per hour.

1. Did Shawn break the traffic law? (Yes/No)

2. Did Shawn unintentionally break the traffic law? (Yes/No)

3. Can Shawn be blamed for speeding? (Yes/No)

4. How fast was Shawn driving? (65mph/50mph)

Data analysis

The three dependent variables of interest were attributions of rule-breaking, unintentional rule-breaking, and blame (within-subjects). I counted an answer of "Yes" to any of these questions as an attribution of the relevant status (coded as 1), and an answer of "No" as a denial (coded as 0).

The primary demographic variable of interest was culture (Korean versus American); of secondary interest were participant sex and age. To assess whether these variables affected the three attributions, I analyzed participant response using a generalized linear mixed effects model. The model included fixed effects of Culture (Korean, American), Judgment (within-subjects: broke, unintentionally broke, blame), and participant age and sex, and random intercepts for scenario and participant nested within scenario. I followed this up with proportion tests against chance for attributions rates for the three judgments.

The basic pattern observed in previous research was low blame attribution, chance rates of rule-breaking attribution, and high unintentional rule-breaking attribution. To assess the robustness of those patterns, I compared the observed rates to test proportions based on previous findings, which I set at .10 for blame, .50 for rule-breaking, and .75 for unintentional rule-breaking. Another pattern of interest from previous research was the proportion of participants who gave the inconsistent pair of responses of denying rule-breaking while attributing unintentional rule-breaking. I set the test proportion for this combination at .40.

Results

The linear mixed effects analysis revealed main effects of Judgment and participant age (see Figure 1 and Table 1). Culture and participant sex were insignificant and there were no interactions. Attribution was higher for unintentional rule-breaking than for rule-breaking, and it was higher for rule-breaking than for blame. Older participants were less likely to make an attribution. Americans were numerically more likely to make an attribution, but this difference did not reach the conventional threshold for statistical significance ($p < .05$), although it did reach what is sometimes called "marginal" or "trending" significance ($.10 > p > .05$). Overall, attribution was at chance for rule-breaking, above chance for unintentional rule-breaking, and below chance for blame (see Table 2).

Table 1. Generalized linear mixed model's fixed effects.

term	estimate	std.error	z	p.value
(Intercept)	0.349	0.367	0.953	.341
Unintentional	1.224	0.260	4.701	<.001
Blame	-1.847	0.319	-5.797	<.001
American	0.467	0.252	1.851	.064
Male	0.152	0.177	0.856	.392
age	-0.021	0.008	-2.530	.011
Unintentional:American	-0.341	0.348	-0.979	.328
Blame:American	0.298	0.401	0.743	.458

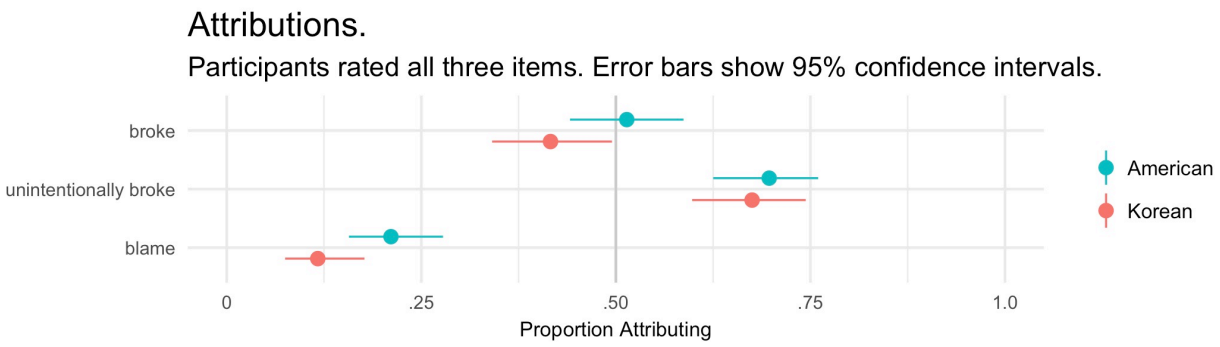

Figure 1. Proportion of participants attributing rule-breaking, unintentional rule-breaking, and blame (within-subjects). Error bars show 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, binomial tests, and effect sizes for the three attributions.

Judgment	n	k	prop	conf.low	conf.high	p	test.prop	h
broke	329	154	.468	.415	.522	.27	.5	-0.064
unintentionally broke	329	226	.687	.635	.735	<.001	.5	0.383
blame	329	55	.167	.131	.211	<.001	.5	-0.728

The proportion of participants attributing rule-breaking did not differ from the hypothesized proportion (see Table 3). The proportion of participants attributing blame was significantly higher than the hypothesized proportion. The proportion attributing unintentional rule breaking was significantly lower than the hypothesized proportion. The proportion of participants who selected the inconsistent combination (denying rule-breaking and attributing unintentional rule-breaking) was .33. This was significantly lower than the hypothesized proportion, $\chi^2(1) = 6.758$, p = .009, h = -0.149, test value = 0.4; but it was also higher than chance, $\chi^2(1) = 10.335$, p = .001, h = 0.173, test value = 0.25.

Table 3. Tests against hypothesized proportions for the three attributions.

Judgment	n	k	test.prop	p	h

broke	329	154	.50	.270	-0.064
unintentionally broke	329	226	.75	.011	-0.140
blame	329	55	.10	<.001	0.199

To follow up on the unexpected effect of age on attributions, I conducted separate binary logistic regressions for each attribution (broke, unintentionally broke, blame). The models included Culture, Scenario, and participant age and sex as predictors. Age did not significantly predict attribution of unintentional rule-breaking ($p = .209$) or blame ($p = .617$), but it did significantly predict attribution of rule-breaking ($p = .018$).

To further explore this effect, I generated test data for two qualitatively different scenarios based on the linear model. On the one hand, consider a Korean female who read the baking scenario. The predicted probability of a rule-breaking attribution is .502 if she is 20 years old; it is .371 if she is 40 years old; and it is .208 if she is 70 years old. On the other hand, consider an American male who read the game scenario. The predicted probability of a rule-breaking attribution is .673 if he is 20 years old; it is .545 if he is 40 years old; and it is .349 if he is 70 years old. Figure 2 visualizes the predicted probability of a rule-breaking attribution based on the participant's age.

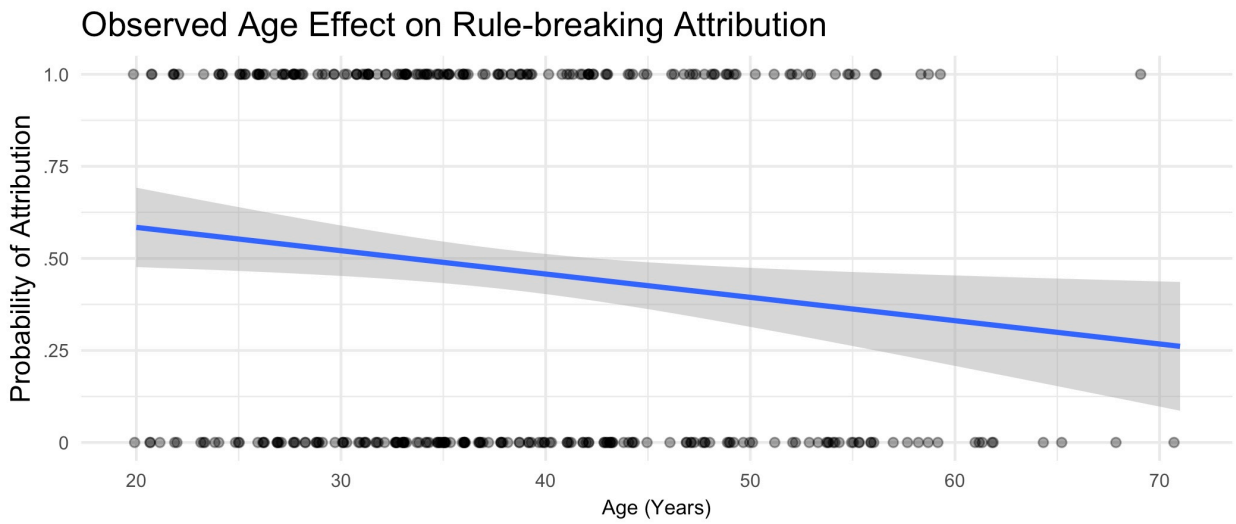

Figure 2. Observed age effect on rule-breaking attribution. Points represent individual attributions (=1) or denials (=0).

Conclusion

Humans are disposed to react negatively to rule-breaking and failures to punish rule-breaking. Current evidence indicates that these first- and second-order dispositions are proximately caused by negative emotions, especially anger (Rozin et al. 1999; Royzman et al. 2014), and ultimately caused by selective pressures driving gene-culture coevolution, which favored individuals with psychological traits that facilitated cooperation, including a *norm-psychology* (Sripada and Stich 2006; Chudek and Henrich 2011). At the same time, in addition to posessing punitive instincts, humans are capable of perspective-taking and sympathy, care about how they are perceived, and often forgive transgressions (Tomasello and Vaish 2013). In light of this, one might predict disagreement over cases of blameless rule-breaking and, moreover, to observe such disagreement across cultures.

This paper began testing that prediction by building on previous findings on excuse validation. Excuse validation occurs when considering cases of blameless rule-breaking. Researchers

have found that when considering such cases, approximately half of participants deny that a rule was broken (Turri 2013; Turri and Blouw 2015). Many people will even offer inconsistent judgments, denying that the agent broke the rules but claiming that the agent unintentionally broke the rules. Two limitations of prior research on this topic are that it studied only American adults, and the studies were not highly powered. In this paper, I reported a much more highly powered cross-cultural study on American and Korean adults.

The results are theoretically informative, in two ways. On the one hand, they validate the prediction based on evolutionary norm-psychology: excuse validation occurred at similar rates among Koreans and Americans. In this respect, the present study also contributes to the "fault finding" research program in moral psychology, which has productively studied moral dilemmas (Cushman and Greene 2012). The basic idea is that longstanding debates over moral dilemmas provide clues to dissociable psychological systems contributing to moral judgment (i.e. mental "fault lines"). For example, one thought experiment asks whether it is morally acceptable to smother a baby to death to save the lives of an entire village, with the catch being that if you don't smother the baby to death, a group of enemy soldiers will kill the entire village, including the baby. This case gives rise to competitive conflict between two psychological processes with distinct neural signatures: an immediate emotional aversion to harming the baby, and a calculated response to minimize overall harm. Different parts of our mind offer inconsistent answers to the same question, and we can't be satisfied with either. Analagously, my project could be understood as leveraging disagreement about cases of blameless rule-breaking to gain psychological insight. Of course, "Did Brenda break the rules?" does not pose a dilemma in the same way that "Is it okay for Brenda to smother the baby?" does. However, as researchers have noted

(Cushman and Greene 2012, pp. 276–7), one needn't begin with moral dilemmas specifically. Any case that prompts competitive conflict can provide insight into psychological architecture.

On the other hand, the present findings sharpen our understanding of the incidence of excuse validation. In line with previous findings, approximately half of participants denied that the agent broke the rules. In contrast with previous findings, a significantly higher percentage of participants went so far as to deny that the agent unintentionally broke the rules. Based on previous findings, I hypothesized that up to 25% of participants did this, but in the present study 31% did. Also in line with previous findings, participant sex did not affect any of the judgments studied here. Previous research did not investigate the potential role of participant age in excuse validation. Here I found that older participants were more likely to engage in excuse validation (i.e. to deny rule-breaking in cases of blameless rule-breaking).

Further research is needed to understand any connection between age and excuse validation. Most importantly, the result should be replicated before we take it seriously enough to start testing hypotheses about why it occurs. Assuming that it does replicate, two prior findings might provide insight into generating hypotheses. On the one hand, older people are more forgiving than younger people (Girard and Mullet 1997; Cheng and Yim 2008). On the other hand, when faced with situations involving interpersonal problems, older adults are more likely to adopt an "avoidance-denial strategy." This means that they are more likely to "suppress emotions" and "deny" potentially inflammatory aspects of the situation (Blanchard-Fields, Mienaltowski, and Seay 2007).

The present study is limited most importantly by the fact that it focused on only two cultures, American and Korean. This comparison provides a strong initial test of the cross-cultural prediction, but it remains to be seen whether excuse validation occurs in other cultures too. It

could be particularly interesting to look at excuse validation in more traditional cultures, especially those that are not involved in a market economy. The result on age also suggests that it is worthwhile to study excuse validation in children, particular whether the trend observed here extends through childhood, with young children being the least likely to engage in excuse validation.

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