

EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS MUSIC ON DISHONEST BEHAVIOR



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INTRODUCTION

- Previous studies suggest that religious reminders and contexts enhance the saliency of group-specific norms and increase **prosocial behaviour** (Shariff et al. 2016).
- However, the effects of religious situational factors on **dishonest behaviour** are less well documented and the underlying perceptual-behavioural mechanisms through which religious cues affect decision-making are still not fully understood.
- Moving beyond both the priming carrying semantic associations with moral norms and the anthropomorphic depictions triggering reputational concerns, we tested how **an arbitrary subtle sensory cue associated with religion**, that does not bear any inherent meaning by itself, affects moral behaviour.

METHODS

Experiment I

Participants

- general Hindu population in Mauritius, student populations in Czech Republic and North Carolina ($n = 254$)

Independent variable

- pre-screened instrumental music with no lyrics, 2 min duration in headphones, similar in sound and tempo
 - religious music** (site-specific drums and flute sound played at Thaipusam Kavadi; Bach's *Ave Maria*; Bach's *BWV 147*)
 - secular music** (site-specific Bollywood song; Tchaikovsky's *Romance for piano in F Minor*; Bach's *BWV 140*)
 - white noise** (control)

Dependent variable

- a **chance to dishonestly report** on solved mathematical equations increasing monetary reward (adapted from Mazar et al. 2008)

Experiment II

Participants

- student populations in North Carolina, Czech Republic, and Japan ($n = 456$)

Independent variable

- whole task duration vs 2 min prior to task
 - religious music** (Bach's *Ave Maria*; Japan: gaga music)
 - secular music** (Bach's *Romance for piano*; Japan: koto music)
 - white noise**
 - no sound** (control)

Dependent variable

- playing a **game where self-reported performance dictated payment** (the Dots Game adapted from Mazar et al. 2008)
- 200 trials vs 20

DISCUSSION

- Significant **Condition*Religiosity** interaction **across all sites**, with religious participants being more influenced by religious stimuli than non-religious participants, suggests that religious music can function as a subtle moral cue, however, only **for those who previously formed this moral association** via cultural socialization and ritual participation.

REFERENCES

- Shariff, A. F., Willard, A. K., Andersen, T., and Norenzayan, A. (2016). Religious priming: a meta-analysis with a focus on prosociality. *Personal. Soc. Psychol. Rev.* 20, 27–48.
- Mazar, N., Amir, O., and Ariely, D. (2008). The dishonesty of honest people: a theory of self-concept maintenance. *J. Mark. Res.* 45, 633–644.



Experiment I - USA, Czech Republic, Mauritius

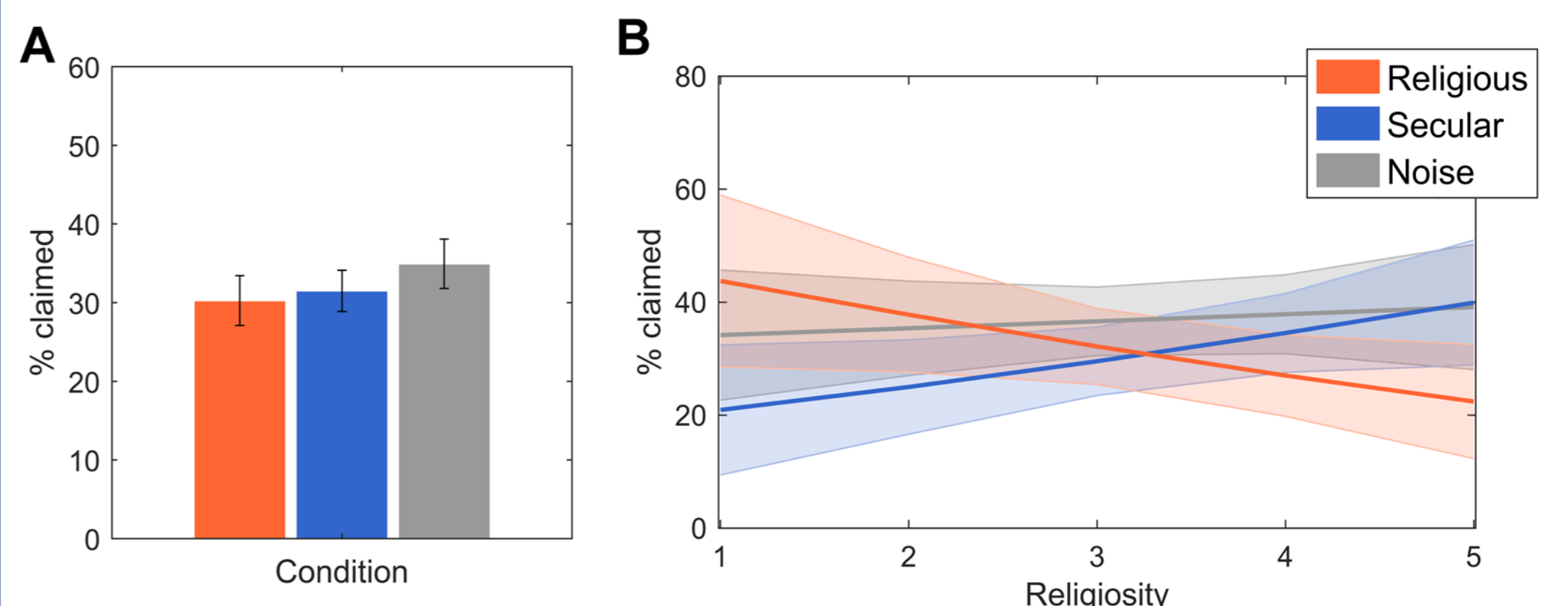
Lang, M., Mitkidis, P., Kundt, R., Nichols, A. D., Krajčiková, L., & Xygalatas, D. (2016). Music As a Sacred Cue? Effects of Religious Music on Moral Behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology* 7(814), 1-13.

Experiment II - USA, Czech Republic, Japan

Nichols, A. D., Lang, M., Kavanagh, C., Kundt, R., Yamada, J., Ariely, D., & Mitkidis, P. (Forthcoming). Replicating the Effects of Auditory Religious Cues on Dishonest Behavior.

RESULTS

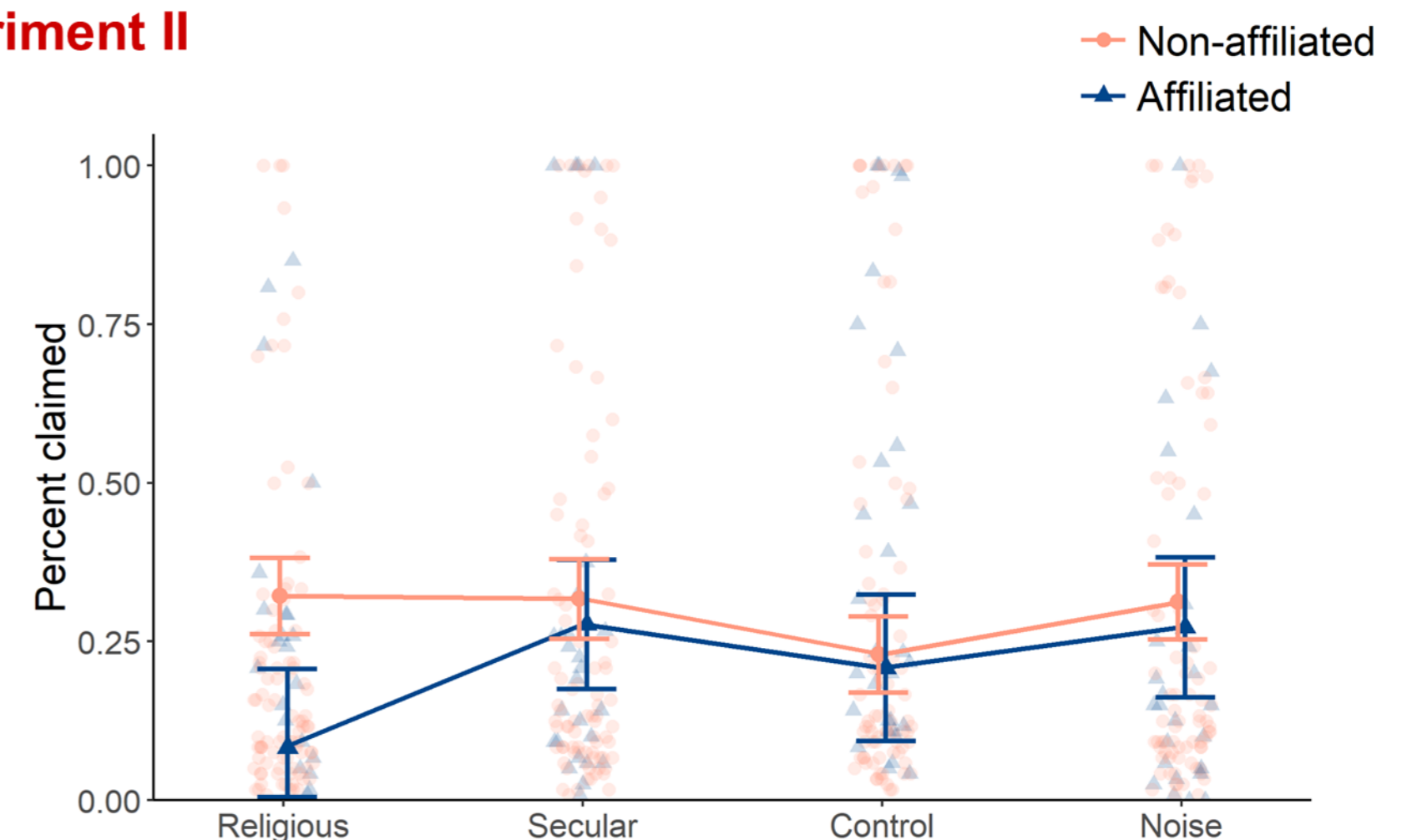
Experiment I



(A) The effects of different stimuli on the percent of matrices that were claimed as correctly solved above the expected levels with \pm SEM. While controlling for the effects of site, there were no significant differences between conditions.

(B) Predicted values with 95% confidence intervals for the Condition*Religiosity interaction. The significantly different slopes suggest that religious participants cheated less upon being exposed to religious music.

Experiment II



Estimated values with 95% CI for the interaction between condition and religious affiliation layered over a scatter plot of raw data. The religious prime was effective only in participants affiliated to religious organization where our stimuli came from.

