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Do forgiving God primes strengthen support for state sanctioned punishment?

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Abstract: Do forgiving God primes strengthen support for state-sanctioned punishment?

Laurin et al (2012) found that beliefs in powerful, intervening Gods (both in general and when made salient) reduce people's endorsement of state-sanctioned punishment. In light of this, we investigated whether the manner in which God intervenes (via forgiveness or punishment) influences people's endorsement of state-sanctioned punishment.

Across four studies we explored a) whether priming participants with a forgiving God and b) whether salient, forgiving God beliefs increase endorsements of state-sanctioned punishment. The rationale being that a forgiving God will lead people to view punishment as a responsibility that lies with them rather than one outsourced to God. Our results revealed no evidence for effects of forgiving God primes or salient forgiving god beliefs on endorsements of state-sanctioned punishment. We discuss the implications of these findings for extant theories of religious prosociality and proportionality-based accounts of morality.