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Reasoning about the Scope of Religious Norms: Evidence from Hindu and Muslim Children in
India

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Abstract

Conflicts arise when members of one religion apply their norms to members of another religion. Two studies explored how 100 9- to 15-year-old Hindu and Muslim children from India reason about the scope of religious norms. Both Hindus and Muslims from a diverse Hindu-Muslim school (Study 1) and Hindus from a homogeneous Hindu school (Study 2) more often judged it wrong for Hindus to violate Hindu norms, compared to Muslim norms, and said the opposite for Muslims. In contrast, children judged it wrong for both Hindus and Muslims to harm others. Thus, even in a setting marred by religious conflict, children can restrict the scope of a religion's norms to members of that religion, providing a basis for peaceful co-existence.

Keywords: religious norms, moral development

Reasoning about the Scope of Religious Norms: Evidence from Hindu and Muslim

Children in India

Communal conflicts often arise over differences between religions. Within Hinduism (but not Islam) for example, eating beef is prohibited, and within Islam (but not Hinduism), it is compulsory to fast between sunrise and sunset during Ramadan. In the Indian sub-continent, such differences in religious norms have triggered communal violence. For instance, between 2010 and 2017, 28 Indians were killed and 124 injured – most of them Muslims – because they were suspected of eating beef or being involved in the beef industry (Abraham & Rao, 2017). Similarly, within Pakistan, many religious minorities have been accused of blasphemies of the Quran, and either targeted by vigilantes or punished by the state (Amnesty International, 2016). Conflicts over religion, of course, are not limited to South Asia, but are present in most regions of the world, and have arisen throughout history (Atran & Ginges, 2012).

Critically, these communal conflicts need not arise if adherents of a particular religion limit the *scope* of their religious norms to members of their own religious group. By the scope of a norm, we mean the individuals whose actions are evaluated with the respect to the norm. If members of a religious group believe that their norms apply to everyone, they may be outraged by perceived “violations” by outgroup members, and use them to justify violence. For example, one Hindu “cow protector” justified his actions by stating: “In our beliefs, it says the cow is the mother of the whole world [...] Every country and every state should believe in it” (Safi, 2016).

Additionally, peaceful co-existence within a pluralistic society may depend not just on how members of religious groups conceptualize the scope of *their own* religion’s norms, but also on how they reason about the norms of *other religions*, and whether they believe that members of other religions should follow their own norms, e.g., such that Hindus believe Muslims should

follow Muslim norms, and vice versa. Believing that members of another religious group should follow their own norms entails respect for those norms, and could promote peaceful coexistence.

Prior research has indicated that children distinguish between the scope of different kinds of norms from early in life (Killen & Smetana, 2015; Turiel, 1983). For instance, while children hold that moral prohibitions against harming others apply to everyone, they appear to believe that social conventions such as how to dress or play a game apply only to individuals within a particular group or context (e.g. Dahl & Kim, 2014; Schmidt, Rakoczy, & Tomasello, 2012; for a review, see Killen & Smetana, 2015). However, there has been relatively little research on children's beliefs about the scope of their own religious norms and those of other religious groups (cf. Nucci & Turiel, 1993; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987).

In the present studies, we explored the developmental basis of religious tolerance by investigating how Hindu and Muslim children from K-12 schools in Gujarat Province, India, reason about the scope of Hindu and Muslim norms. Specifically, we presented children with vignettes in which Hindu and Muslim protagonists violated Hindu and Muslim norms and asked children to evaluate these actions and justify their judgments. Additionally, we explored how children reason about the conditions in which ingroup violations of religious norms would be permissible and contrasted children's reasoning about violations of religious norms with their reasoning about violations of a moral norm against physical harm (Turiel, 2002, 2015a). The question of how children reason about religious norms is of central importance because children's understanding of the scope of religious norms is likely to play a critical role in whether communal conflicts are prolonged or reduced over time. This question is also timely, given that violence and discrimination on the basis of religion has been on the rise in recent years across the world (Pew Research Center, 2014).

As we review below, the setting of our studies was interesting, given the recent history of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims in Gujarat (Varadarajan, 2002), and the rise of Hindu nationalism in India more broadly (Jha, 2017; Safi, 2017). These events, together with previous evidence that Hindu and Muslim children at the schools from which we recruited our participants exhibit significant intergroup bias (Dunham, Srinivasan, Dotsch, & Barner, 2014), suggest a climate in which it may be difficult for children to restrict their religious norms to their own group and expect members of other groups to follow their own customs. Our studies speak to whether it is possible for children to develop religious tolerance under such circumstances, and hold implications for children growing up in similar conditions across the world. Additionally, we explore the role of intergroup contact on children's beliefs about religious norms by comparing the responses of Hindu children who attend a diverse Hindu-Muslim school (Study 1) with the responses of Hindu children from a homogeneous Hindu school (Study 2).

Determining the Scope of Religious Norms

Here, we define *religious norms* as norms that (1) stem primarily from religious authorities such as gods, priests, or religious texts and (2) lack intrinsic consequences for others' welfare and rights (Nucci & Turiel, 1993). Thus, although most religions contain norms pertaining to others' welfare or rights – e.g., biblical commandments against killing and stealing – we will refer to these as moral norms rather than as religious norms in this paper.

For several reasons, children may face a challenge in determining the scope of religious norms. First, in the process of learning about their religion, children are likely to be exposed to a variety of norms of different scope, some of which could apply narrowly to members of their own religious group, and others that could apply more broadly to individuals across religious boundaries. Pope Francis, for instance, issued an encyclical about global climate change (Green,

2015) and as noted above, religious authorities often discuss moral issues, like stealing, that pertain to others' welfare and rights. Such moral issues could be considered wrong not simply because they are prohibited by the religion, but also because they have direct consequences for victims, and thus could be thought of as applying to all people (Turiel, 1983, 2015).

Second, children may have difficulty determining the scope of any given religious norm because it may be ambiguously stated, or left entirely unstated by religious authorities and scriptures. For instance, the Bible introduces the Ten Commandments as a set of rules that Moses was asked to communicate to the Israelites. However, the commandments are typically seen as applying to all members of Judaism and Christian faiths. Some have even argued that the ten commandments apply to everyone (Bravin, 2001), even though the first commandment of having one god conflicts with polytheistic religions as well as with atheism.

Third, children's beliefs about the scope of their own religion's norms could be affected by information they receive from other, ostensibly non-religious sources, like government officials or laws. For example, within nations that employ laws related to religious scripture (e.g., Sharia law), or otherwise promote ties between the government and a state religion, children could come to expect that the norms of the dominant religion have broad scope. For instance, although the Indian constitution asserts that India is a secular nation, several Indian states have enacted laws that prohibit the slaughter of cows and a national ban was recently enacted against the sale of cows for slaughter (i.e., even though eating beef is not prohibited in Islam; Parth, 2017). Statements from political leaders have also promoted a conception of India as a Hindu nation (Jha, 2017), potentially affecting beliefs about the scope of Hindu norms.

A final complication in determining the scope of a religious norm is whether children believe that others are aware of and subscribe to the norm. For example, a Hindu child may not

hold a Muslim child culpable for eating beef if they reason that the Muslim child doesn't understand that eating beef is wrong, because they haven't been taught so by their religion. Past research shows that children and adults consider others' beliefs and intentions when evaluating their actions (Helwig, Zelazo, & Wilson, 2001; Killen, Mulvey, Richardson, Jampol, & Woodward, 2011; Young & Tsoi, 2013). But we currently know little about whether children are tolerant of actions based on divergent religious beliefs and norms.

Developing an understanding of the scope of religious norms is particularly pressing when people from different religions live in close proximity, as was the case in our study. As a Muslim, should one chastise a Hindu who eats during Ramadan? And as a Hindu, should one protest against Muslims that eat beef? When children encounter these situations they are forced to take a stance on the scope of religious norms, either implicitly or explicitly.

Religious Coexistence and Conflict among Hindus and Muslims

The relation between Hindu and Muslim groups in the Indian subcontinent has long been fraught with conflict (Khan, 2008). Tensions between these communities motivated the partition of British India into the separate nations of India and Pakistan in 1947, which itself led to widespread violence along the border, as millions of Hindus living in modern-day Pakistan and Muslims living in modern-day India were uprooted from their respective homes (Khan, 2008). The violent events stemming from partition have affected relations between the two countries up to the present day, especially concerning the disputed territory of Kashmir.

Tensions between India and Pakistan have often been mirrored by Hindu-Muslim tensions within India. One of the largest conflicts occurred in 2002 in Gujarat – the site of the present studies – when a train carrying Hindu pilgrims burst into flames, leaving 59 dead. Blaming Muslims for the deaths, mobs of Hindus committed violent acts against Muslims,

resulting in the deaths of about 1,000 people (mostly Muslims), and the destruction of Muslim homes and places of worship (Varadarajan, 2002). There have been widespread allegations that officials from the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – including Narendra Modi, the chief minister of Gujarat at the time of the riots – were either complicit in the violence or did not do enough to stop it (Dugger, 2002). Since 2002, the Hindu nationalistic movement has grown, as evidenced by the dominant representation of the BJP in the national parliament and the ascension of Mr. Modi to prime minister (Safi, 2017). In line with a vision of India as a Hindu nation, there have been efforts to emphasize commonalities among Hindus while erasing differences, protect Hindu traditions and holy sites, and undo protections for Islamic laws governing personal matters for Muslims (Jha, 2017).

Consistent with this backdrop, previous work shows that by at least third grade, Hindu and Muslim children in Gujarat – recruited from the same schools as the present studies – exhibit significant intergroup bias on measures like the Implicit Association Test (Dunham et al., 2014). These findings, together with the history of communal violence and rise in Hindu nationalism described above, suggest a climate in which children may be prompted to extend their own religious norms to members of other groups, and to respond unfavorably toward the norms of other religions. Consistent with this idea, previous studies indicate that experiencing conflict with and perceiving threat from another group can affect one's attitudes and moral reasoning toward that group (Atran & Ginges, 2012; Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Nesdale, Maass, Durkin, & Griffiths, 2005; Velasco González, Verkuyten, Weesie, & Poppe, 2008). However, children might still develop tolerant religious attitudes within such circumstances; the fact that children prefer members of their own religious group need not imply that they are insensitive to the welfare and rights of others (Killen, Rutland, Abrams, Mulvey, & Hitti, 2013).

Children's Developing Conceptions of Norms

By preschool age, most children distinguish between moral, conventional, and other norms for how to behave (see Killen & Smetana, 2015; Turiel, 1983, 2015). By moral norms, we mean norms that protect the rights and wellbeing of others, for instance prohibitions against hitting or stealing. Violations of fundamental moral norms are viewed as wrong by children across the world (Ardila-Rey & Killen, 2001; Hollos, Leis, & Turiel, 1986; Nucci, Camino, & Sapiro, 1996; Nucci & Weber, 1995; Turiel, 2008). Children justify negative evaluations of moral violations with references to the welfare and rights of victims, and deem that it would be wrong to violate moral norms even in a community without societal rules against moral violations. In contrast, social conventions serve to coordinate and structure social interactions, and their violation has no direct consequences to victims. While the content of conventions vary considerably between communities (e.g. the specific clothing required by dress codes), children typically conceptualize conventions as contingent on authority commands and societal rules. A number of studies have shown that most children say that conventional violations would be permissible in a context where the relevant convention does not exist.

Far less research has investigated children's developing understanding of religious norms. Religious norms appear to share some but – crucially – not all of the features of social conventions. For instance, most view social conventions as alterable by some person or group of persons, for instance a teacher, parent, or a legislature (Laupa, 1991; for reviews, see Killen & Smetana, 2015; Turiel, 1983). However, insofar as priests, imams, or religious texts are seen as speaking on behalf of one or more gods, these earthly religious authorities may not be entitled to change all religious rules. Moreover, whereas the perceived scope of social conventions is

typically limited to a specific group or institutional setting, religious norms could plausibly be viewed as having broader scope, for reasons discussed before.

In a pioneering study, Nucci and Turiel (1993) explored reasoning about religious norms among 10- to 17-year-olds from Judeo-Christian religious groups in the United States. Children were asked about religious norms from their own religion (e.g. work on the Sabbath) as well as moral issues (e.g. hitting). Overall, children provided different kinds of justifications for judgments about religious and moral violations, were less likely to view their own religious norms as applicable to followers of other religions compared to moral rules, and were more likely to view religious norms as alterable by God or other religious authorities, compared to moral norms. Further supporting the idea that children can accept religious differences, other studies have found American children to be tolerant of divergent religious or metaphysical beliefs (Heiphetz, Spelke, Harris, & Banaji, 2013; Wainryb et al., 2001). In contrast, children in these studies were not similarly pluralistic about moral issues or about empirical facts. However, these studies focused on religious beliefs and did not investigate children's views about religious norms for how to act. Addressing the latter issue, Shweder and colleagues (Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987) argued that children and adults from eastern India often extend the scope of many Hindu norms to non-Hindus (for discussion, see Turiel, Killen, & Helwig, 1987).

Critically, these previous studies leave open a number of central issues about the development of children's conceptions of religious norms. First, we do not know how children's conceptions of religious norms develop in regions with a history of conflict between religious groups, such as Hindu and Muslim populations in India. The children studied in Nucci and Turiel (1993) were raised in settings that were relatively free of religious conflict, and were asked about whether their religious norms applied to followers of a hypothetical "other religion". In contrast,

in the present studies, we explored how children from schools in Gujarat, India, reason about violations of their religious norms by members of a specific religious outgroup with whom there has been significant communal conflict and toward whom children from the same schools exhibit significant intergroup bias (Dunham et al., 2014). Understanding the development of children's conceptions of religious norms under such conditions could inform efforts toward promoting religious tolerance in regions of religious conflict more broadly.

Second, because children in Nucci and Turiel (1993) were only asked about whether they believed that *their own* religious norms applied to others, they leave open how children reason about the norms of *other religions*, and whether members of other religions ought to follow their own religious norms (Killen et al., 2013). For example, even if Hindu children think Muslims can violate Hindu norms, they may not care whether Muslims violate Muslim norms, or may even think it is wrong for Muslims to follow Muslim norms. However, another possibility is that children believe that adherents of another religion ought to follow the norms of that religion. In doing so, children would be endorsing the validity of the norms of other religions rather than being indifferent toward or rejecting of those norms, which may be conducive to peaceful coexistence between members of different religious groups.

Our Research Questions

The present studies investigated reasoning about Hindu and Muslim religious norms among nine- to fifteen-year-old Hindu and Muslim children in Gujarat, India from a mixed Hindu-Muslim school (Study 1), and among Hindu children from a homogeneous Hindu school (Study 2). In each study, children were presented with vignettes in which Hindu and Muslim protagonists violated Hindu norms, Muslim norms, and a moral prohibition against hitting others. Children were asked to evaluate the permissibility and severity of these actions, justify

their judgments, consider conditions in which the actions could be permissible, and indicate whether it would be better if everyone followed the same norms. Using these methods, we addressed several questions.

(1) How do children reason about the scope of religious and moral norms? We expected that children would indicate that moral norms apply to members of different religious groups (based on Turiel, 1983; Nucci & Turiel, 1993). However, it was an open question as to how children would reason about the scope of religious norms. For example, both Hindu and Muslim children might restrict the scope of their own religious norms and expect members of the other religion to follow the norms of that religion. Alternatively, children might believe that their own religious norms apply to all, or limit the scope of their own religious norms to their own group without expecting others to follow their own religious norms. We tested these hypotheses through analyses of children's permissibility and severity judgments.

(2) Do children make qualitative distinctions when justifying their judgments about religious and moral violations? Second, to test whether children draw qualitative distinctions between why religious and moral norm violations are permissible or not, we analyzed children's justifications for their judgments. Based on previous research (Killen & Smetana, 2015; Nucci & Turiel, 1993; Turiel, 1983), we expected that children would differentiate moral violations from religious norm violations by making evaluative statements (e.g., "because it's not nice") or referencing others' welfare (e.g., "he might get hurt") when justifying judgments about moral violations, but instead appeal to religious considerations (e.g., "her religion doesn't allow it", "Allah would be angry") when justifying judgments about religious norm violations.

(3) How do children reason about the conditions in which religious and moral norm violations would be permissible? Third, we explored how children reason about the conditions in

which religious and moral norm violations would be permissible. Here, we were interested in whether children viewed a given religious norm as emanating from parents, priests/imams, or gods. Since gods are the highest religious authorities, we expected that children would view religious norm violations as permissible if god(s) give permission. However, it was an open question whether children would view a moral prohibition against hitting as alterable by gods or other religious authorities. Nucci and Turiel (1993) found that children from several Judeo-Christian religious groups in the U.S. did not generally view moral norms as alterable by God. Given the differences between their study's sample and our own, we did not know whether participants would think that gods could make it permissible to harm others. The existence of violent religious terrorism suggests that at least some religious subgroups believe that religious authorities can give permission, or even obligation, to harm others (Atran & Ginges, 2012).

(4) Do children think it would be better if members of one religion followed the norms of the other religion? Fourth, we reasoned that even if children do not apply their own religious norms to members of other religions, they may still prefer that everyone follows the same norms. For instance, Hindu children may believe that it is okay for Muslims to eat beef but still prefer that nobody eats beef. To assess this, we asked children whether they thought it would be better if members of the religious outgroup should follow the norm in question (e.g., whether it would be better for Muslims to follow Hindu norms and vice versa). Children might respond "yes" to this question due to a general preference that everyone follows similar religious practices, in which case children should respond "yes" regardless of whether the norm is from their own religion or not. Alternatively, "yes" responses might reveal children's belief in the virtues of their own religious practices, in which case children should prefer that everyone follows *their own* religious norms, but not that everyone follows the norms of the other religion.

We were also interested in whether answers to these four research questions might vary between Hindu and Muslim children, or children of different age groups, and between children who have different levels of contact with members of another religion. Nucci and Turiel (1993) found that in their sample of 10- to 17-year-olds, older children more clearly differentiated between moral and religious norm violations in their justifications. Further, they found that while children from some religious groups (e.g., Conservative Jews) indicated that their religion's norms could be altered by religious authorities, children from other groups (e.g., Orthodox Jews) indicated that only God could alter religious norms. Given differences between the context of their study and ours, we did not have *a priori* hypotheses about the age- and religion-related differences that would arise from our samples of younger and older Hindu and Muslim children in India. Finally, given previous evidence that inter-group contact can reduce negative attitudes toward another group and promote moral reasoning with respect to that group (Crystal, Killen, & Ruck, 2008; McGlothlin & Killen, 2005), we were interested in whether children's responses would differ as a function of how much daily contact they had with members of another religion. To this end, we compared the responses of Hindu children from a diverse Hindu-Muslim school (Study 1) with those of Hindu children from a homogeneous Hindu school (Study 2).

Study 1

Method

Participants. Sixty-three children between 9.1 and 15.3 years of age participated in this study. The sample size was chosen based on related studies with children and adolescents (Nucci & Turiel, 1993; Wainryb et al., 2001) as well as power analyses, which indicated a power of more than 95 percent for detecting an interaction between norm type and the religion of the protagonist (our first research question above). Children were either Hindu or Muslim, and

drawn from one of two age groups, resulting in the following four groups: Younger Hindu (8 female, 8 male, $M_{\text{age}} = 10.1$ years, range: 9.1 - 10.7 years), Younger Muslim (8 female, 7 male, $M_{\text{age}} = 10.2$ years, range: 9.3 - 10.9 years), Older Hindu (8 female, 8 male, $M_{\text{age}} = 13.7$ years, range: 12.4 - 15.3 years) and Older Muslim (8 female, 8 male, $M_{\text{age}} = 14.0$ years, range: 12.8 – 15.2 years). Our choice of age groups was motivated by Nucci and Turiel (1993), who enrolled 10- to 17-year-old children. Data from one additional participant was lost due to technical error, and three others started but did not complete the study. All children were students at an English language, K-12 school for low-income children in Vadodara, in Gujarat Province, India (see *Supplementary Material*). Although Hindus are the majority group in Vadodara, the school makes an effort to enroll an approximately equal number of Hindu and Muslim students.

Parents of participants gave informed consent in writing prior to their child's participation, and each child gave written assent before starting the interview. Interviews were generally conducted in English by the first or second author, or a trained research assistant. Bilingual translators – trained research assistants who lived in Vadodara – were also available for children who felt more comfortable answering questions in Hindi or Gujarati. Before starting the interview, participants were assured that their answers would not be shared with others. The procedures reported here were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of California, Berkeley.

Materials and procedures. Participants were presented a series of pairs of vignettes about protagonists who violated religious or moral norms, and were then asked questions about those violations. Vignettes and questions were presented orally, without visual materials. Each participant answered questions about the violation of two Hindu norms, two Muslim norms, and one moral norm (i.e., hitting another child for no reason). Vignette pairs involving norms from

the same religion were grouped together in the same block, and the order of these blocks was counterbalanced within each group of participants; the vignette pair involving the moral norm always came after the vignettes involving the religious norms. For each norm, participants heard one vignette with a Hindu protagonist and another with a Muslim protagonist. Thus, the sequence of vignettes within one block of Hindu norms would be as follows: Hindu protagonist violates Hindu Norm 1, Muslim protagonist violates Hindu Norm 1, Hindu protagonist violates Hindu Norm 2, Muslim protagonist violates Hindu Norm 2. The protagonists in the vignettes were always the same gender as the participant, with the exception of religious norms that applied only to females.

Selection of religious norms. In consultation with school administrators, teachers, and experts on the region, the first author generated a list of religious norms that were likely to be salient to students at the school, and ranked these norms in terms of how likely students would be to exclusively associate them with either Hinduism or Islam. This led to the following ranked list of Hindu norms, involving prohibitions against: 1) Eating beef, 2) Failing to wear a *bindi* (decorative marker on forehead) to a religious function for married women, 3) Failing to cremate a body after death (and instead burying it), 4) Eating from the same plate as a guest, 5) Taking *prasadam* (a religious offering) with the left as opposed to right hand, and 6) Intentionally touching a book with one's foot. The ranked list of Muslim norms involved prohibitions against: 1) Failing to read *namaz* (Muslim prayers) in the morning and evening, 2) Not making a pilgrimage to Mecca even when given the opportunity, 3) Worshipping a *murti* (an idol of a deity), 4) Not wearing a *burqa* (for women), 5) Failing to bury a body after death (and instead cremating it), and 6) Not fasting during *Ramadan*.

Before receiving a vignette pair for a norm, participants were asked to identify which group of people adhered to the norm: “There are some people who almost [never eat beef]. What types of people are they?” If the student linked the norm to the target religious group, the experimenter presented the vignettes and interview questions for that norm, but otherwise moved to the next religious norm on the list. This procedure ensured that all participants recognized the norms they were questioned about. Although all children responded to questions about two norms for each religion, children sometimes received different items from one another, and some items were received by more participants than others (see *Supplementary Material*).

Norm vignettes and interview questions. The vignette pairs involving religious norms began by introducing a protagonist who was a member of the target religion, using a name stereotypical to the religion: “There is a child named [Ganesh]. [Ganesh] is a Hindu.” The vignette then went on to describe the protagonist’s violation of the norm: “One day, [Ganesh] went to a restaurant and he ate beef].”

After hearing the first vignette, participants were first asked whether the protagonist’s action was **permissible, in their opinion**: “In your opinion, do you think what [Ganesh] did is *okay*, or *not okay*?” They were also asked to provide a **justification for their own permissibility judgment**: “Why? / Why not?” Participants next rated the **severity of the norm violation** on a four-point scale: “How bad is what [Ganesh] did? *Not bad*, *a little bad*, *very bad*, or *extremely bad*?” Next, participants were asked if the violation was **permissible within the religious community**: “What about [Hindus]? Do [Hindus] think what [Ganesh] did is okay?” If needed, clarification was given to ensure that the student understood that the protagonist did not accidentally violate the norm, and was not in an extenuating circumstance that prevented him or her from following the norm.

Next, participants were asked about the **alterability of the religious norm** by different authority figures: “What if [Ganesh’s parents] said that it was okay [to eat beef]? Would it be okay for [Ganesh to eat beef] then?” Participants were asked if the violation of the norm would be acceptable if given permission by: 1) Parents, 2) Priests (Hindus) / Imams (Muslims) and all members of the target religious community, and 3) The target religion’s deity (or deities).

After answering questions about the protagonist in the first vignette, the participants next heard a second vignette about the same norm, but with a protagonist of the outgroup religion, using a name stereotypical of that religion: “Now, there is a child named [Masood]. And [Masood] is a Muslim. One day, [Masood went to a restaurant and he ate beef].” As in the first vignette, participants were asked if the protagonist’s action was permissible in their opinion, why this action was okay or not okay, how severe of a violation this action was, and whether people in the protagonist’s religious community would think that the action was permissible.

After responding to questions about each protagonist in the vignette pair, students were asked whether they thought it **would be better for members of the outgroup religion to follow the norm**: e.g., “Would it be better if [Muslims] decided to [not eat beef], just like [Hindus]?” Lastly, for each norm, students were asked to identify their **source of knowledge for the norm**: “Where did you learn that [eating beef] is not okay [for Hindus]?”

Finally, for the pair of moral vignettes – in which the protagonist hit another child for no reason – the protagonist in the first vignette was always the same religion and gender as the participant, and the protagonist in the second vignette was of the same gender but of the other religion. Participants were asked the same series of questions as in the religious norm vignette pairs (i.e., involving permissibility, severity, and alterability), with the exception of the item questioning whether it would be better for members of the other religion to follow the norm.

After finishing the interview, participants completed a **group relations questionnaire**, which probed their attitudes toward and interactions with Hindus and Muslims. Participants were asked how many of their five best friends were Hindu or Muslim, how much time they spent with Hindu and Muslim friends outside of school, and how much they like Hindus and Muslims.

Data coding and analysis. Participants' responses to the interview questions were transcribed by the experimenter during the interview. Audio recordings were used to validate and supplement transcriptions that were taken during the interview. In the few cases where audio was not available (due to technical difficulties or experimenter error; $n = 8$), the experimenter's original transcription was used for data coding and analysis.

Coders classified each justification into one of the categories listed in Table 1. Coders also classified participants' permissibility judgments as either *Okay* or *Not Okay*, severity judgments as *Extremely bad*, *Very bad*, *A little bad*, or *Not bad*, and responses about whether it would be better if everyone followed the given norm as *Better* or *Not Better*. Permissibility judgments deemed ambiguous were rare (0.6% of judgments) and were pooled with *Not Okay* judgments for the purposes of analyses. To estimate agreement, 52% of interviews were double-coded. Cohen's κ was .71 for justifications, and .91 for judgments.

Data from the group relations questionnaires were analyzed using non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. Data from the interviews were analyzed using Generalized Linear Mixed Models (GLMMs), since GLMMs can model subject effects in within-subjects designs (using random effects) and include non-normal error distributions. GLMMs model the dependent variable as having some specified *probability distribution* (e.g. binomial) around an expected value. The expected value is modelled as a transformation of a linear combination of the predictors using a *link function*, such as the logit or log functions (see Hox, 2010). Because all of

the dependent variables in our studies were dichotomous, we used GLMMs with binomial error distribution and logistic link function. Although severity ratings were originally measured on an ordinal scale, we transformed them into a dichotomous variable (*extremely bad* vs. *not extremely bad*) because the distribution of responses was negatively skewed (Pearson's moment coefficient: -0.25) and discrete, violating the assumption of normality.

To address our first research question – whether participants take a protagonist's religion into account when deciding whether they ought to adhere to a given norm – we tested the interaction between protagonist religion and norm type. To test whether this interaction varied by religious group or age group, we also included three way interactions between norm type (Hindu, Muslim, or Moral), protagonist religion (Hindu, Muslim), and participant religion (Hindu, Muslim), and between norm type, protagonist religion, and age group. Our models also included all two-way interactions and main effects between the four fixed predictors. Non-significant interactions were dropped until only significant interactions and main effects remained. All models included random intercepts for participants to account for the repeated measures design. We note that preliminary analyses revealed no significant four-way interactions and no other significant three-way interactions, although some of these models failed to converge (see Hox, 2010). Preliminary analyses also did not reveal significant effects of participant gender, hence gender was not included as a predictor in the analyses reported below. Hypotheses were tested using likelihood ratio tests and Wald tests for regression coefficients (Hox, 2010).

Results

Group relations questionnaire. Participants reported having significantly more friends of their own religious group than of the other religious group, Wilcoxon test, $V = 1572$, $p < .001$. This pattern was seen among both Hindu participants (Hindu friends: $M = 3.6$, Muslim Friends:

$M = 1.4$) and Muslim participants (Hindu Friends: 1.8, Muslim friends: 3.2). Participants also reported spending more of their time outside of school with friends from their own religious group, $V = 561$, $p < .001$, and this was true of both Hindus (time with Hindu friends: $M = 2.6$, time with Muslim friends: $M = 2.0$, on a scale from 1 [*None*] to 4 [*All*]) and Muslims (time with Hindu friends: $M = 2.1$, time with Muslim friends: $M = 2.8$). Finally, participants expressed more positive attitudes toward their own religious group, $V = 406$, $p < .001$, and this was evident among both Hindus (attitude toward Hindus: $M = 4.8$, attitude toward Muslims: $M = 4.1$, on a scale from 1 [*dislike very much*] to 5 [*like very much*]) and Muslims (attitude toward Hindus: $M = 3.7$, attitude toward Muslims: $M = 4.7$).

In sum, we observed clear in-group preferences in children's friendships and attitudes, consistent with prior findings from the same school (Dunham et al., 2014). Still, on average, children had at least one friend from the other religious group, spent some of their time outside of school with friends from the other religious group, and expressed relatively positive attitudes toward the other religious group.

Interview data. We organize our results from the interviews according to our first four research questions (see Introduction), and include analyses of age- and religion-related differences within each of these sections. For additional analyses see *Supplementary Material*.

(1) How do children reason about the scope of religious and moral norms? We addressed this question by analyzing children's own permissibility and severity judgments regarding the norm violations. Children's sensitivity to the relation between religious norms and religious groups was evident in their own permissibility judgments (Figure 1). In particular, children were far more likely to say that they thought it was *not okay* for a protagonist to violate the protagonist's own religion's norms (e.g., for a Hindu to violate a Hindu norm; 67% of cases)

than to violate the norms of the other religion (e.g., for a Hindu to violate a Muslim norm; 9%). This pattern of responses obtained across the different religious norms that children were interviewed about (see *Supplementary Material*). In contrast to the case of religious norms, participants virtually always (98% of cases) judged the protagonist's moral violation to be *not okay*, regardless of the protagonist's own religion. This was substantiated by a significant norm type by protagonist religion interaction: $D(2) = 219.70, p < .001$. We also found a significant three-way interaction between participant religion, protagonist religion, and norm type, $D(2) = 7.86, p = .020$, which reflected that evaluations were especially different when Muslim participants were making judgments about violations of Muslim norms by Muslim protagonists. Specifically, Muslim children judged it as *not okay* for Muslim protagonists to violate Muslim norms in 89 percent of cases (vs. 11% for cases in which Hindu protagonists violated Muslim norms), whereas Hindu children were less strict about ingroup violations of Hindu norms, judging it *not okay* for Hindu protagonists to violate Hindu norms in only 62 percent of cases (vs. 14% for cases in which Muslim protagonists violated Hindu norms).

Finally, we also found a significant effect of age group, $D(1) = 9.98, p = .002$, as younger children were generally more likely to say that actions were *not okay* (56%) than were older children (45%). Interestingly, while younger Hindu children (84%) were more likely to say that it was *not okay* for a Hindu to violate a Hindu norm than older Hindu children (41%), Muslim children were not more permissive of ingroup violations with age: Older Muslim children said that it was *not okay* for a Muslim to violate a Muslim norm (91%) at similar levels to younger Muslim children (87%). There were no other significant two- or three-way interactions, $ps > .15$.

To investigate *how* negatively children evaluated the various moral and religious violations, we turned to children's severity judgments, and analyzed whether children who

viewed an act as *not okay* also stated that the protagonist's action was *extremely bad*. Because most children restricted the scope of religious norms and said it was *okay* for members of one religion to violate the norms of another religion, our analyses focused on scenarios in which most participants said the action was *not okay*: i.e., moral violations, Hindu violations of Hindu norms, and Muslim violations of Muslim norms. See *Supplementary Material* for complete analyses.

Interestingly, there was a significant interaction between norm type and age group, $D(2) = 8.56, p = .014$, reflecting that younger children differentiated less between moral and religious violations in their severity judgments. Younger children were similarly likely to deem moral violations *extremely bad* (40%) as they were to deem Muslim violations *extremely bad* (35%), but were less likely to deem Hindu violations as *extremely bad* (21%), overall effect of norm type: $D(2) = 7.60, p = .022$. In contrast, older children were far more likely to say the moral violation was *extremely bad* (58%) than to say that Muslim norm violations (24%) or Hindu norm violations (11%) were *extremely bad*, overall norm type effect: $D(2) = 36.17, p < .001$. For *extremely bad* judgments, there were no other significant interactions or main effects, $ps > .12$.

(2) Do children make qualitative distinctions when justifying their judgments about religious and moral violations? To investigate the reasoning behind children's judgments for whether the protagonist's action was *okay* or *not okay*, we explored whether children provided different kinds of justifications (Table 1) depending on whether the protagonist violated the moral norm, or a religious norm from their own religion or the other religion. We also investigated whether justifications varied as a function of children's own religion or age group. Below, we summarize the main patterns in justifications for *not okay* and *okay* judgments (see *Supplementary Material* for analyses).

Beginning with *not okay* judgments, we found a strong relation between the type of norm being violated and the nature of children's justifications. When explaining why it was *not okay* to violate religious norms as opposed to hit someone else, children were significantly more likely to use *god evaluation* justifications ("Allah would be angry") and *religious* justifications ("Her religion doesn't allow it"), $Ds(2) \geq 6.55, ps \leq .038$. In contrast, when explaining why it was *not okay* to hit someone else, children were significantly more likely to use non-religious justifications like *evaluation* ("Because it's not nice to hit people") and *welfare* ("It'll hurt the other person"), $Ds(2) \geq 8.68, ps \leq .010$. We also found reliable differences between religious groups, as *god evaluation* justifications were significantly more common for Muslim norms, protagonists, and participants $ps \leq .038$. Children were also significantly more likely to use *religious* justifications when the protagonist was a member of their own religious group, $D(2) = 6.55, p = .038$. These patterns held across children of both age groups.

Turning to justifications for *okay* judgments, children of both age groups provided different justifications when explaining why it was *okay* for protagonists to violate their own religion's norms, as opposed to norms of another religion. In particular, when explaining why it was okay for protagonists to violate their own religion's norms, children were significantly more likely to refer to conditions that made the violation permissible (*exculpation*; e.g., "It's okay to not pray once in a while"), to make an *evaluation* statement (e.g., "Because it's not a bad thing"), or to state that it was the protagonist's own choice whether to follow the norm (classified as *other*, e.g., "Because it's her choice to do it"), $Ds(1) \geq 6.17, ps \leq .001$. This tendency to refer to the protagonist's choice was significantly more common in Hindu participants than in Muslim participants, $D(1) = 5.63, p = .018$.

In contrast, when explaining why it was *okay* to violate the norms of another religion – as opposed to the norms of the protagonist’s own religion – participants were significantly more likely to refer to the protagonists’ religious group affiliation (*group label*; e.g., “Because he’s Hindu”) or provide a *religious* justification (e.g., “There’s no rule against that for Hindus”), $Ds(1) \geq 40.49, ps < .001$. We also found that Muslim children were significantly more likely to give these *religious* justifications than Hindu children, $D(1) = 5.52, p = .018$.

(3) How do children reason about the conditions in which religious and moral norm violations would be permissible? A key question of our study was whether children’s permissibility judgments about the protagonist’s action would change if the protagonist’s parents, priests/imams, or gods said the action was *okay*. To address this question, we compared children’s initial permissibility judgments to their judgments after they were asked to imagine that the different authorities had permitted the behavior (Figure 2). Alterability questions were only asked about the protagonists’ own religious norms (e.g., whether Hindu priests and gods could alter Hindu norms for a Hindu protagonist) and for cases in which the protagonist violated a moral norm and was the same religion as the participant (see Method). Below, we summarize the main patterns in children’s alterability judgments (see *Supplementary Material*).

As Figure 2 suggests, all four participant groups were significantly more likely to indicate that a norm violation was *okay* as the “level” of authority increased, from parents to religious authorities to gods, $Ds(3) \geq 30.20, ps \leq .001$. Across participant groups and different levels of permission from authority, children were also significantly more likely to view the moral violation than the religious violations as *not okay*, $Ds(2) \geq 25.81, ps \leq .001$. This difference was particularly striking when children were asked to imagine if the relevant Hindu or Muslim god(s) had given permission to violate the norms: While most children in each of the four participant

groups indicated that religious norm violations would be *okay* with permission from the relevant divine authority, the majority of children judged that god(s) could not make it *okay* to hit another child for no reason. Interestingly, this difference in judgments about religious and moral violations given divine permission was significant for all participant groups, $Ds(2) \geq 25.59$, $ps \leq .001$, except for the younger Muslim children, $D(2) = 2.02$, $p = .36$. Younger Muslim children rarely said that the moral violation would be wrong given divine permission (13%), and not significantly more often than they said Hindu (10%) or Muslim (3%) violations would be wrong.

(4) Do children think it would be better if members of one religion followed the norms of the other religion? Children's judgments and justifications showed a clear awareness that the norms of one religion do not apply to members of the other religion. Still, children often indicated that they thought it *would be better* if people followed the same religious norms. Interestingly, children were especially likely to say that members of another religion should follow norms from children's own religion, pointing to children's belief in the virtues of their own religious customs (Hindu children: 69% for Hindu norms, vs. 48% for Muslim norms, Muslim participants: 66% for Muslim norms, vs. 25% for Hindu norms; norm type by participant religion interaction, $D(1) = 28.51$, $p < .001$). Also, we found that older Hindu children – but not older Muslim children – were significantly more likely to indicate that members of one religion should follow the norms of the other religion (age group by participant religion interaction: $D[1] = 7.15$, $p = .007$). Older Hindu children did not simply indicate that it would be better for Muslims to follow Hindu norms (84%), but also often indicated that it would be better for Hindus to follow Muslim norms (68%), suggesting a desire for everyone to follow the same religious practices. In contrast, this was not the case for older Muslim children, who rarely

indicated that it would be better for Muslims to follow Hindu norms (20%; compared to 69% indicating that it would be better for Hindus to follow Muslim norms).

Study 1 Discussion

Study 1 found that, while younger and older Hindu and Muslim children typically indicated that it was *not okay* for a protagonist to violate a religious norm when they were a member of that religious group (e.g., a Hindu eating beef), they typically indicated that the same action was *okay* when performed by a member of the other religious group (e.g., a Muslim eating beef). Further, this pattern of responses held not just when children were judging violations of their own religion's norms but also when judging violations of the other religion's norms, suggesting that children endorsed the validity of each other's norms. Thus, even in a region with a history of religious conflict, and in children who exhibit ingroup preferences in their friendship choices and attitudes, children can restrict the norms of their own religion and expect others to follow their own religious practices.

Children's justifications for their judgments revealed that they reasoned about violations of religious norms in religious terms. For example, when explaining why it was *not okay* for protagonists to violate their own religious norms, children often appealed to religious rules or evaluations from God, and when explaining why it was *okay* for protagonists to violate the norms of another religion, children typically noted that the protagonist was a member of a different religion, or that this religion doesn't include the norm. Children's alterability judgments also pointed to their understanding of the religious basis of religious norms, as they almost always indicated that it would be *okay* for a protagonist to violate their own religious norms if the relevant god(s) had given permission to do so.

Consistent with previous findings (Nucci & Turiel, 1993), we found that children reasoned differently about violations of religious norms compared to a violation of a moral norm against harming others. For example, in contrast to the case of religious norms, children of both age groups typically judged the moral violation as *not okay* regardless of whether the protagonist was Hindu or Muslim, though older children were more likely to differentiate between the moral and religious violations in their severity judgments. Children also appealed to different criteria when justifying their judgments of moral vs. religious norms; instead of appealing to religious rules or evaluations from God to explain why moral violations were wrong, children typically invoked others' welfare or made general evaluative statements. Finally, most children (with the exception of younger Muslim children) distinguished between religious and moral norm violations in judging that, although the god(s) could make religious norm violations permissible, they could not make it *okay* to hit another child.

Interestingly, although children typically restricted the scope of their own religious norms and indicated that it was *okay* for members of another religion to not follow these norms, they also often indicated that it *would be better* if members of one religion followed the norms of the other religion. This was especially true when children were asked whether their own religion's norms should be followed by members of the other religion, suggesting a belief in the virtues of one's own religious norms. But it was also true of older Hindu children – but not older Muslim children – regardless of whether they were asked about Hindu or Muslim norms, suggesting a general preference that everyone follows similar religious practices. Perhaps relatedly, while older Hindu children were quite permissive of Hindu violations of Hindu norms, and more permissive of norm violations than younger Hindu children, older Muslim children indicated that Muslim violations of Muslim norms were wrong at similar levels to younger Muslim children.

Taken together, the findings of Study 1 are important because they show that, even under conditions in which it might be difficult for children to develop tolerant religious attitudes, children can restrict the scope of their own religious norms, and expect others to follow their own religious practices. However, because the school tested in Study 1 included a relatively similar proportion of Hindu and Muslim students, our participants had high levels of daily contact with children of a different religion, and on average reported having at least one friend from the other religion, and spending some of their time with friends of the other religion outside of school. This contact could potentially have given children opportunities to recognize that different religions include different norms, and encourage them to view their own religious norms as applying only to their religious group. Indeed, children often cited their friends as sources of their knowledge about the norms of the other religion (see *Supplementary Material*).

Study 2 investigated whether children with less contact with members of another religion would show similar patterns of responses as children in Study 1. This second study included Hindu children who attended a mostly Hindu school in the same region, and who thus lacked significant daily contact with Muslim children.

Study 2

Method

Participants. Thirty-seven Hindu children between 8.4 and 14.9 years of age participated. As in Study 1, we recruited a younger group of 4th and 5th graders (6 female, 12 male, $M_{\text{age}} = 10.0$ years, range: 8.4 – 11.0 years) and an older group of 8th and 9th graders (9 female, 10 male, $M_{\text{age}} = 13.7$ years, range: 13.0 – 14.9 years). Three additional participants started but did not complete the interview. All children were middle-class students at an English language K-12 school located just outside of Vadodara (see *Supplementary Material* for

additional information). The school enrolls primarily Hindu students: for example, only two out of 132 students in the 4th, 5th, 8th, and 9th grades were Muslim. Parents gave written informed prior to their child's participation, and children gave written assent before starting the interview.

Materials, procedures, coding, and data analysis. Materials, procedures, coding, and analyses were as in Study 1, except that the statistical models did not include participant religion as an independent variable, since all participants were Hindu. Again, preliminary analyses revealed no significant effects of gender, hence this predictor was not included in the analyses reported below. Two children were interviewed about only 9 situations (instead of 10), one due to the child's request to skip a scenario, and the other due to experimenter error. To assess inter-rater agreement, 20 percent of the data was randomly selected for double-coding. Agreement was as follows: Judgments: Cohen's $\kappa = .97$, Justifications: Cohen's $\kappa = .81$.

Results

Group interactions and attitudes questionnaire. As expected, participants in Study 2 reported having markedly less contact with Muslim peers than did Hindu participants in Study 1. Participants reported having significantly more Hindu friends ($M = 4.4$) than Muslim friends ($M = 0.6$), Wilcoxon test, $V = 627$, $p < .001$ (by comparison, Hindu participants in Study 1 reported an average 1.4 Muslim friends). Participants also reported spending more time outside of school with Hindu friends ($M = 2.9$ on a scale from 1 [*None*] to 4 [*All*]) than with Muslim friends ($M = 1.3$), $V = 528$, $p < .001$ (the mean for time spent with Muslim friends among Hindu participants in Study 1 was 2.0). Finally, participants expressed more positive attitudes toward Hindus ($M = 4.4$ on a scale from 1 [*dislike very much*] to 5 [*like very much*]) than toward Muslims ($M = 3.3$), $V = 240$, $p < .001$. Still, as in Study 1, participants in Study 2 reported on average slightly positive attitudes toward the other religious group.

Interview data. We present the primary findings for each of our research questions below (see *Supplementary Material* for additional data and analyses).

(1) How do children reason about the scope of religious and moral norms? Similar to Study 1, children were sensitive to the relation between religious norms and religious groups in their own permissibility judgments. Most thought it was *not okay* for Hindu protagonists to violate Hindu norms (59%) but not Muslim norms (10%) and *not okay* for Muslim protagonists to violate Muslim norms (58%) but not Hindu norms (9%), and this was reflected in the interaction between norm type and protagonist religion, $D(2) = 112.30, p < .001$ (Figure 1). This pattern of responses obtained across the different religious norms that children were interviewed about (see *Supplementary Material*). In contrast to the case of religious norms, participants virtually always thought it was *not okay* for both Hindu and Muslim protagonists to violate the moral norm (Hindu protagonist: 100%, Muslim protagonist: 92%).

The analyses also revealed significant two-way interactions between protagonist religion and age group, $D(1) = 5.76, p = .016$, and between norm type and age group, $D(2) = 7.42, p = .025$. These interactions reflected that younger children were more likely to say it was *not okay* for a protagonist to violate the norms of their own religion than older children, especially in the case of Hindu protagonists (Hindus violating Hindu norms: younger = 86%, older = 34%; Muslims violating Muslim norms: younger = 69%, older = 47%). The finding that older Hindu children were quite permissive of violations of their own religious norms is consistent with findings from Study 1.

To investigate *how* negatively children evaluated the various moral and religious violations, we turned to children's severity judgments. As in Study 1, we analyzed whether participants said the protagonist's action was *extremely bad* only for scenarios in which most

participants said the action was wrong: moral violations, Hindu violations of Hindu norms, and Muslim violations of Muslim norms. See *Supplementary Material* for complete analyses.

The two age groups responded differently to this question, age group by norm type: $D(2) = 10.1, p = .006$. Similar to Study 1, younger children differentiated less between moral and religious violations than older children. While the younger children were similarly likely to say that a moral violation (56%) and a Hindu violating a Hindu norm were *extremely bad* (50%), they were less likely to say that a Muslim violating Muslim norm was *extremely bad* (25%), as reflected in a significant effect of norm type, $D(2) = 6.56, p = .038$. In contrast, older children were substantially more likely to say that the moral violation was *extremely bad* (58%) than to say that either a Hindu violating a Hindu norm (12%) or a Muslim violating a Muslim norm was *extremely bad* (16%), norm type effect: $D(2) = 26.56, p < .001$.

(2) Do children make qualitative distinctions when justifying their judgments about religious and moral violations? As in Study 1, children gave different kinds of justifications when explaining why it was *not okay* to violate religious norms as opposed to why it was not okay to hit someone else. Children of both age groups were significantly more likely to use *religious* (“It’s obligatory for Hindus”) and *group label* justifications (“Because he’s Hindu”) when explaining why it was *not okay* to violate religious norms, $Ds(2) \geq 25.63, ps < .001$. But when explaining why it was *not okay* to hit someone else, children of both age groups were significantly more likely to use non-religious justifications like *evaluation* (“You can’t hit somebody for no reason”) and *welfare* (“She’d be hurting the other kid”), $Ds(2) \geq 10.12, p \leq .006$. These patterns held regardless of whether the protagonist was Hindu or Muslim (see *Supplemental Material* for specific analyses and statistics).

Also similar to Study 1, children gave different kinds of justifications when explaining why it was *okay* for the protagonist to violate the protagonist's own religious norms compared to the norms of the other group. When explaining why it was *okay* for a protagonist to violate the norms of another religion, children were significantly more likely to use *group labels* ("Because he's Muslim") or *religious* justifications ("It's not compulsory for Hindus to go to Mecca"), $Ds(1) \geq 13.72, ps < .001$. *Religious* justifications were also more common in younger children, $D(1) = 6.10, p = .013$. In contrast, when explaining why it was *okay* for a protagonist to violate his/her own religious norms, children were significantly more likely to refer to the personal choice of the protagonist (classified as *other*; e.g. "It's up to him whether he wants to do it"), $D(1) = 30.30, p < .001$. Personal choice justifications were significantly more common in older than younger children, $D(1) = 6.28, p = .012$.

(3) How do children reason about the conditions in which religious and moral norm violations would be permissible? As in Study 1, we compared children's initial permissibility judgments to their judgments about whether the actions would be okay if permitted by parents, religious authorities, or god(s) (see Figure 2). These questions were only asked about the protagonists' own religious norms and for cases in which the protagonist was Hindu and violated a moral norm. Below, we summarize the main patterns in children's alterability judgments (see *Supplementary Material* for specific analyses and statistics).

Similar to Study 1, both younger and older children were significantly more likely to indicate that a norm violation was *okay* as the "level" of authority increased, from parents to religious authorities to gods. Both groups of children were also significantly more likely to say that moral violations were *not okay* than religious norm violations across different levels of permission from authority, $Ds(3) \geq 55.68, ps < .001$. This difference between judgments of the

religious and moral norm violations was significant for older Hindu children, $D(2) = 42.13$, $p < .001$ – but not younger Hindu children, $D(2) = 1.55$, $p = .46$ – when they were asked to imagine if the relevant god(s) had given permission. Specifically, while older Hindu children generally indicated that it would still be wrong to hit others (74%) if the god(s) gave permission, they rarely indicated that it would be wrong to violate Hindu (6%) or Muslim (5%) norms. In contrast, the younger Hindu children did not significantly differentiate between the wrongness of hitting (50%) and religious norm violations under divine permission, and indicated that Hindu (36%) or Muslim (34%) would still be wrong at higher levels than did the younger Hindu or Muslim children of Study 1.

(4) Do children think it would be better if members of one religion followed the norms of the other religion? Like the Hindu participants of Study 1, Study 2 participants were overall more likely to say that it *would be better* if Muslims followed Hindu norms (59%) than for Hindus to follow Muslim norms (35%), $D(1) = 14.84$, $p < .001$, suggesting a belief in the virtues of Hindu norms. Older children were more likely to say that it *would be better* if everyone followed the same norms (64%) than younger children (30%), $D(1) = 7.80$, $p = .005$. Similar to Study 1, while older Hindu children often said that it *would be better* if Hindus followed Muslim norms (57%) – suggesting a preference for everyone to follow the same practices – younger Hindu children rarely did so (12%).

Study 2 Discussion

Although the Hindu participants of Study 2 had more limited daily contact with Muslim children than did the Hindu children of Study 1 – and thus fewer opportunities to learn that Muslim children follow different religious norms than Hindu children – they behaved similarly, restricting the scope of Hindu norms to Hindu protagonists, while expecting Muslim protagonists

to follow Muslim norms. Also as in Study 1, Study 2 participants distinguished between religious norms and moral norms, by indicating that it was wrong to violate the moral prohibition against hitting regardless of the protagonist's religion, and by referencing different concepts to justify judgments about religious norm violations compared to judgments about moral norm violations. Additionally, and as in Study 1, older children differentiated more between religious and moral norm violations than younger children in their severity judgments, more often indicating that the moral norm violations were *extremely bad* than the religious norm violations.

Paralleling findings from Hindu participants in Study 1, while younger Hindu children in Study 2 often said that it was *not okay* for protagonists to violate their own religion's norms, older Hindu children were quite permissive of such actions, especially in the case of Hindu violations of Hindu norms. Also similar to the Hindu participants of Study 1, the participants of Study 2 were more likely to say that it would be better if Muslims followed Hindu norms than the reverse, though older children were more likely to say it would be better if everyone followed the same norms, and often indicated that Hindus should follow Muslim norms.

One noteworthy difference between Studies 1 and 2 were the alterability judgments of younger Hindu children. Among younger children in Study 2, there was no significant difference in children's permissibility judgments between moral and religious norms when they were asked to imagine that the relevant god(s) had given permission. These younger Hindu children often indicated that the Hindu, Muslim, and moral violations would be wrong, even if god(s) had given permission. This difference among younger Hindu children in Studies 1 and 2 may be due to differences in exposure to non-Hindu religions, or to other differences between the schools, such as socio-economic status. In contrast, older children in Study 2, as well as younger and older

Hindu children in Study 1, typically said that only the moral violation, but not the religious violations, would be wrong given divine permission.

Overall, the similarity between the findings of Studies 1 and 2 suggests that daily exposure to members of another religion (Study 1) is not necessary for children to understand the different scopes of religious and moral norms. Even Hindu children in Study 2, who went to a predominantly Hindu school and had more limited experiences with Muslim children, conceptualized Hindu, Muslim, and moral norms as distinct types of norms with different scopes and justifications for their existence.

General Discussion

Children face a challenge in determining the scope of religious norms, a task that is particularly important when members of different religions live in close proximity. Across two studies, we explored how Hindu and Muslim children from Gujarat, India, reason about Hindu and Muslim norms. Given the history of Hindu-Muslim conflict in this region, and prior evidence that children from our test sites exhibit implicit intergroup bias (Dunham et al., 2014), we were unsure of whether children would be permissive of transgressions of their religious norms by members of the other religion.

However, across two studies, we found that Hindu and Muslim children often indicated that it was okay for members of one religion to violate the norms of another religion (e.g., for a Muslim to eat beef), and were far more likely to indicate that it was wrong for people to violate the norms of their own religion (e.g. for a Hindu to eat beef). Critically, this pattern held regardless of whether children were judging violations of norms from their own religion or the other religion. In contrast, children judged it wrong for members of both religions to violate the moral prohibition against harming others. Children also distinguished between religious and moral norms by referencing religious concepts more often when justifying judgments about

religious norm violations than moral violations, and by indicating that religious violations – but not moral violations – would be okay if the relevant god(s) had given permission. These patterns were observed for children of both religions and age groups, although we also found some interesting variability (described below). Moreover, this systematic context sensitivity in reasoning about religious norms was evident both among Hindu and Muslim children from a mixed Hindu-Muslim school (Study 1) and Hindu children from a predominantly Hindu school (Study 2). Together, our findings suggest that children raised in a pluralistic society can not only be aware of the range of norms that exist within their society – including those they do not follow – but can flexibly differentiate between norms that apply only to their own group (e.g., Hindu norms for a Hindu child), norms that apply to other groups (e.g., Muslim norms for a Hindu child), and norms that apply to everyone (e.g., moral norms).

The tendency to apply the norms of one's own religion only to ingroup members and to expect members of another religious group to follow their own religion's norms may contribute to peaceful coexistence. Doing so means not only allowing adherents of other religions the freedom to follow their own norms (as opposed to one's own religion's norms), but also endorsing the validity of other religions' norms. For example, Hindu children not only said it was permissible for Muslims to violate the Hindu prohibition against eating beef, but were also likely to say that Muslims should follow the Muslim norm of praying in the morning and evening. Interestingly, in our studies, these indices of tolerance and respect toward another religion co-existed with children's tendencies to favor their own religion. In both studies, children reported having more friends from and more positive attitudes toward their own religious group. Moreover, children were more likely to say that it would be better if everyone followed the norms from their own religion than to say that it would be better if everyone

followed the norms of the other religion. Together, our findings suggest that preferences for one's own religious group need not entail intolerance toward the religious practices of others.

Of course, our data should not be taken to show that individuals never apply their own religion's norms to members of other religions. In the Introduction, we cited several instances of such broadened scope, including recent violence against Muslims suspected of killing cows in India (Abraham & Rao, 2017). Rather, our findings show that even in a region with a history of religious conflicts, and among children who exhibit intergroup religious bias, children can develop a nuanced understanding of the basis and scope of norms rooted in their own and other religions. These findings offer hope that exposure to conflicts over religious differences – which characterizes children's experience in many regions across the world (Grim & Cooperman, 2014) – need not lead children to develop negative attitudes toward the religious practices of other groups. Instead, a nuanced understanding of the scope of religious norms could play a role in reducing communal conflicts over time.

Age and Religious Group Differences

Some interesting differences emerged among the different religious and age groups in our two studies. Although we had not hypothesized these differences, they merit discussion and further investigation. Still, these differences should be interpreted with caution, given our cross-sectional design and the fact that our sample sizes – especially for Muslim children – were relatively small across the two studies.

Among Hindu participants, older participants were generally more accepting of events in which a protagonist violated a norm from the protagonist's own religion. For instance, older Hindu participants said the protagonist's action was *not okay* in less than half of the scenarios in which a Hindu violated a Hindu norm or a Muslim violated a Muslim norm. In contrast, younger

Hindu children thought such violations were *not okay* well over half of the time (sometimes more than 80 percent of the time). Consistent with this, older Hindu participants were also far more likely to say that the moral violation was *extremely bad* than to say that any of the religious violations were *extremely bad*, whereas younger Hindu children showed less differentiation between moral and religious norms in their severity ratings.

Older Muslim children in Study 1 differed from older Hindu children in both studies in that they nearly always said it would be *not okay* for a Muslim protagonist to violate a Muslim norm, whereas older Hindu children were generally permissive of Hindu violations of Hindu norms. Similarly, while older Hindu children in Studies 1 and 2 often said *it would be better* if Hindus followed Muslim norms, older Muslim children in Study 1 rarely said *it would be better* if Muslims followed Hindu norms. These findings suggest that older Muslim children were more strict about ingroup violations than their same-age Hindu peers, and could reflect that Islam is a minority religion in India (e.g., such that Muslims more urgently feel the need to maintain their religious identity), and/or differences between Hinduism and Islam – as they are practiced in Gujarat, India – in whether religious norms are viewed as mandatory or as matters of personal choice (Nucci, 1981). Regarding the latter possibility, in Study 1, Hindu participants were more likely than Muslim participants to reference the protagonist's personal choice when explaining why it was permissible to violate a religious norm, for instance stating that a Hindu woman “has her choice” in deciding whether to wear a *bindhi*.

It was particularly surprising that two of the younger participant groups – i.e., younger Muslims in Study 1 and younger Hindus in Study 2 – did not differentiate significantly between the permissibility of moral and religious violations when asked to imagine that god(s) had given permission. Strikingly, the younger Muslim children in Study 1 typically said that both the

religious and the moral violations would be *okay* if god(s) had given permission. Although it is possible that these participants viewed the moral prohibition against harming others as entirely contingent on divine authority, their other judgments and justifications indicated that they did distinguish between moral and religious rules (see above). An alternative explanation is that the younger Muslim participants of Study 1 were conflicted about what to say regarding the moral violation when god(s) gave permission, but ultimately gave priority to what they saw as an authority command (Turiel, 2015). This may also explain why participants were overall more likely to say that it was *okay* to hit another child if god(s) had given permission compared to in the absence of such explicit permission.

In contrast to the younger Muslim participants of Study 1, who rarely indicated that religious and moral violations were *not okay* given divine permission, the younger Hindu children in Study 2 often indicated that the Hindu, Muslim, and moral violations were *not okay*, even if god(s) had given permission. This suggests that at least some of these children viewed religious rules as not just contingent on what god(s) had said, but also on intrinsic features of the actions such as their expected physical or metaphysical consequences, similar to how children are thought to conceptualize moral norms (Turiel et al., 1987). However, as reviewed above, these children distinguished between religious and moral norm violations in their other judgments and justifications.

Limitations and Issues for Future Research

As noted above, the present research was limited by its cross-sectional design and by its reliance on relatively small samples. Additional studies with larger sample sizes are needed to confirm the age and religious differences documented here. Further studies are also needed to

explore whether the pattern of findings documented here extend beyond Hindu and Muslim children from Gujarat, India, to religious children growing up in other parts of the world.

These limitations aside, the present research adds several important findings to the relatively sparse psychological literature on children's reasoning about religious norms (Nucci & Turiel, 1993; Shweder et al., 1987). Most importantly, our studies find that by about nine years of age, Hindu and Muslim children in Gujarat, India have acquired fairly sophisticated beliefs about the scope, basis, and alterability of religious norms, including how such norms differ from the moral prohibition against harm. In this final section, we highlight two key issues for future research in this area.

A first key area for future research is how children come to form conceptions of religious norms. Unlike moral violations, the religious violations used in the present study did not have direct, observable consequences to a victim. If a Muslim decides not to go to Mecca or a Hindu decides to not wear a bindhi, these acts have no immediate consequences by themselves. Like knowledge about social conventions, knowledge about religious norms may thus depend heavily on cultural mediation through conversations with parents, peers, or teachers, as well as through media exposure (Turiel, 1983, 2015). The fact that our findings from a mixed Hindu-Muslim school (Study 1) were consistent with those from a homogeneous Hindu school (Study 2) suggest that extensive daily contact with peers of a different religion is not necessary to develop sensitivity to the scope of religious norms. However, since children in both studies correctly linked Hindu and Muslim norms with the appropriate religious groups, they clearly had some direct or indirect experience with religions other than their own.

A second important issue is why religious conflicts develop around the world, despite the potential for tolerance demonstrated by the present findings. As illustrated by examples of

Hindus attacking Muslims for their involvement in the beef industry, the scope of religious norms can be central to intergroup conflict (Atran & Ginges, 2012). Why might individuals from different groups sometimes develop divergent views about the scope of religious norms? One possibility is that experiencing threats from or material conflicts with another group may lead individuals to view the practices of those group as sacrilegious, and to accept religiously sanctioned violence against those groups (Atran & Ginges, 2012). The presence of laws related to religious scripture, and rhetoric that links religion with nationality could also lead children to assume that the norms of the majority religion apply broadly, to members of other religious groups in their country.

Another source of broadened scope of religious norms could be perceptions that religious norms are based on physical or metaphysical consequences. For instance, Turiel and colleagues (1987) argued that some Hindu individuals universalized a prohibition against widows eating fish because they believed that eating fish would affect her deceased husband's spirit. Finally, children may also expand the scope of religious norms when they perceive members of other religions as entering their own religious spaces. For instance, visitors to places of worship are sometimes required to adhere to the prevailing dress code, regardless of their religious affiliation. Failure to adhere to a group's religious norms when in that group's religious spaces could be considered offensive by members of the group, potentially triggering conflict. In some cases, divergent views on entitlements to religious spaces can also lead to violent confrontations, as in the case of Israel. In sum, while the participants in our studies were quite tolerant when interviewed about violations of religious norms by outgroup members, there are likely to be circumstances in which individuals extend their own religious norms to members of other religious groups, leading to conflict. A better scientific understanding of how children limit or

extend the scope of religious norms may inform efforts to promote dialogue and respect across religious boundaries.

Understanding how children develop conceptions of religious norms is of both scientific interest and societal importance. The ways in which children come to view religious norms appears to differ from how they view moral, conventional, and other norms (Nucci & Turiel, 1993). Once developed, these conceptions of norms may inform the treatment of members of one's own religion as well as members of other religions. Reasoning about religious norms may therefore be decisive for peaceful coexistence in multi-religious societies.

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Table 1

Justification Coding Categories

Justification	Definition	Examples
Parent evaluation	Reference to parents' evaluation of act	His mom wouldn't like it His dad says he can do it
Priest evaluation	Reference to imams' or priests' evaluation of act	The imams will be angry about it The priests say it's okay
God evaluation	Reference to Allah's or Hindu gods' evaluation of act	Allah would be angry The Hindu Gods say it's okay
Group label	Labeling of persons as belonging to a particular group/religion	Because he's Hindu Because he's Muslim
Religious	Other explanations based on religion (not including God evaluation, Priest evaluation, or Group label)	Her religion doesn't allow it There's no rule against that for Hindus
Exculpation	Reference to specific conditions that make action permissible	It's okay not to pray once in a while He wasn't at home so he couldn't pray
Welfare	Reference to effect of action on others' welfare	It'll hurt the other person No-one is harmed
Evaluation	Evaluative statement	Because it's not nice to hit people Because it's good
Other	Statement not falling into above categories	Because it's her choice to do it. Not everybody gets a chance to go to Mecca

Running head: SCOPE OF RELIGIOUS NORMS

Figure 1. Participants' own judgments about the permissibility of the protagonist's actions. The lines indicate the proportion of children who said the protagonist's action was *not okay* based on norm type, participant age group, and participant religion. Data from Study 1 is shown in the left panel and data from Study 2 is shown in the right panel.

Figure 2. Changeability of norms. The lines show proportion of cases in which participants said action was “not okay” as a function of authority permission. Solid lines show responses for moral norms, dashed lines show responses for Hindu norms, and dotted lines show responses for Muslim norms. Study 1 is shown in the upper panel and Study 2 in the lower panel