

MMoRL

(Marathon Moral Reasoning Laboratory)

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MMoRL

The Goal:

Conduct a novel, interesting, and valuable
experiment about Moral Reasoning
in under 24 hours

Plan for the Class

- THURSDAY 7 - 10 PM
 - Intro; problem set; & reading
 - Lecture by Prof Mikhail
 - Description of homework assignment
- FRIDAY 10 AM - 7 PM
 - Student presentations & discussion (10 - 12)
 - Conducting experiment (12 - 4:30)
 - Presentation of Results & Pizza (4:30 - 7)

Plan for the Class

- THURSDAY 7 - 10 PM
 - Intro; problem set; & reading

*Come pick up a problem set;
When finished, hand in answers & pick up reading.*

- Andrew (train driver) 5.45
- Barbara (surgeon) 1.8
- Carl (bystander) 4.3
- Daniel (backpack) 2.1
- Ernie (spinach ill) 5.4
- Frank (spinach safe) 4.1
- Gerry (belch) 5.4
- Ian (plates) 1.4

- Heinz (cancer) 5.2
- John (ticket) 3.2
- Karl (equipment) 1.6
- Luke (injury) 6.5
- Mark (don't care) 2.4

Homework Assignment

The Goal:

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Your Homework:

Write the Stimuli

Homework Assignment

Basic Method:

- Paper & Pencil Questionnaire
- Participants: your friends, acquaintances, & strangers (mall, subway platform...)
- Dress respectably
- Reimbursement: small candy/chocolate

Homework Assignment

Notes on Experimental Design:

- Minimal pairs
- Between versus Within Subjects Design
- Experiment has to be very short!
- Hysteresis?
- Statistical power: quota of responses per student?

Homework Assignment

Your Homework:

Write the Stimuli

- A set of 2, 3, or 4 scenarios + question
- As similar as possible, except:
- Differ according to some principle of interest
- (If 4 scenarios, could test interaction of 2 principles)

PRESENTATION TOMORROW (<7 min):

1. Read your scenarios out loud
2. Explain the principle you are trying to test
3. (Starting with students taking the class for credit)
4. We will pick 3 or 4 pairs for the experiment

Some Ideas (I)

Exploring the Trolley Problem:

Why is it OK to push the switch to move the train (killing 1 to save 5), but not OK to kill a patient to distribute organs to 5 dying people?

- Intentions vs side-effects
 - Hands-on causality
 - “Choosing” the victim

(NB: well-covered territory!)

Some Ideas (I)

Exploring the Trolley Problem:

Why is it OK to push the switch to move the train (killing 1 to save 5), but not OK to kill a patient to distribute organs to 5 dying people?

- Train Equipment versus Medical Equipment?
 - Vaccines that save thousands of lives?
 - A surgeon who saves thousands of lives?

Some Ideas (2)

Exploring the Side-Effect Effect:

Foresees side-effect

Says “doesn’t care”

Judged more “intentional” for bad
than good effects

- “Produced effect intentionally” versus
“intended to produce effect”
- What if effect fails to occur (by luck)?

Some Ideas (3)

Linking the Trolley Problem and the Side-Effect Effect:

Trolley Problem

Goal: save 5
Foresees bad effect
Judged not “wrong”

Side-effect effect

Goal: economic
Foresees bad effect
Says “doesn’t care”
Judged more “intentional”

- Goal has obvious versus dubious value
- Doesn’t care, versus (assume) does care
- Judgement: wrongness, versus intentionality

Some Ideas (4)

The role of belief: Impossible attempts

Thinks substance is poison
Really just sugar
Still judged “forbidden”

- Justification of the false belief
- “Unreasonable” beliefs like voodoo?
- Crimes that occur mainly in the mind
e.g. “Impossible” treason?
- Causal analysis: unforeseen prevention, versus missing enabler

Some Ideas (5)

The role of belief: Accidents

Thinks substance is sugar
Really poison
Judged not totally permissible

- Why asymmetry versus attempts
- Justification of the false belief (vs negligence)
 - Certainty of the believer
 - Interaction with desire?

Some Ideas (5)

Unintended harms: Different kinds of defenses

Mistake of Fact

Self-Defense

Defense of Others

Provocation

Insanity

- Are all defenses equally good?
 - Does it depend on judgement?
- e.g. “wrong”, “blameworthy”, “punishable”

Some Ideas (7)

The “Only One Bad-guy” Theory

Do moral judgements of very same action
change based on:

- (irrelevant) emotions about victim?
- victim perceived as active versus passive?

Are people who cause accidents viewed
as bad-guys?

e.g. more likely to deliberately harm in future?

Or a principle of your
own devising...
(but will need to
defend it)

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Your Homework:

Write the Stimuli
Email them to us ASAP

SEE YOU TOMORROW AT 10