MMoRL
(Marathon Moral Reasoning Laboratory)

January 18 & 19, 2007
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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:**
Conduct a novel, interesting, and valuable experiment about Moral Reasoning in under 24 hours

**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 (1)

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 (1)

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trolley Problem</th>
<th>Side-effect effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal: save 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foresees bad effect</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Judged not “wrong”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal: economic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Foresees bad effect</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Says “doesn’t care”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judged more “intentional”</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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- 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)
MMoRL

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Your Homework:
Write the Stimuli
Email them to us ASAP

SEE YOU TOMORROW AT 10