

Project Outline: The effect of experiencing actions and outcomes on moral choice

To study moral cognition, some psychologists have been using moral dilemmas (hypothetical vignettes), which describe the conflict between two traditions in philosophy: Utilitarianism emphasizes outcomes and evaluates behaviour based on its consequences, and deontology, on the other hand, evaluates the action itself. Recently, there has been an attempt to match these theories onto the two decision-making architectures: the model-based (chooses actions based on outcomes) and the model-free system (chooses actions based on past experiences) (Crockett, 2014). Given certain conditions (time pressure versus long deliberation phases for example) the experimenter can alter participants' decisions to conform either of the two decision-making systems (Suter & Hertwig, 2011).

In our experiments we are using a paradigm from the risky decision making domain, decisions from experience, to understand if and how experiencing actions and their consequences can alter participants' moral decision making. In many previous experiments participants were presented with hypothetical dilemmas and are asked whether it is appropriate for the actor in the dilemma to cause the death of one person in order to save more lives. In our experiment participants will actively explore two possible hypothetical actions and experience their outcomes: First the participant will be presented with the dilemma, after which two buttons will appear and the participant will need to click on one of them to find out what its consequence is. The participant can explore this or the alternative action multiple times before she/he makes her/his final decision. When the final decision is made, the next dilemma appears on the screen.

In the literature so far, the dilemmas are all deterministic. In the follow up experiments we are aiming to make the outcomes probabilistic, as this resembles the real world more than deterministic outcomes do.

We would like to recruit participants via DR@W for experiments in the lab and would like to use *Amazon Mechanical Turk* (or corresponding UK versions), an Internet platform, where registered people complete small tasks and get paid for their work. The dilemma battery that we plan to use has been presented to thousands of participants so far who have been recruited on-line as well as via subject pools at universities. Here are some links that currently run moral judgement and behaviour studies online:

<http://wjh.harvard.edu/~mcl/online.html> (retrieved on 14th October 2014)

To get a better intuition of our experiment, please follow this link:

http://cog.psych.warwick.ac.uk/~psrmat/moral_experience1/

Average hourly payment on MTurk is \$6. As hour experiment will be shorter than that we'll pay them a fraction of that, so that the average payment won't be exceeded. Participants recruited via DR@W will be paid the usual £5 or a sticker if they participate for course credit, respectively.

Crockett, M.J. (2013). Models of morality. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 17, 363-366.

Suter, R. S., & Hertwig, R. (2011). Time and moral judgment. *Cognition*, 119, 454-458.