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Prospectus Draft

Format of project
Presentation

Introduction

Past works in moral psychology mainly examined moral judgments using decontextualized hypothetical vignettes. However, morality has been theorized to play the role of regulating relationships (Rai & Fiske, 2014) and it is likely that moral judgments of a transgressor depends on the relationship between the transgressor and the observer. In a recent study, Forbes and Stellar (2021) examined how relationship contexts affect moral judgments and found that people not only judge moral transgressions committed by close others more leniently, but also take the emotional burden for their partners by experiencing more self-conscious emotions.

For my project, I plan to replicate the authors' findings in Study 4 using a Bayesian analysis approach. In Study 4, the authors tested the effect of relationship type on moral judgment of one's partner after learning about their moral transgressions. The authors used a between-subject design. Participants were paired with either 1) their romantic partner, 2) their friend, or 3) a stranger. First, each pair of participants separately provided information about themselves. Next, they learn the information ostensibly provided by their partner, which, unbeknownst to participants, were designed by the experimenters to include acts of moral transgression. Then, participants reported their own and their study partner's moral traits (DV1 & 2), their other-critical and self-conscious emotions (DV3 & 4), and their perceived closeness, commitment, and dependence with their partner (DV5 - 7) which were used for manipulation check). For my analysis, I will focus on DV2 and DV4.

The authors analyzed data using mixed model dyadic analysis, nesting individuals within pairs, under the assumption that the answers provided by two partners are correlated. Condition (romantic partner, close friend, stranger) was treated as fixed effects.

Analysis Plan

Data source. The authors made their data available on the Open Science Framework website: https://osf.io/9utgm/?view_only=91c641b22bd2453d91243219237839db.

Prior. For my project, I will replicate their findings using Bayesian analysis. In Study 1, the authors examined responses to hypothetical immoral acts ostensibly committed by a romantic partner, friend, and stranger. Because Study 1 has the most similar design as Study 4, I plan to use the means and standard deviations in Study 1 as the prior for Study 4.

In Study 1, participants made moral judgments to romantic partners, friends, or strangers before and after imagining they have committed moral transgressions. Moral judgments are based on the questions ""How moral or immoral do you think [insert romantic partner name, friend name, or the average person] is?" and "How moral or immoral would you think [insert romantic partner name, friend name, or Adam or Alice] is after learning this happened?" After learning about moral transgression, participants also report their emotions by the following

question: “How much would you feel the following emotions (shame, guilt, embarrassment) if you found out this happened?”

The means and standard deviations for these measures are printed in the table below.

Table 1

Means (Standard Deviations) for Each Condition for Study 1

	Transgressor		Self
Condition	Moral judgment	Other-critical emotions	Self-conscious emotions
Stranger	2.11 (1.30)[a]	2.96 (1.24)[a]	1.85 (1.06)[a]
Close other	2.56 (1.48)	2.76 (1.22)	2.66 (1.14)
Romantic partner	2.61 (1.60)[b]	2.89 (1.29)[a]	2.89 (1.17)[b]
Friend	2.52 (1.35)[b]	2.64 (1.13)[b]	2.42 (1.07)[c]

Bayesian statistical model. For the Bayesian analysis, I will use the model for group comparison. The mean of moral judgment and self-conscious emotions (averaged across all three items) will each be represented using a unique *t* distribution $M \sim t(\nu, \mu, \sigma)$, where μ and σ follow a normal distribution while ν follows a gamma distribution.

The data analytic scripts and supplemental materials will be available at https://github.com/yizhang96/PSYC-573-Project.git.