

Morality

Reminders

- Book approval: April 9
- Assignment due: April 16
- Final exam: April 30
- Also: Experimental participation requirement

Morality

Where are we?

- Brain
- Freud and Skinner
- Cognitive development, language, vision, memory
- Love
- Emotion, reason, evolution

Where are we?

- Cognitive neuroscience
- Differences
- Sex and food
- Morality
- Social thought and behavior
- Mysteries
- Mental illness
- Happiness

Outline

- Moral feelings
- Moral judgment
- Why do good people do bad things?
[The Milgram Study]

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How could moral feelings
evolve?

1. Selfish genes lead to altruistic animals

- To the extent that evolution operates at the level of the genes, there is no hard-and-fast distinction between oneself and another

Haldane's math

- "Would you lay down your life for your brother?"
- "No, but I would gladly give my life for three brothers, or five nephews, or nine first cousins"

Choose:
You die or your three brothers die

- Gene A: makes an animal choose to die
- Gene B: makes an animal choose for its brothers to die
- Gene A wins

2. It benefits animals to cooperate

- Warning cries
 - Grooming
 - Food exchange
- our minds have evolved to solve the prisoner's dilemma

Social emotions and the prisoners dilemma

- We feel GRATITUDE and LIKING for people who cooperate with us. This motivates us to be nice to them in the future
- We feel ANGER and DISTRUST toward those who betray us. This motivates us to betray or avoid them in the future
- We feel GUILT when we betray someone who cooperates with us. This motivates us to behave better in the future

First case-study of moral feeling:

Empathy

Instinctive empathy towards those close to us

The pain of others is aversive

- For babies
- For chimpanzees
- Not logically linked to morality
- But it does lead to moral concern and action
(more empathy --> more concern & help)

Psychopathy as a breakdown in instinctive empathy

13-year-old mugger, when asked about one of his victims:

"What do I care? I'm not her."

Gary Gillmore:

"I was always capable of murder ... I can become totally devoid of feelings of others, unemotional. I know I'm doing something grossly ... wrong. I can still go ahead and do it."

Ted Bundy:

"I mean, there are so many people"

Second case-study of moral feeling:

In-group versus out-group

The Robbers Cave study

- 11 and 12-year-old boys at a 3 week camping program
- Well-adjusted WASPs
- Separate cabins, leaders, "Eagles" and "Rattlers", for one week
- Distinctive cultures
- Competition
 - within-group solidarity
 - negative stereotyping
 - hostility, raids, violence

The Robbers Cave study

- Attempts to reduce hostility between groups:
 - peace talks
 - individual competitions
 - shared meals
 - shared movies
 - fun with firecrackers
 - sermons on brotherly love

ALL FAILED

The Robbers Cave study

What could bring them together?

Superordinate goal
(shared enemy)

“Minimal Groups”

- Henri Tajfel, after World War II
- Klee/Kandinsky lovers
- Coin flip

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Moral judgments

- Evaluation
- Obligation
- Sanctions

Universals

- Intuitions about fairness and reciprocity (anger at cheaters, gratitude toward sharers)
- Intuitions about moral and immoral acts
- Adult humans, but also:
 - young children
 - non-human primates

Variation

- Richard Shweder notes that people ...

Three frameworks of moral thought

Ethics of autonomy

-- rights, equality, freedom

Ethics of community

-- duty, status, hierarchy, interdependence

Ethics of divinity

-- purity, sanctity, pollution, sin

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Ethics of autonomy

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- Most Americans -- particularly college students -- believe that they hold to an ethics of autonomy
- If it doesn't harm anyone, it's ok
- E.g., sex between consenting adults
- Ok?

Moral disgust

- Brother and sister
- Family dog
- Flag & toilet
- Chicken

Conclusion: Our moral intuitions can surprise us

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[The Milgram Study]

Stanley Milgram's Studies

- Basic study procedure
 - teacher and learner (learner always confederate)
 - watch learner being strapped into chair -- learner expresses concern over his "heart condition"

Stanley Milgram's Studies

- Teacher to another room with experimenter
- Shock generator panel – 15 to 450 volts, labels “slight shock” to “XXX”
- Asked to give higher shocks for every mistake learner makes

Stanley Milgram's Studies

- Learner protests more and more as shock increases
- Experimenter continues to request obedience even if teacher balks

120 “Ugh! Hey this really hurts.”

150 “Ugh! Experimenter! That’s all. get me out of here. I told you I had heart trouble. My heart’s starting to bother me now.”

300 (agonized scream) “I absolutely refuse to answer any more. get me out of here You can’t hold me here. Get me out.”

330 “(intense & prolonged agonized scream) “Let me out of here. Let me out of here. My heart’s bothering me. Let me out, I tell you...”

Bad explanations for Milgram's Results

- Abnormal group of subjects?
 - numerous replications with variety of groups shows no support
- People in general are sadistic?
 - videotapes of Milgram's subjects show extreme distress

Follow-Up Studies to Milgram

- Original study
- Different building
- Teacher with learner
- Put hand on shock
- Orders by phone
- Ordinary man orders
- 2 teachers rebel
- Teacher chooses shock level

Critiques of Milgram

- 84% later said they were glad to have participated and fewer than 2% said they were sorry, but, still, serious damage could have been done
- Do these experiments really help us understand real-world atrocities?

Is the issue really obedience?

The perfect situation

- Authority of Yale and value of science
- Experimenter self-assurance and acceptance of responsibility
- Distance of learner and experimenter
- New situation and no model of how to behave

Two forces for evil

- Deindividuation of self
- Denigration of other

Two forces for evil

- Deindividuation of self
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Deindividuation

- There is a sense of reduced accountability and shifted attention away from the self that occurs in the context of groups
- Responsible for riots, lynching, gang rapes, and other group violence
- Deindividuation is not limited to groups
 - Effect of authority
 - Effect of anonymity

Why Don't People Always Help Others in Need?

- Diffusion of responsibility
 - presence of others leads to decreased help response
 - we all think someone else will help, so we don't

Why Don't People Always Help Others in Need?

- Latane studies
 - several scenarios designed to measure the help response
 - found that if you think you're the only one that can hear or help, you are more likely to do so
 - if there are others around, you will diffuse the responsibility to others
- Kitty Genovese incident

How to make others matter less

- Distance
- Euphemism ('cargo', 'extermination')
- Humor
- Take away their names
- See them as disgusting

Disgust

("the body and soul emotion")

- Human universal
- Basic emotion: characteristic facial expression
- Rozin: Animals and animal by-products
 - Feces
 - Urine
 - Blood
 - Vomit
 - Rotten flesh
 - Most meat

If people are seen as disgusting, they matter less

"Thus, throughout history, certain disgust properties -- sliminess, bad smell, stickiness, decay, foulness -- have repeatedly and monotonously been associated with... Jews, women, homosexuals, untouchables, lower-class people -- all of those are imagined as tainted by the dirt of the body"
-- Martha Nussbaum

"Just look at these guys!
The louse-infested
beards! The filthy,
protruding ears, Those
stained, fatty clothes..."

Jews often have an
unpleasant sweetish odor.
If you have a good nose,
you can smell the Jews."
(Nazi School Book, 1938)

Two forces for good

- Contact and interdependence
- Perspective-taking

1. Contact and interdependence

- Selfish motives for altruistic action

Robert Wright's argument for the moral value of globalization

"One of the many reasons I don't want to bomb the Japanese is that they built my minivan."

Thomas Friedman:

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1. Contact and interdependence

- The contact hypothesis
 - equal status
 - common goal
 - social support

e.g., - Robber's Cave
- military
- universities?

2. Perspective taking

- If you take another person's perspective, you care more about that person

Ways to motivate perspective taking in others

Direct:

"How would you feel if you ..."

"Try to see it from their point of view ..."

Indirect:

Representing something as similar to more familiar objects of empathy

Fetus: similar to child

Animal: similar to human

Stranger: similar to family member

[metaphors of "brotherhood", "sisterhood"]

Reading response

- If the Milgram experiment was done for the first time right now, at Yale, with Yale undergraduates
 - a) what do you think you would do?
 - b) what do you think the average Yale student would do?