Human Morality
Features and Bugs

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GEM 2017
Features

What problem does morality solve?
How does it do it?

Bugs

How does morality go wrong?

Fixes

How can we do better?
Me vs. Us
Tragedy of the Commons in the lab: The Public Goods Game

Four players, each gets some money

Players can keep money or contribute to a common pool

Experimenter doubles pool and distributes to all four

Me: Keep money + Get share of common pool

Us: Contribute to common pool
Public Goods Game

Rand, Greene, & Nowak, 2012
Trust

Rand, Greene, & Nowak, 2012
Fast Moral Machinery

Positive
- empathy, compassion
- love, friendship
- trust, goodwill

Negative
- guilt
- embarrassment
- fear

Self

Other
- gratitude
- forgiveness

- anger
- disgust
Trolleyology

Foot, 1967; Thomson, 1976

trolley images by John Holbo
Koenigs et al., 2007, Ciaramelli et al., 2007

5 > 1
The Buddha and the Trolley

Lhasa, Tibet:
- 49 Buddhist Monks
- 43 Lay Tibetans

Guangzhou, China:
- 61 Han Chinese

Boston, US:
- 27 American Christian Ministers
- 41 Lay Americans

**83%**

**64%**

**19%**

**33%**

**15%**
Features

Bugs
The Tragedy of Commonsense Morality

Us vs. Them
• Holly Fisher, USA

• Reem Riyashi, Gaza
Cooperating with Strangers

Hermann et al., 2008
Cooperating with Strangers

Hermann et al., 2008
Singer (1972); Unger (1996)
Dear Sir
Please send us $200...

Singer (1972); Unger (1996)
Distant Suffering

68% 

34% 

Musen & Greene, in prep
Moral Innumeracy

value

lives
Pushing

Push vs. Switch ≈ 1,000,000 lives

Cushman et al., 2006; Greene et al., 2009
Features
Bugs
Fixes
Global Metamorality

fix tribalism

fix innumeracy

common currency
Doctors vs. Public Health Professionals

Mean rating

More utilitarian

Medical Cases

Non-Medical Cases

MD

PH

Mean rating
Metamorality

“I have been tormenting myself for years to find if possible a sufficient ground for treating [gays] with the severity with which they are treated at this time of day by all European nations: but upon the principle of utility I can find none.”

Jeremy Bentham, “Paederasty,”
circa 1785

slavery, free speech, free markets, public education, environmental protection, prison reform, animal rights, workers’ rights, the right to divorce, etc.
Common Currency

How do you make *tradeoffs* among competing values?

Q: Who really matters?  
A: Everyone, equally

Q: What really matters?  
A: Happiness: The overall quality of experience

Maximize happiness impartially
Moral Philosophy
A Psychological Perspective

Bless the Mess
Use your manual mode to describe your tribe’s point-and-shoot morality

Rationalize the Mess
Use your manual mode to justify your tribe’s point-and-shoot morality

Clean up the Mess
Use your manual mode to transcend your tribe’s point-and-shoot morality
Cooperating with Strangers

Henrich et al., 2010
Medical Dilemmas:
Rationing drugs, equipment, organs
Quarantine of infectious patient
Cheap prevention vs. expensive treatment
Utilitarian Assessment
Which action will produce better results?

Integrative Judgment
Which action do you find more morally acceptable?

Emotional Assessment
Which action do you feel worse about doing?

Shenhav & Greene, Journal of Neuroscience, 2014
Numbers vs. Feelings

70%  
Push vs. Switch ≈ 1,000,000 lives

Greene et al., 2009, Paxton et al., 2011
Symbolic and Social Boundaries
Boundaries Literature Rapidly Expands (1980 to 2016)

Growth of the Various Literatures on Boundaries Since 1980

- Symbolic
- Social
- Ethnic
- Religious
Which Boundary Concepts and Terms Are the Most Salient?

Total Number of Academic Articles or Books on Boundary-Related Topics

Articles or Books Discussing Each Type of Boundary

Type of Boundary Literature

- In-Group/Out-Group
- Tribalism
- Social
- Ethnic
- Spatial
- Professional
- Boundary Object(s)
- Gender
- Boundary Work
- Symbolic
- Religious
- Sexual Boundaries
- Groupness
- Scientific

Pre-1990
1990 to 2000
2001 to 2010
Post-2010
GETTING RESPECT
Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in The United States, Brazil & Israel

Michèle Lamont, Graziella Moraes Silva, Jessica Welburn, Joshua Guetzkow, Nissim Mizrachi, Hanna Herzog, Elisa Reis
Variation in Groupness

- **African-Americans**: strong but contradictory
- **Black Brazilians**: Blurred
- **Palestinian citizens**: Strong
- **Ethiopians**: Dissonant
- **Mizrahim**: Weak
**TABLE 1.2. CHARACTERIZATION OF GROUPNESS FOR THE FIVE ETHNORACIAL GROUPS STUDIED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characterization</th>
<th>UNITED STATES</th>
<th>BRAZIL</th>
<th>ISRAEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary bases of groupness</td>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>Pretos and pardos</td>
<td>Palestinian citizens, Ethiopians, Mizrahim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characterization</td>
<td>Strong but contradictory Race</td>
<td>Blurred Race</td>
<td>Strong Dissonant Race/Ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-identification</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National identification</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Boundaries</th>
<th>Reported social boundaries</th>
<th>Symbolic boundaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived spatial segregation</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Strong but contradictory (race, slavery)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homophily</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Strong (race, slavery, and class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Strong (colonialism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Strong (Ashkenazim)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available repertoires of group disadvantages and shared experiences</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inequality

Macro social processes

Cognition

Culture variously defined
(Harding, Lamont and Small 2010)
Focus on public attitudes (public stigma) and structural policies (structural stigma). Two aspects of destigmatization: Removing blame and drawing equivalence between in-group and out-group for:

- People living with HIV-AIDS (successful case)
- African Americans (gains on public and structural stigma, but stereotypes remain and some legal protections are weakly enforced)
- People labeled as Obese (limited success: no scientific consensus)
Destigmatizing

Outcomes

Public stigma reduction
- Beliefs
- Attitudes
- Norms etc.

Destigmatizing Actions
Making public claims
- Removing blame
- Asserting worth of group etc.

Structural stigma reduction
- Advocating for legislation regarding rights and protections
- Advocating for org. change etc.

Social Actors
- Medical experts
- Legal experts
- Media/journalists etc.

Construction of Group’s Belonging
- Perceived equivalence to dominant group
- Whether group helps or burdens society

Construction of Stigmatized Conditions
- Etiology
- Responsibility/blame
- Perceived consequences of condition etc.

Existing ideologies
- Equality
- Rights
- Multiculturalism

Expert Knowledge
- Medical knowledge
- Social scientific expertise
- Legal and policy expertise etc.

Cultural Resources

Actions

Outcome
Conditions for destigmatization:

“By tracing this process across cases, we find that the conditions that account for destigmatization include:

- the credibility of new constructions
- the status and visibility of actors carrying these constructions
- the conclusiveness of expert knowledge about stigmatized groups
- the interaction between new constructions and existing cultural ideologies
- perceived linked fate of the stigmatized and dominant groups.”