

Lecture 21

Moral Reasoning

- **Moral reasoning**
 - **Emotion vs. rational thinking**
- **Moral Justification**
 - **Rationalizations for doing immoral things**
- **Trusting others**
 - **When to apologize, when to deny culpability**
 - **Issues of competence vs. integrity**

Moral Reasoning

The Gist of the Study

The long-standing rationalist tradition in moral psychology emphasizes the role of reason in moral judgment. A more recent trend places increased emphasis on emotion. Although both reason and emotion are likely to play important roles in moral judgment, relatively little is known about their neural correlates, the nature of their interaction, and the factors that modulate their respective behavioral influences in the context of moral judgment. We show that moral dilemmas vary systematically in the extent to which they engage emotional processing and that these variations in emotional engagement influence moral judgment.

Greene (2001)

Moral Reasoning

The Trolley Dilemma

The present study was inspired by a family of ethical dilemmas familiar to contemporary moral philosophers. One such dilemma is the trolley dilemma: A runaway trolley is headed for five people who will be killed if it proceeds on its present course. The only way to save them is to hit a switch that will turn the trolley onto an alternate set of tracks where it will kill one person instead of five. Ought you to turn the trolley in order to save five people at the expense of one? Most people say yes.

Greene (2001)

Moral Reasoning

The Footbridge Dilemma

Now consider a similar problem, the footbridge dilemma. As before, a trolley threatens to kill five people. You are standing next to a large stranger on a footbridge that spans the tracks, in between the oncoming trolley and the five people. In this scenario, the only way to save the five people is to push this stranger off the bridge, onto the tracks below. He will die if you do this, but his body will stop the trolley from reaching the others. Ought you to save the five others by pushing this stranger to his death? Most people say no.

Greene (2001)

Moral Reasoning

The Difference in Dilemmas

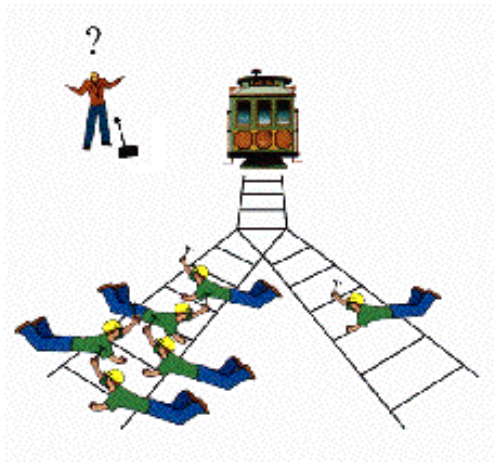
We maintain that the crucial difference is in the emotional response to the dilemma. The thought of pushing someone to his death is, we propose, more emotionally salient than the thought of hitting a switch that will cause a trolley to produce similar consequences, and it is this emotional response that accounts for people's tendency to treat these cases differently.

Greene (2001)

Emotion and Moral Reasoning

The Difference in Dilemmas

Trolley dilemma



Trying to minimize the # of casualties in a bad situation. A relatively unemotional decision

Footbridge dilemma



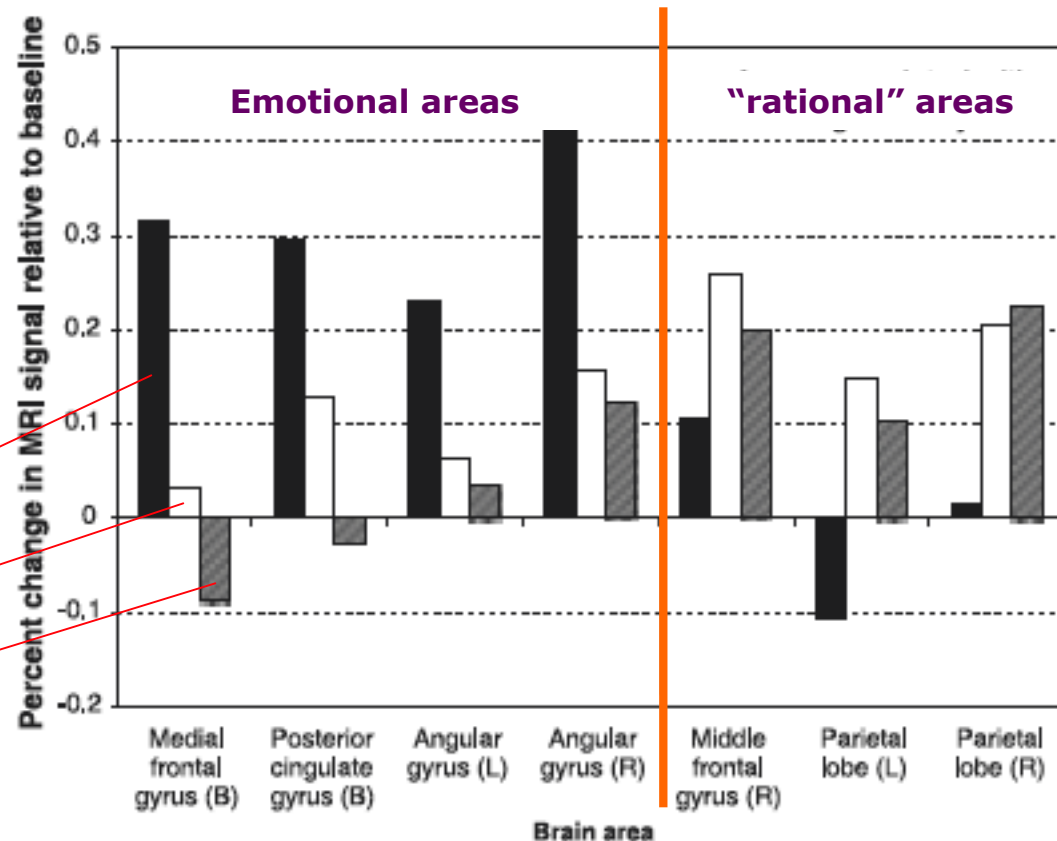
Killing an innocent for the greater good. A relatively emotional decision

Greene (2001)

Emotion and Moral Reasoning

What brain areas responded to the dilemma?

Plotted is activity in different brain regions as a function of whether the region is “emotional” (left of orange line) or “rational” (right of orange line), and footbridge dilemma (black bars), trolley dilemma (white bars), and non-moral dilemma (grey bars)

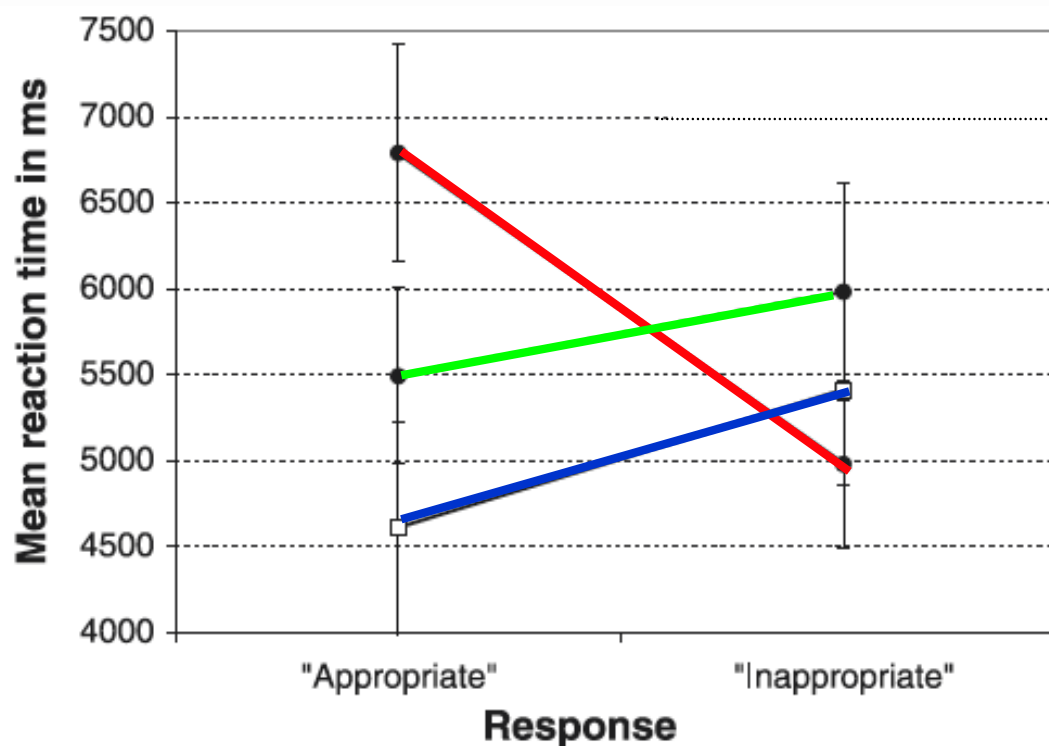


Greene (2001)

Emotion and Moral Reasoning

Thinking about the Dilemmas

Plotted is time taken to respond to the dilemma, as a function of whether your response was "appropriate" (left) or "inappropriate" (right), and type of dilemma: footbridge (red), trolley (blue), and non-moral (green).



Greene (2001)

Moral Justification



From *Office Space*

Moral Justification

Two Types to Consider

- **Denial of an ethical wrong-doing**
 - **We don't actually think what we're doing is wrong**
- **Ethical justification for an unethical act**
 - **We rationalize that what we're doing is ethical**
 - **A "Robin Hood" kind of scenario**

Trusting Others

A definition

We define trust as a psychological state comprising the intention to accept personal vulnerability based on the expectation that the person you are trusting is going to be cool and not let you down. This involves two things at the psychological level:

- (1) “trusting intentions”, or your willingness to make yourself vulnerable to another in the presence of risk.**
- (2) “trusting beliefs”, or the beliefs you hold about another person’s **integrity and competence** that may lead you to trusting intentions.**

Kim (2002)

Trusting Others

Today's Question



In trust-damaging situations, is it better to apologize or to deny any wrong-doing?

Kim (2002)

Trusting Others

Apology and Denial

Efforts to understand how to repair trust have led trust researchers to focus on two different ways of responding to a trust violation— apology and denial. Apology is defined as a statement that acknowledges both responsibility and regret for a trust violation. Denial, in contrast, is defined as a statement whereby an allegation is explicitly declared to be untrue (i.e., the statement acknowledges no responsibility and hence no regret). A growing body of literature that assesses the implications of such responses suggests that each may exert an important influence on trust.

Kim (2002)

Trusting Others

Competence vs. integrity violations

Competence beliefs concern your perception as to whether the trustee possesses the technical and interpersonal skills required for a job.



Integrity beliefs concern your perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles or ethics that you find acceptable.



Kim (2002)

Trusting Others

A 2 x2 Experimental Design

Apology

Denial

**Competence
violation**

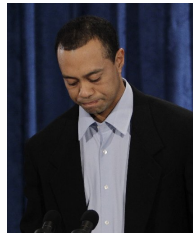


**I'm sorry, my
bad. I'll learn
and grow from
my lameness.**



**I didn't do it!
You liberals
need to get off
my back!**

**integrity
violation**



**I'm sorry, my
bad. I'll learn
and grow from
my lameness.**



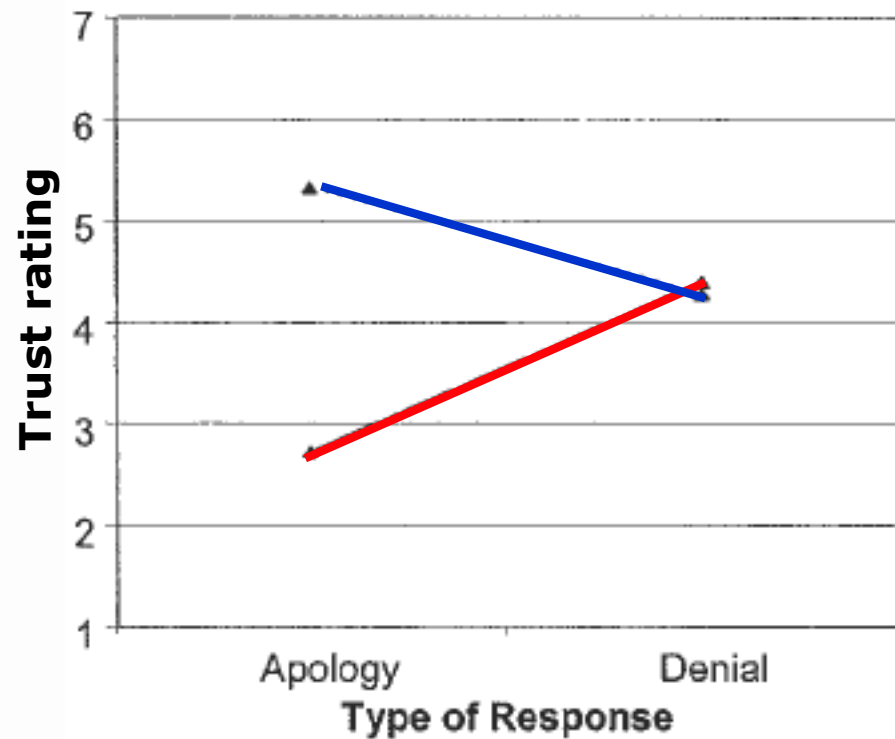
**I didn't do it!
I'm a good,
clean family
guy!**

Kim (2002)

Trusting Others

Affects on trust

Plotted perceived integrity of person as a function of whether the person apologized (left) or denied wrong-doing (right) for either a **competence** (blue line) or **integrity** (red line) violation

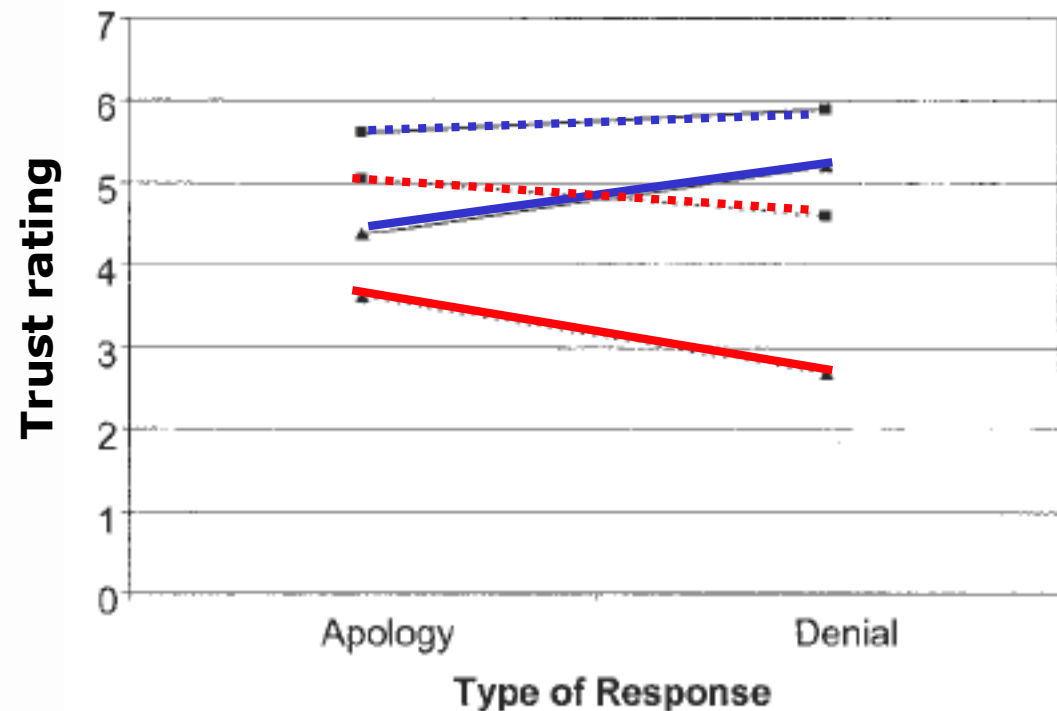


Kim (2002)

Trusting Others

What happens when person is found to be guilty vs. innocent?

Plotted are trust ratings of a person as a function of whether the person was found innocent (dotted lines) or guilty of wrongdoing (solid lines) for either a **competence** (blue line) or **integrity** (red line) violation



Kim (2002)