

Moral Media 2018
The Ohio State University
Data Blitz Agenda and Abstracts

DATA BLITZ ONE – ASSESSING CONTENT AND ITS EFFECTS: 10:30 – 11:15

Moral Conflict, Mixed Emotion and the Appreciation of Popular Films

Kevin Kryston (Michigan State University) & Allison Eden (Michigan State University)

The term appreciation is used to distinguish meaningful, moving and thought-provoking media experiences from hedonic enjoyment (Grizzard, Tamborini, Lewis, Wang, & Prabhu, 2014; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver et al., 2018). While the content or narrative-based elements leading to enjoyment are well documented, it is less clear what type of content in narrative may lead to appreciation. To address this issue, we conducted a content analysis of plot synopses of 49 major box office films from the last 40 years. Moral conflict, emotionality, and mixed emotion frequency were coded in each synopsis and used as predictors of enjoyment (based on budget and IMDb reviews) and appreciation (based on IMDb rating and reviews; cf. Lewis, Grizzard, Choi, & Wang, 2017) as well as acclaim (critical ratings and awards) and popularity (number of ratings and box office; cf. Oliver, Ash, Woolley, Shade, & Kim, 2014). Contrary to expectations, neither moral conflict nor mixed emotion were related to appreciation or acclaim, although negative emotions were positively related to critical acclaim. As expected, frequent positive emotions were positively related to enjoyment and popularity. In contrast to prior research, mixed emotions were positively related to enjoyment and popularity. Results will be discussed in terms of the relevance of moral conflict and emotionality of content on audiences.

Short- and Long-term Trends in the Moral and Political Content of Popular Music

Jacob Long (The Ohio State University)

Research on the content of popular music tends to be cross-sectional, focused on single genres, and forced by practical constraints to analyze only a small set of exemplars. Recent research efforts on the moral content of music (Long & Eveland, 2018) have expanded to include more genres at once and using a more comprehensive corpus for analysis. Previous work has failed to examine the temporal dynamics of music content over time in the American context, with few exceptions (e.g., Van Sickle, 2005). The present study draws on a vast dataset of approximately 100,000 songs (or songs from albums) that reached the Billboard music charts in the genres Billboard tracks as well as lyrics for those songs. Data for some genres are available going back as early as 1992, with more complete data beginning around 2000. Moral content is analyzed initially via word counts, using the Moral Foundations Dictionary (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009), while political content is assessed using an ad hoc supplemental dictionary. Follow-up analyses quantify moral and political content using distributed dictionary representations (DDR; Garten, Hoover, Johnson, Boghrati, Iskiwitsch, & Dehghani, 2017) to avoid some pitfalls of word-counting methods. In both cases, the (in)stability of the rank order of genres over time is explored.

The Effect of Perceived Moral Conflict in Video Games on Moral Emotions and Replay Value

Lu Zhang (Michigan State University) & Allison Eden (Michigan State University)

Past literatures show that players use individual moral considerations based on Moral Foundations Theory (Haidt & Joseph, 2004) when making decisions in video games (Krcmar & Cingel, 2016; Joeckel, Bowman & Dogruel, 2012). Further work shows that conducting behaviors perceived as immoral in games can elicit guilt (Grizzard, Tamborini, Lewis, Wang & Prabhu, 2014), particularly when individuals violate their own moral code (Weaver & Lewis, 2012). However, these studies have examined relatively unconflicted moral scenarios, in which only one aspect of moral foundation is represented, or in which one option is clearly the moral choice for a player. This study fills that gap by exploring the emotional impact of conflicted moral dilemmas in video game. We define conflict as presence and salience of two or more moral foundations conflicting in a game decision scenario. We predict that differences in individual moral salience between conflicted morals will lead to perceptions of conflict for the player, except in the case where both moral foundations are of low salience. The perception of conflict will lead to greater feelings of guilt upon making either decision, and stronger desire to replay the moral scenario to find a different resolution. Guilt is expected to mediate the relationship between conflict and replay value. Results from this study continue the investigation into morality and media in terms of broadening our understandings of moral decision making in games, and potential effects on players.

DATA BLITZ TWO – EFFECTS OF MORAL CONTENT: 11:15 – 12:00

Risk Mitigation as Altruism: Examining the Use of Elevation & Empathy in Risk Communication

Kate T. Long (The Ohio State University) & Emily Moyer-Guse (The Ohio State University)

Several risk contexts can be considered collective risks, and the corresponding mitigation behaviors can be framed as altruistic behaviors. In two experiments, the current study examines the effect of moral beauty and victim exemplars on altruism, and if the ingroup-outgroup status of the exemplar moderates this effect. Altruism was measured by behavioral response (subscribing to a newsletter for more information), behavioral intention, policy support, and collective risk perception.

Study 1 employed a 2 (exemplar: moral beauty vs. victim) x 2 (group status: ingroup vs. outgroup) design. It was conducted with a parent sample, using the context of anti-vaccination. The results showed that elevation mediates the effect of a moral beauty exemplar on behavioral intention to vaccinate and to advocate for childhood vaccination. Empathy mediates the effect of a victim exemplar on behavioral intention, policy support for mandatory childhood vaccination, and risk perception. No effect was found for the group status of the exemplars or for the behavioral response outcome. Overall, study 1 showed that a victim exemplar was more effective in encouraging altruism than a moral beauty exemplar.

For study 2 (upcoming), a student sample will be recruited, and the context is climate change. Two alternations will be implemented: (a) a control group will be added; and (b) a different outgroup with more social distance will be used. We expect to see the effect of the exemplars on the behavioral response outcome compared to the control group, and the moderating effect of group status due to increased social distance.

Creating Moral Exemplars

Henry Goble (Michigan State University)

The MIME predicts that media can increase the accessibility of moral intuitions, which shape subsequent decision-making. Increased accessibility occurs through exposure to content that exemplifies the upholding/violation of specific moral intuitions. Implicitly, the MIME suggests that once objects/events exemplify moral intuitions, exposure to exemplars prime associated intuitions. Although research supports the MIME's contention that exposure media can increase intuition salience, no research examines how objects/events come to exemplify specific moral intuitions.

Certain objects/behaviors are inherently linked to specific moral intuitions. For example, a mother nurturing a baby inherently exemplifies the upholding of care. However, other objects/behaviors are made to exemplify an intuition by repeatedly associating the intuition with the behavior/object. In a study of political issues, we test the proposition that objects/behaviors can be made to exemplify an intuition. A political issue was pretested to demonstrate its lack of associated preconceived notions. Over a three-week period, participants in an experiment are exposed repeatedly to messages in which the political issue was associated with the upholding of care or the violation of fairness. On week four, participants are (1) exposed to competing messages from two political candidates expressing divergent positions on the issue and (2) asked to express a preference for one candidate. We predict, that participants repeatedly exposed to messages associating the issue with the upholding of care will prefer the candidate who expressed support for that political issue, whereas, participants exposed to messages exemplifying violations of fairness will prefer the candidate who expressed opposition to the political issue.

Developing the Moral Foundations Lexical Decision-Making Task

Sara Grady (Michigan State University)

Growing literature theorizes that moral judgements are based on intuitive mechanisms that have both affective and semantic components. The MIME suggests that media content which emphasizes or increases the salience of these intuitive mechanisms will increase the accessibility of those specific moral intuitions within viewers.

Intuitions, however, are notoriously hard to assess. Previous work has employed the moral foundations-affect misattribution procedure to test the accessibility of the affective component of moral intuitions. To date, no research assesses the semantic component of these intuitions. The current study addresses this shortcoming. The moral foundations lexical decision-making task (MF-LDT) measures the accessibility of intuition-specific information in pre-cognitive processing.

A traditional LDT flashes letter combinations quickly (<500ms) on screen and participants choose if the display is a word (butter) or a non-word (grinter). The speed and accuracy of respondents indicates the word's accessibility. The MF-LDT consist of 200 words (10 related to each of the five moral intuitions, 50 neutral words, 100 nonwords).

In semantic priming research, the extent to which a prime increases speed and accuracy for related terms indicates the accessibility of concepts associated with the prime. To test the ability of the MF-LDT to measure the semantic component of intuition accessibility, subjects engaged in activities intended to prime one of five intuitions (care, fairness, ingroup loyalty, respect for authority and purity) or a control and completed the MF-LDT. Thus, we hypothesize words connected to a primed intuition will be recognized faster than words connected to other intuitions, neutral words, or non-words.

DATA BLITZ THREE – CHARACTERS AND DISPOSITION THEORY PROCESSES: 13:30 – 14:15

The Influence of Dominantly and Overridingly Salient Intuition on Disposition Formations and Character Evaluations

Joshua Baldwin (Michigan State University)

Disposition theory claims moral judgements play a central role in the formation of character disposition, the evaluation of their behaviors, and the enjoyment of narrative outcomes. ADT says little about how dispositions are formed, however, the MIME has explicated the processes governing these judgments. The MIME describes how audiences form positive disposition towards characters who uphold moral intuitions and negative dispositions towards those who violate them. However, characters are not always purely good or bad. Often, characters uphold some intuitions while violating others. According to the MIME, when moral intuitions are in conflict, judgments about characters and behaviors are determined by how much different intuitions are made dominantly salient (so salient that it precludes consideration of other intuitions) or overriding salient (so salient that upholding one intuition supersedes violation of others in determining moral judgments). Little research has tested this MIME proposition. The presentation proposed in this abstract reports results from one experiment testing this proposition and plans for a second experiment that replicates and extends the results of the first study. Study one exposed participants to narratives that manipulated the overriding salience of care and authority. As predicted, making the salience of one intuition override another affected perceptions of the character's behavior, which in turn, predicted approbation of the character's behavior and character liking. The second experiment attempts to extend the first by (1) manipulating both the overriding and dominant salience of care and authority, and (2) measuring the mediating influence of intuition salience in the model.

The Impact of Moral Expectancy Violations on Audiences' Parasocial Relationships With Movie Heroes and Villains

Alex Bonus (The Ohio State University), Nicholas L. Matthews (The Ohio State University), and Tim Wulf (University of Cologne)

Abstract: Research on the processes by which audiences forge relationships with media characters can generally be ascribed to one of two epistemic pedigrees. The first, descending from affective disposition theory, emphasizes how audiences use their preexisting story schemas to interpret and judge character behaviors along relatively bifurcated notions of good versus evil. The second, celebrating a more diverse lineage, adopts theories from interpersonal communication and applies them in mediated contexts. While these separate realms of study are complimentary, their predictions are rarely integrated. The current study addressed this gap by uniting disposition theory with a related theory in interpersonal communication: expectancy violations theory (EVT). Accordingly, a longitudinal survey assessed adults' parasocial relationships with characters in a popular movie franchise (i.e., Star Wars) before and after the release of the latest film installment of that franchise (i.e., The Last Jedi). Consistent with disposition theory, characters' immoral behavior in the film weakened participants' parasocial relationships with those characters. However, analyses conducted using a novel statistical technique (i.e., response surface analysis) revealed that further shifts occurred when characters subverted participants' expectations regarding their typical moral behavior. Specifically, participants' relationship with the film's primary villain strengthened when he was perceived as behaving more morally than expected, whereas their relationship with the film's primary hero weakened when he was perceived as behaving either more or less morally than expected. This project highlights the need for more nuanced examinations of disposition formation processes and introduces a statistical technique well-suited for such investigations.

Using Social Judgment Theory to observe Affective Disposition Theory's Latitudes of Moral Sanctions & Rewards

Nicholas L. Matthews (The Ohio State University)

Zillmann's (2000) Moral-Sanction Theory of Delight and Repugnance (MSTDR) is an extension of the more general Affective Disposition Theory. MSTDR explains the moral rewards people hope for protagonists and the moral sanctions people hope for antagonists do not follow a specific moral code. Rather, the reward/punishment latitudes are large and conceptualized as basal. However, the latitudes have sensible bounds. When a reward/punishment falls beyond a latitude, it violates expectations of justice and diminishes enjoyment. Although limited extant work demonstrates the latitudes' existence, the nature of and nuance of the latitudes is unknown. Learning how behaviors in the space between moral and immoral alter judgment, affect, and cognition would refine conceptualizations and MSTDR. Three experiments tested the efficacy of using Social Judgement Theory's ordered alternative procedure (ORP) to observe the variance within latitudes and the nature of their boundary conditions. Results suggest that the ORP was effective (study 1)—demonstrating novel data patterns that reveal the nature and dynamics within sanction latitudes (studies 2 & 3). Specifically, study 3 tested the ORP's ability to detect the influence of character schema on perceptions of moral violations (Raney, 2004). Furthermore, study 3 observed the difference between prototypical character schema and exemplars (Sanders, 2010). The data indicate that people judge the moral violations of heroes as

similar to the violations of average people. However, relative to average people, people judged the moral violations of anti-heroes as more morally correct. Both of these outcomes were stronger when considering prototypical characters and weaker when considering exemplars.

DATA BLITZ FOUR – CHILDREN AS SPECIAL AUDIENCE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: 14:15 – 15:15

Extending Research Testing the Model of Intuitive Morality and Exemplars in Children Melinda Aley (Michigan State University)

The MIME suggests that intuition accessibility can be influenced by narrative media content which highlights a specific intuition. However, measuring intuition accessibility has been a challenge for MIME researchers. Research using an affect misattribution procedure (AMP) has supported MIME claims with adults. Unfortunately, the AMP cannot be used with children. Recent research has developed and tested a measure for children called the moral measure of intuition accessibility (M-MIA). The measure proved reliable for three of four intuition in one test (care, fairness, loyalty) and all four in a second test (care, fairness, loyalty, authority). The present study attempted to replicate research on the M-MIA, and to extend the M-MIA to measure the accessibility of egoistic intuitions. Participants were exposed to one of five comic book versions designed to highlight a moral intuition (care, fairness, loyalty, authority) or an egoistic intuition (hedonism/power). After exposure, participants filled out the M-MIA, the egoistic measure of intuition accessibility (E-MIA), and the altruistic and egoistic measure of intuition accessibility (A&E-MIA). Findings partially replicated previous research showing that comic book primes increased the accessibility of care, loyalty, and authority, but did not significantly increase the accessibility of the fairness intuition. The egoistic comic book did not increase the accessibility of hedonism or power. The results offer support to the utility of M-MIA for measuring the accessibility of moral intuitions in children and add support for the MIME's claim that narrative media content can increase the accessibility of that intuition in children.

Narrative Media's Effect on the Accessibility of Moral Intuitions and Subsequent Behavior in Pre-Teen Children: A Test of the Model of Intuitive Morality and Exemplars Lindsay Hahn (University of Georgia)

Logic from the model of intuitive morality and exemplars (MIME) suggests that narrative media emphasizing certain moral intuitions can increase the accessibility of those intuitions in audiences, which can subsequently affect related behaviors among audience members. Support for this contention has been previously limited to adults. The present study tested this mediation process in a pre-teen audience. Participants (N = 210; 48.8% female; Mage = 11.74; age range 10-13) were exposed to one of five versions of a comic book. Each version of the comic book was manipulated to emphasize one of four moral intuitions identified in the MIME, or no moral intuition. After exposure, participants completed a measure of intuition accessibility (M-MIA), followed by a moral measure of intuitively motivated behavior (M-MIMB). The M-MIMB, a modified version of the dictator game, was designed to give participants the opportunity to share tokens with intuition-relevant others. Three major outcomes were observed: For participants in all four moral conditions, exposure to a comic book emphasizing an intuition (1) directly

increased both the accessibility of that intuition and (2) directly increased their sharing with intuition-relevant others. Moreover, (3) media exposure's effect on participants' behavior was mediated by intuition accessibility in models for care and (in one analysis) fairness, but no other intuition. Data will be discussed in terms of their value for research on morality, children's media, and the MIME.

Challenges of Measuring Children's Comprehension of Moral Narratives

Marie-Louise Mares (University of Wisconsin – Madison)

When children don't behave as desired after seeing a moral narrative, it is helpful to understand if that's because they misunderstood the plot and the overarching lesson or if they do understand but think it's irrelevant to them, or simply don't want to comply. However, measuring young viewers' moral comprehension is challenging. We present data from a series of studies, illustrating 3- to 5-year-olds' responses to various methods of assessing moral comprehension, including open-ended questions, multiple-choice items where competing lessons are presented, and yes/no items where only one lesson is presented at a time.

Deadly Child's Play: Exposure to Guns in Movies Increases Interest in Real Guns

Brad Bushman (The Ohio State University)

Children often want to imitate movie characters. Research has shown that children who see movie characters drink alcohol are more likely to drink themselves, and children who see movie characters smoke cigarettes are more likely to smoke themselves. What, then, happens when children see movie characters use guns? In one experiment, 104 children (52 pairs) were randomly assigned to watch a 20-minute clip of the same movie with or without guns. After watching the movie, children were told they could play in a room that contained toys and games for 20 minutes. The room also contained a cabinet with a real (disabled) gun inside one of the drawers. Among children who found the gun (72%) and picked it up (43%), those who previously saw a movie with guns handled it longer (53.1 vs. 11.1 seconds) and pulled the trigger more times (2.8 vs. 0.01 trigger pulls) than those who saw the movie without guns. We are currently replicating this experiment using video games. These experiments are important because 40 children are shot with a gun each day in the U.S.