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Moral Decision-Making: How Utilitarian Similarity, Content, and Psychological Ownership Influence Moral Rationality. PETKO KUSEV, Kingston University London, PAUL VAN SCHAIK, Teesside University, VICTORIA BARANOVA, Lomonosov Moscow State University

Is it acceptable and moral to sacrifice a few people's lives or jobs to save many others? Research on moral dilemmas has shown that respondents judge personal moral actions as less appropriate than equivalent impersonal moral actions. Accordingly, theorists have argued that judgments of appropriateness in personal moral dilemmas are (i) more emotionally salient and more cognitively demanding than impersonal moral dilemmas (e.g., Greene et al., 2001) and (ii) dependent on utilitarian uncertainty – comprehensive information about moral actions and consequences boost utility maximization in moral choices (Kusev et al., 2016, Psych. Bull. & Rev.). In three experiments, we found that utilitarian similarity, content and ownership inform the psychological mechanisms employed in moral choice, independent of the emotional 'personal involvement' effects. Information about utilitarian content, similarity and ownership alter human utilitarian preferences. Our findings highlight a need to investigate how variation in moral descriptions produces variation in utilitarian judgments.

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