Limits of Empathy: The need for a shift in morality
A quantitative approach

Julia de Jonge, MSc.
Moral shift
Moral shift

Moral disengagement

Self-regulatory mechanisms governing moral conduct do not come into play unless they are activated.

Cognitive restructuring of immoral conduct into benign or worthy

(Bandura, 2002)
Moral shift

Moral disengagement

Self-regulatory mechanisms governing moral conduct do not come into play unless they are activated.

Cognitive restructuring of immoral conduct into benign or worthy

(Moral judgement

The evaluation of a certain behaviour as good or bad, or as right or wrong

Judgement of a person’s morality vs. immorality highly correlates with the judgement of goodness vs. badness

(Jin & Peng, 2021; Goodwin et al., 2014)
Moral disengagement

Condition
Autobiography vs. Novel

Empathy

De Jonge et al., 2022
Moral disengagement

De Jonge et al., 2022
Moral disengagement

Condition
Autobiography vs. Novel

Moral disengagement

Autobiography: M = 3.41, SD = 0.96
Novel: M = 3.76, SD = 0.86

t(102) = 1.990, p = 0.049

De Jonge et al., 2022
Moral disengagement

De Jonge et al., 2022

**Condition**
Autobiography vs. Novel

**Autobiography:**
- Slope: 0.354
- p: 0.049

**Novel:**
- Slope: 0.535
- p < 0.001

**Empathy**

Autobiography: M = 4.18, SD = 1.22
Novel: M = 4.25, SD = 1.07
Moral disengagement

Indirect effect of X on Y: slope = 0.190; 95% CI [0.01, 0.42]

Condition
Autobiography vs. Novel

Empathy
slope = 0.535, p < 0.001

Autobiography: M = 4.18, SD = 1.22
Novel: M = 4.25, SD = 1.07

slope = 0.354, p = 0.049

Indirect effect of X on Y: slope = 0.190; 95% CI [0.01, 0.42]

De Jonge et al., 2022
Moral judgement

Condition
Immoral vs. Moral

Aesthetic Appreciation
Immoral: M = 4.52, SD = 0.93
Moral: M = 4.33, SD = 1.05

Condition
Immoral vs. Moral

Aesthetic Appreciation

t(130) = -1.054, p = 0.294

Moral judgement
Moral judgement

Condition: Immoral vs. Moral

Moral judgement

Immoral: $M = 5.58$, $SD = 1.26$
Moral: $M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.43$

$t(130) = 5.923, p < .001$
Moral judgement

\[ \text{Immoral: } M = 4.52, \text{ SD } = 0.93 \]
\[ \text{Moral: } M = 4.33, \text{ SD } = 1.05 \]

Aesthetic Appreciation

\[ \text{slope} = 0.216, \text{ } p = 0.001 \]

Condition
Immoral vs. Moral

\[ \text{slope} = 1.389, \text{ } p < 0.001 \]
Moral judgement

Indirect effect of X on Y:
\[ \text{slope} = 0.310; \ 95\% \ CI \ [0.14, 0.52] \]

Moral judgement
\[ \text{slope} = 0.216, \ p = 0.001 \]

Aesthetic Appreciation

Condition
Immoral vs. Moral
\[ \text{slope} = 1.389, \ p < 0.001 \]

Immoral: M = 4.52, SD = 0.93
Moral: M = 4.33, SD = 1.05

Indirect effect of X on Y:
\[ \text{slope} = 0.310; \ 95\% \ CI \ [0.14, 0.52] \]
Moral judgement

\[ \text{slope} = 1.389 \quad p < 0.001 \]

Indirect effect of X on Y:
\[ \text{slope} = 0.310; 95\% \text{ CI} [0.14, 0.52] \]

Condition
Immoral vs. Moral

Aesthetic Appreciation

\[ t(129) = -2.558, \quad p = 0.012 \]

Immoral: M = 4.52, SD = 0.93
Moral: M = 4.33, SD = 1.05
Moral shift
Moral shift

Moral disengagement

Readers need to morally disengage before they empathise.

Readers of fiction disengage more easily from immoral conduct.
Moral shift

Moral disengagement

Readers need to morally disengage before they empathise

Readers of fiction disengage more easily from immoral conduct

Moral judgement

Appreciation will be in line with ones perceived moral judgement

Readers can only aesthetically appreciate the immoral character if they adjust their moral judgement
**Moral shift**

**Moral disengagement**

Readers need to morally disengage before they empathise

Readers of fiction disengage more easily from immoral conduct

**Moral judgement**

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References


