Force: Test of causal background domain expansion (#13642)

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Created: 08/29/2018 09:58 AM (PT)
Public: 09/11/2018 12:22 PM (PT)

1) Have any data been collected for this study already?
No, no data have been collected for this study yet.

2) What's the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?
We want to test a domain expansion hypothesis for the asymmetry in 'force' judgments observed originally in Young & Phillips (2011). In particular, after reading a vignette similar to the following:

While sailing on the sea, a large storm came upon a captain and his ship. As the waves began to grow larger, the captain realized that his small vessel was too heavy and the ship would flood if he didn't make it lighter.

The only things on the captain's small boat were a single sailor, some small but expensive cargo that he was transporting, and a number of passengers. He knew he had to throw something overboard to keep the ship from capsizing. Thinking quickly, the captain ordered the sailor to throw the [passengers/cargo] overboard. While the [passengers/cargo] sank to the bottom of the sea, the captain and his ship survived the storm and returned home safely.

Participants more agreed with (1b) than with (1a).

(1a) The sailor was forced to throw the passengers overboard by the captain.
(1b) The captain forced the sailor to throw the passengers overboard.

In contrast, when it was the cargo thrown overboard instead, they did not more agree with (2b) than (2a).

(2a) The sailor was forced to throw the cargo overboard by the captain.
(2b) The captain forced the sailor to throw the cargo overboard.

A domain expansion hypothesis proposes that the effect is observed because (i) people have a tendency to ignore causal background when an agent acts immorally (seeing him as acting freely or independently), thus the low agreement with (1a). However, (1b) mandates that the domain of causal background facts includes the captain ordering the sailor, thus raising agreement with (1b). If this is the correct explanation then we would expect that if participants are first asked to agree with (1b), they will enlarge the domain to include the captain, and that this domain will remain enlarged and also raise their subsequent agreement with (1a). In contrast, if they first judge (1a) and then judge (1b) we would expect to recover the originally asymmetry observed in Young & Phillips (2011). We do not expect to find a corresponding pattern when the cargo rather than the passengers are thrown overboard because (i) does not apply and thus people should always include the captain as part of the causal background.

3) Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.
Participants will rate their agreement on a scale from 0 (disagree) to 100 (agree) for either sentences (1a) and (1b) or (2a) and (2b), depending on whether they were assigned to read the passengers or cargo version of the vignette.

4) How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?
Participants will be randomly assigned to read the cargo or the passenger version of the vignette and will also be randomly assigned to first judge a sentence of the form 'A forced B to phi' or first judge a sentence of the form 'B was forced to phi by A' (both between-subjects manipulations). The passive vs. active sentence structure will be treated as a within-subjects manipulation.

5) Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.
We will analyze the data using mixed between/within ANOVA with morality (cargo vs. passengers) as a between-subjects factor, order (passive form first vs. active form first) as a between-subjects factor and sentence form (passive vs. active) as a within-subjects factor. We predict a three-way interaction, driven by the fact that a difference in agreement with the passive and active form of the force statement is only observed for the immoral version of the vignette and only when the passive sentence is judged first.

6) Describe exactly how outliers will be defined and handled, and your precise rule(s) for excluding observations.
We do not plan to exclude participants, though we will collect data on how long they spend on each page.

7) How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? No need to justify decision, but be precise about exactly how the

number will be determined.

We will collect a sample of 800 participants, or 200 per cell and the 2x2 between-subjects design.

8) Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., secondary analyses, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)

Nothing else to pre-register.