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Learning Non-Utilitarian Moral Rules: Preference Reversals In Utilitarian Choice.

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Previous decision- making research has investigated factors that influence moral utilitarian choice involving human life including: personal involvement (Greene et al., 2001), accessibility to utilitarian information (Kusev et al., 2016), utility content (Gold et al., 2013), and utility ratio (Martin & Kusev, 2016). However, no experimental studies have investigated the influence of associative learning on moral choice, despite associative learning having been found to influence rational choice in non-morally sensitive decision- making tasks (Kusev et al., 2017). Accordingly, we devised an associative learning method/task in order to investigate whether newly learned moral rules induce rational utilitarian choice. Our results revealed that respondents who learned non-utilitarian moral rules were less utilitarian/rational than respondents who did not receive moral rule learning. We further demonstrated a preference reversal in utilitarian choice - from utilitarian- rational to utilitarian-irrational. The results therefore indicate that respondents follow learned non-utilitarian moral rules as opposed to utilitarian rules and strategy.

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