

Social Learning Shapes Moral Strategy Selection

Rachel Calcott

Harvard, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States

Fiery Cushman

Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States

Abstract

Social norms—perceptions of what is commonly done in a given context—serve as powerful signals for guiding moral decision-making in complex dilemmas. We investigate whether individuals adjust their moral strategies in response to information about others' judgments, and explore the underlying learning processes that support these shifts. Using a computational approach, we compare two models of social learning: (1) Decision Biasing, where social influence temporarily alters choices without affecting underlying values, and (2) Value Shaping, where social feedback directly updates individuals' moral value representations. Our results show that a Decision Biasing model fails to adequately explain the observed data, while a Value Shaping model better accounts for the persistence of moral adaptation. Taken together, these data suggest that social norms may play a role in shaping not only immediate moral choices but also the strategies people use to make them.