

ABSTRACT

THESIS: THE EFFECT OF HYPOTHETICAL DISTANCE ON THE CONSISTENCY OF MORAL BEHAVIOR

STUDENT: HANNA NGUYEN

DEGREE: MASTER OF ARTS

COLLEGE: SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

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Studies in moral psychology have sought to understand the drivers of moral behavior. Psychological distance and Construal Level Theory have been explored by recent studies; yet there are very few studies on the effects of hypothetical distance and moral behavior. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate hypothetical distance as the moderator of the relationship between writing about a moral or immoral action and subsequent moral behavior. This is a 2 (hypothetical distance: imaginary, real) x 2 (moral valence: immoral, moral) between-subjects study. 153 participants, recruited from Prolific, were assigned to one of four groups, completed a writing task in which they described an action, completed two manipulation checks, and indicated their prosocial behavior intentions and donation amount to charity. Results showed partial support for my hypotheses. More specifically, they indicated that hypothetical distance increased consistency in imaginary conditions for prosocial behavior intentions. This consistency effect was not found for charity donation. Moral balancing was not observed in any group. I concluded that the effects of hypothetical distance on moral behavior are more complex than previously assumed, highlighting the need for further research to better understand this mechanism and explore its potential applications in real-world efforts to promote moral behavior.