



**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR
2015 PROJECT SUMMARY**

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Name(s) Emily P. Condon | Project Number 35856 |
| Project Title Moral Judgment and the Principle of Double Effect | |
| Abstract Objectives/Goals An online survey was conducted to assess people's moral judgments using the classic trolley problems. I ask: To what extent do demographic characteristics like gender and age influence the consistency of moral judgments? My hypotheses: People will contrast their answers to scenarios because of the principle of double effect, which states that people's moral judgments are often inconsistent when presented with different scenarios that ultimately result in the same outcome. Furthermore, demographics such as age, gender, education, ethnicity, religion, and political affiliation will have little influence on people's judgments because, in part, evolution has created a common/unconscious "moral grammar." Therefore, if I analyze each demographic individually and compare the different groups, then there will be no statistical difference between the observed and expected values. Methods/Materials Procedures: Create and send out an online survey. Collect and analyze data. Use Chi-Square analysis with 95% confidence level, where a p value less than or equal to .05 is significant, via SPSS to determine what, if any, demographic groups are significantly different from each other. Results The total percent of those who did demonstrate the principle of double effect is 68.6%. The significant statistical differences within demographics, calculated with Chi-Square test, showed that certain characteristics mattered in the consistency of moral judgment, as expressed in the principle of double effect. These characteristics included gender, age, education, and religion. Conclusions/Discussion One hypothesis was accepted because the majority of respondents did, in fact, demonstrate the principle of double effect, contradicting their moral judgment by answering "Yes" to Scenario 1 and "No" to Scenario 2 when in both cases the ratio of human life is 5:1 in regards to the greater good. However, the other theory was not accepted because, according to the data gathered, certain demographic characteristics do influence the consistency of moral reasoning. These groups included gender, age, education, and religion. Because of these results, one may question the validity of past studies regarding the idea that a "moral grammar" is hardwired into human brains. My study suggests that there may be a role for learning and an effect of environmental factors, such as society, on moral judgments. | |
| Summary Statement To what extent do demographic characteristics - like gender and age - influence the consistency of moral judgments? | |
| Help Received | |