

COUNTER MORALITY

How Moral Mandates Impact Decision Making

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Introduction

Research Question:

Do moral mandates lead to a repression of an individual's internal sense of morality?

Background

Constraint Morality | Morality based on obedience to authority
Base Morality | Morality based on one's own internal "moral compass"

Constraint Morality Induction: | Punishments, rewards, removal of choice
Base Morality Reduction: | One acts less morally in realm of freedom

Constraint Morality Induction → Base Morality Reduction

Introductions of late pickup fees in daycare → Increase in late pickups (Gneezy, 2015)

Paying students to read for a blind student → Decrease in future desire to help (Kunda, 1983)

Workplace authoritarianism → Decreased helping behaviour between employees (Asim, 2021)

Power Distance Orientation (PDO)

What it means: The extent to which one accepts power imbalances

High PDO: Individual prefers high power imbalances (authority/subordinate relationships in the workplace)

Low PDO: Individual prefers low power imbalances (equality between management and workers)

In other words...

PDO means one is more willing/susceptible to act out of constraint

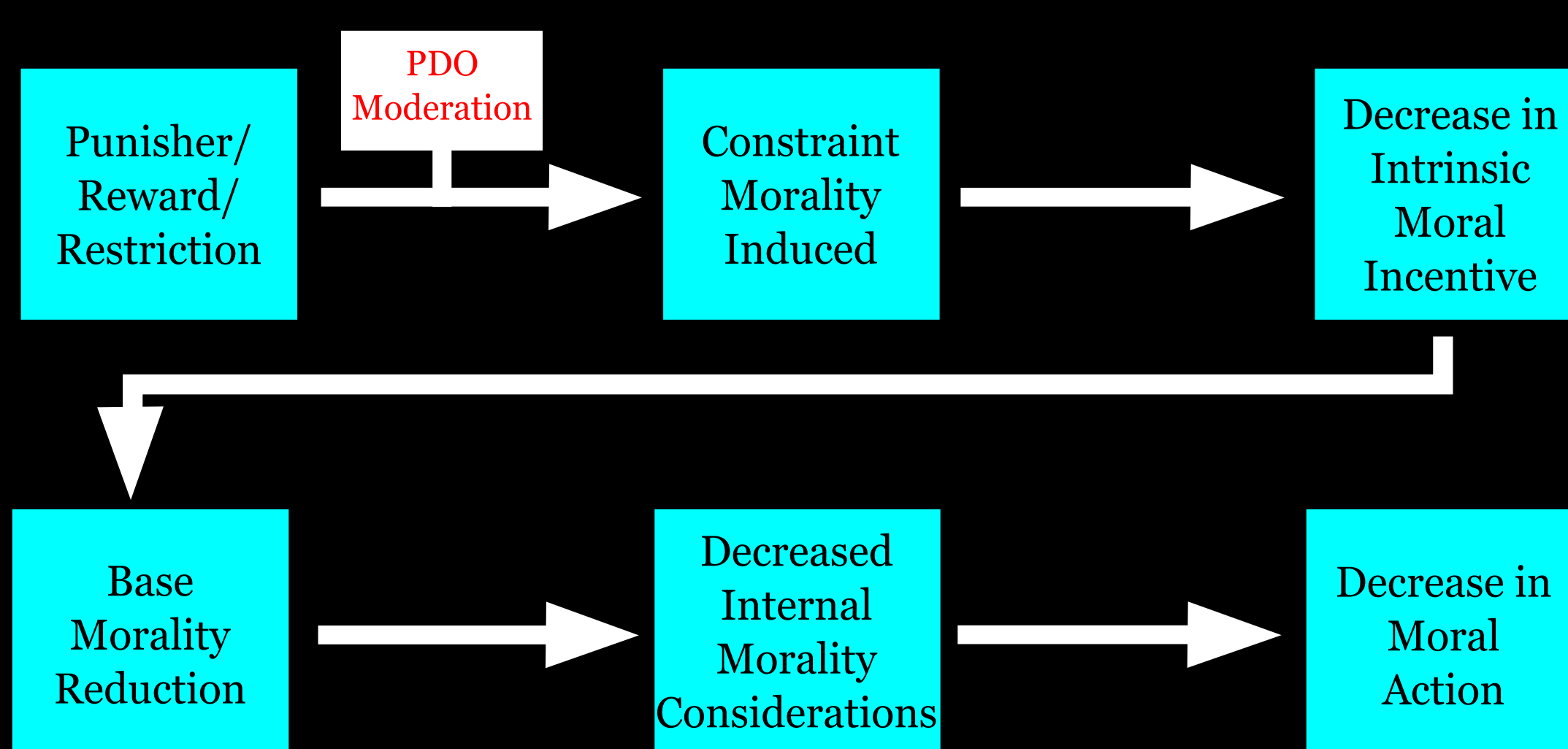
Research shows...

Those with higher PDO are more willing to commit immoral acts for profit (Tian, 2016)

This Suggests...

Those who readily accept a power imbalance (High PDO) are more susceptible to adopting constraint morality and have a subsequent decrease in base morality

Proposed Mechanism



Methods

The Constrained Dictator Game

Participants: 140 american adults recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk

Standard Dictator Game: Players are given the ability to distribute \$1 between themselves and a stranger

Control Condition: Players play the game as usual

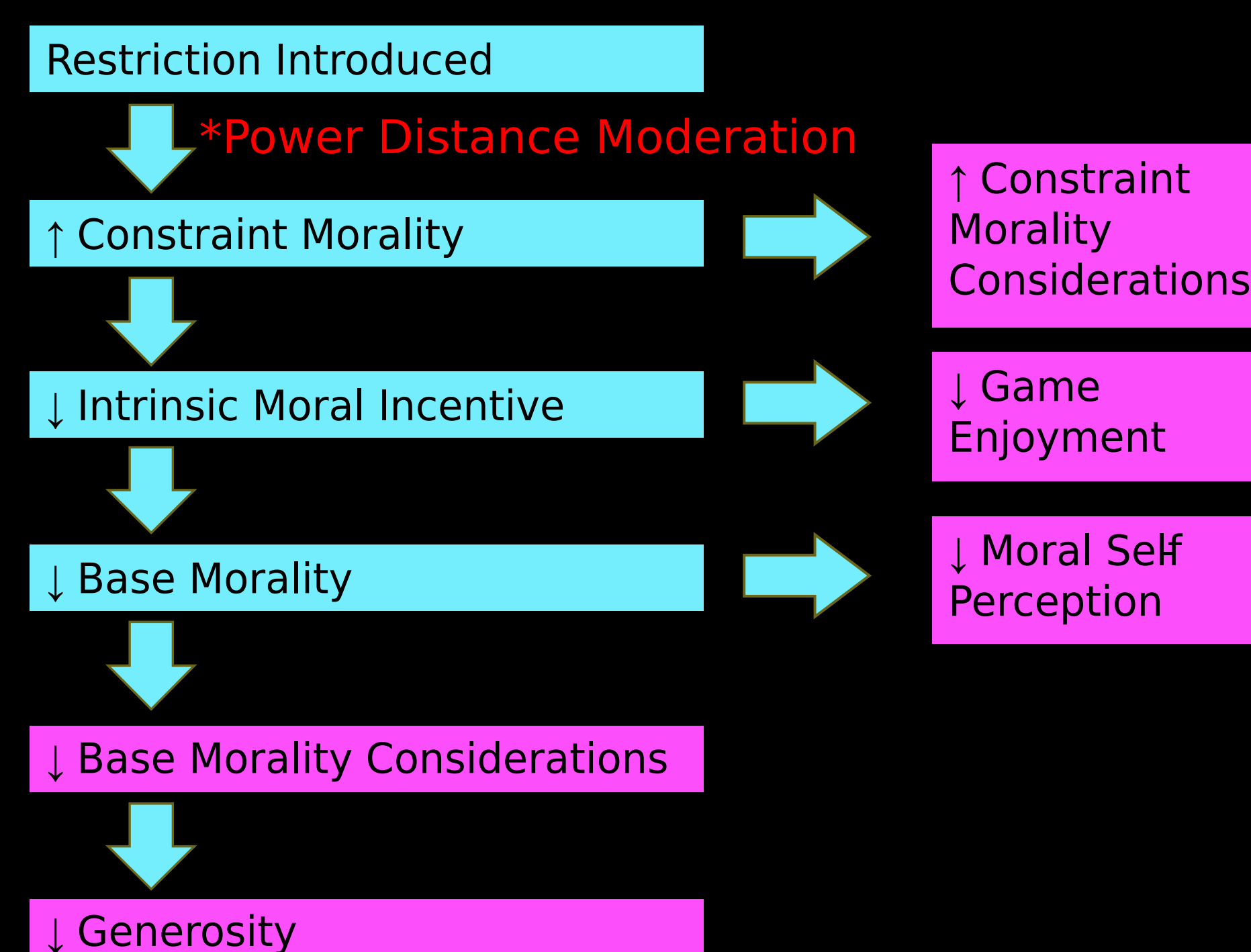
Experimental Condition: Players are told "You must give at least 5% to the other player"

Hypothesis: Players given a minimum requirement will give less overall

Mediators: -Constraint morality decision making
-Intrinsic moral incentive (operationalized as game liking)
-Reduction in their morality (operationalized as moral self-perception)
-Decrease in internal morality considerations
-Decrease in generosity (operationalized as amount given)

Moderator: Power Distance Orientation

Flow of Expected Results

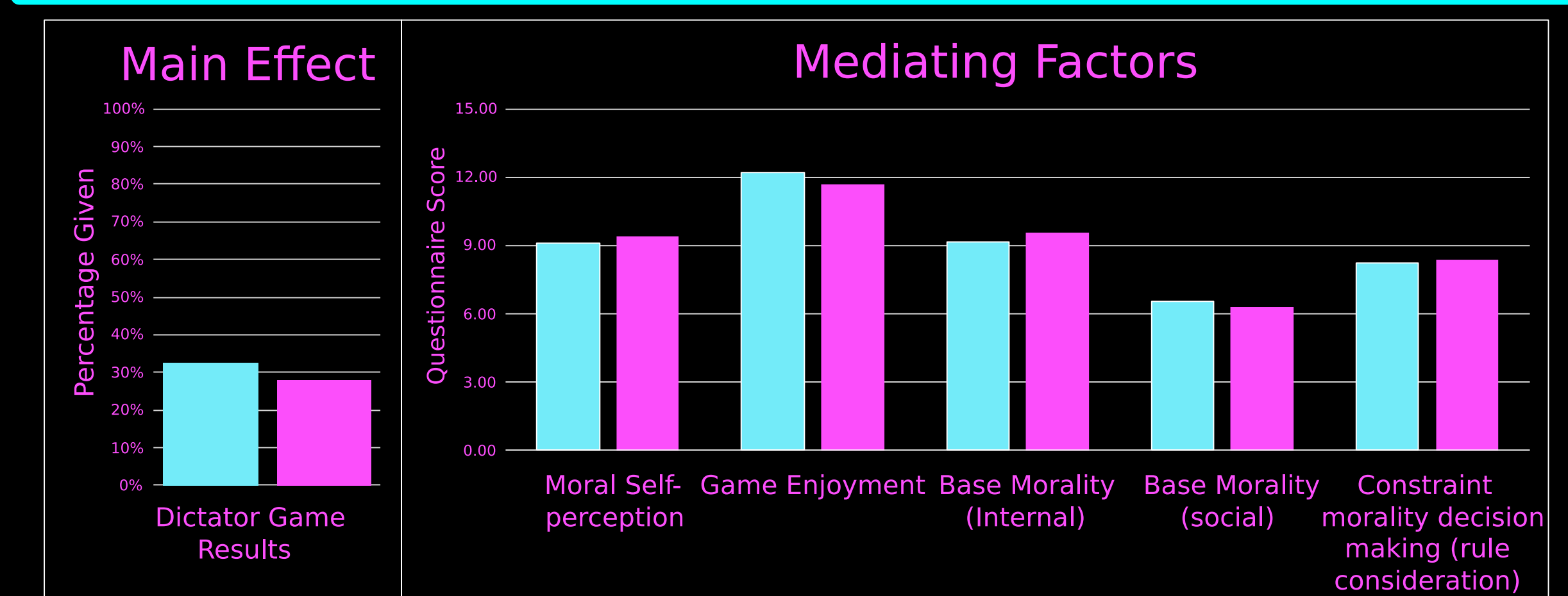


Measured variables are shown in magenta

Mediators

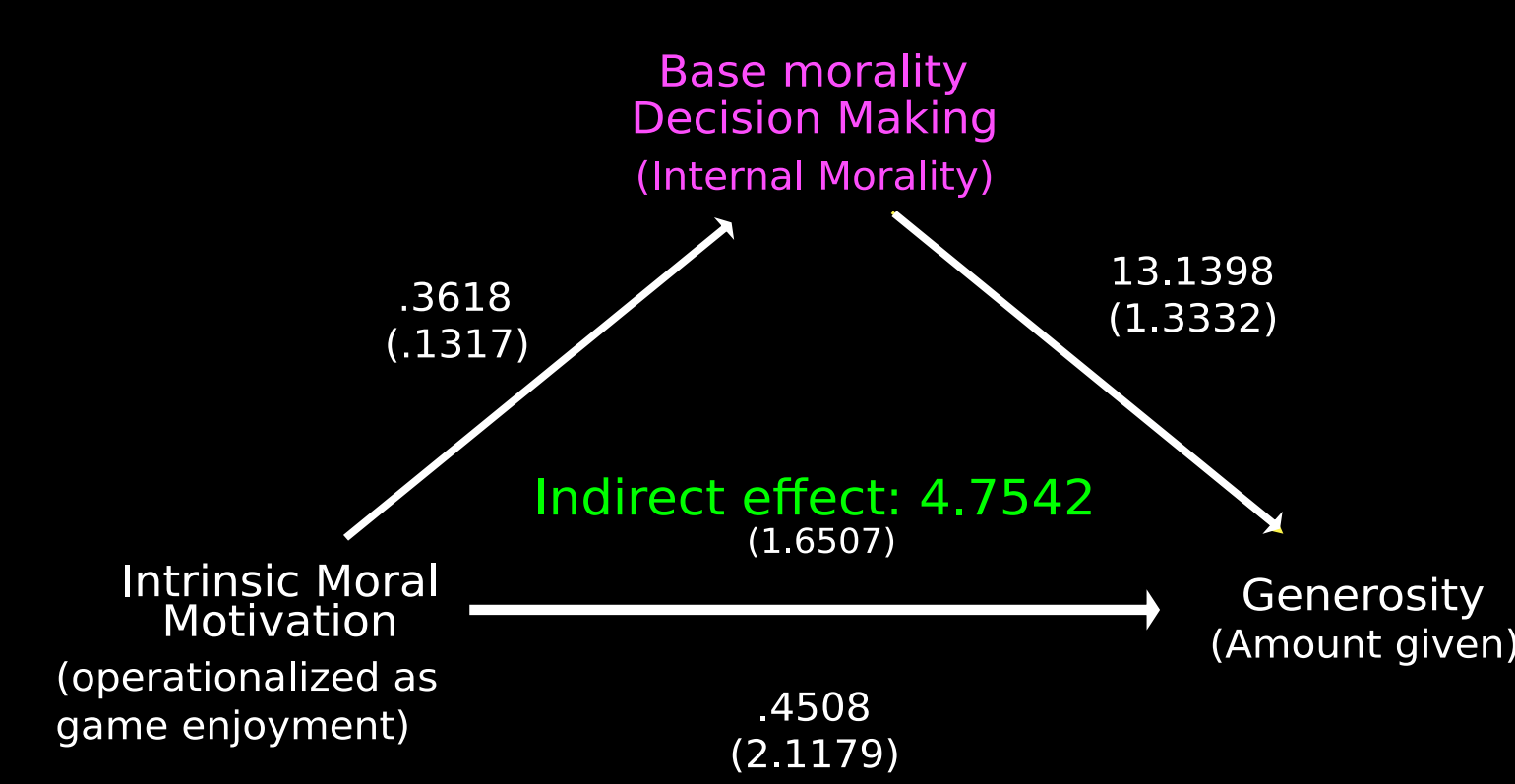
Mediators	5 pt Likert Questionnaire Item Example
Constraint Morality Decision Making	"I feel like the constraints of the game influenced my decision."
Game Enjoyment	"I enjoyed performing this experiment."
Moral Self Perception	"I feel as though I acted morally."
Base Morality Decision Making	"While making the decision I considered the impact on the other person."

Results



*No significant differences between groups on any measure

Game Enjoyment Mediation Path



Generosity Correlations

- Rule based decision making: -.205 (p=.007)
- Self-perceived morality: .572 (p<.001)
- Internal decision making: .656 (p<.001)
- Game Liking: .163 (p=.027)

Discussion

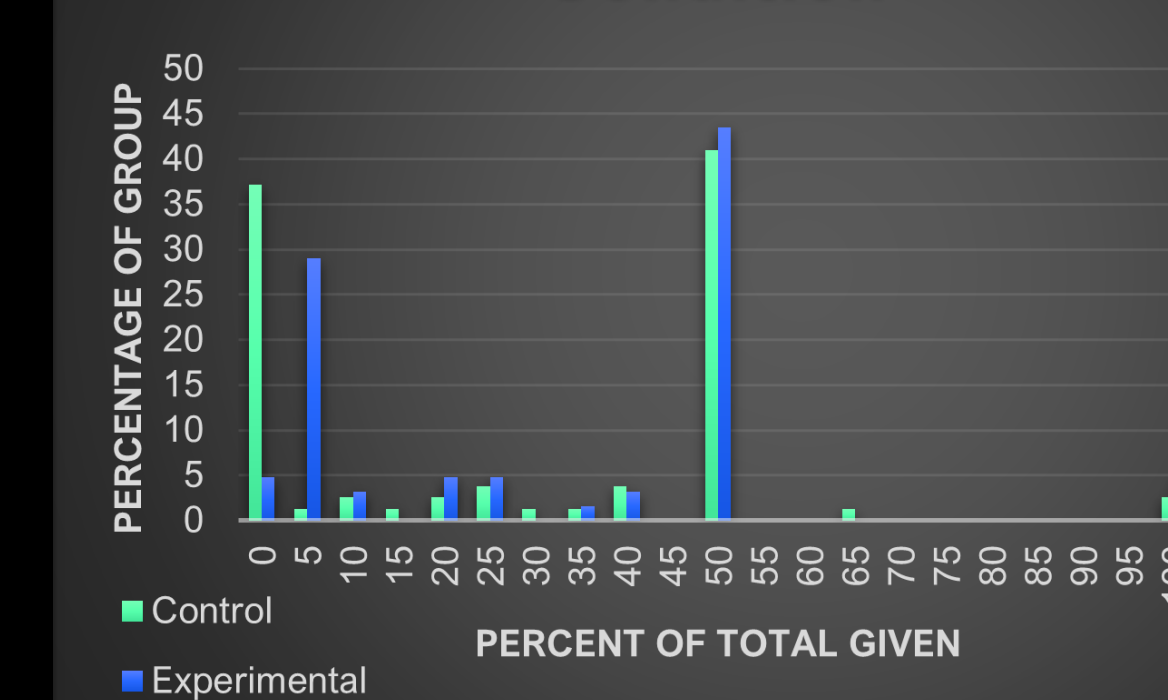
Possible Explanations for Null Main Effect?

- Bimodal Distribution -78.5% of Participants chose 0,5 or 50%
- Covers up subtle impact of the rule
- Too subtle of an effect -Failed to induce constraint morality because the manipulation didn't cause a large enough feeling of constraint

Future Direction of Study

- Larger Sample size
- More specific game enjoyment questions
- Repeated small "All or nothing" dictator game
- Participants allocate money in 10¢ intervals (in order to create more dispersed donation quantities)
- More salient constraint condition
- Moralistic language, etc

Donation Frequencies by Condition



References:

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Gneezy, U., & Rustichini, A. (2000). A fine is a price. *The Journal of Legal Studies*, 29(1), 1-17.

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Tian, Q., & Peterson, D. K. (2016). The effects of ethical pressure and power distance orientation on unethical pro-organizational behavior: The case of earnings management. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 25(2), 159-171.