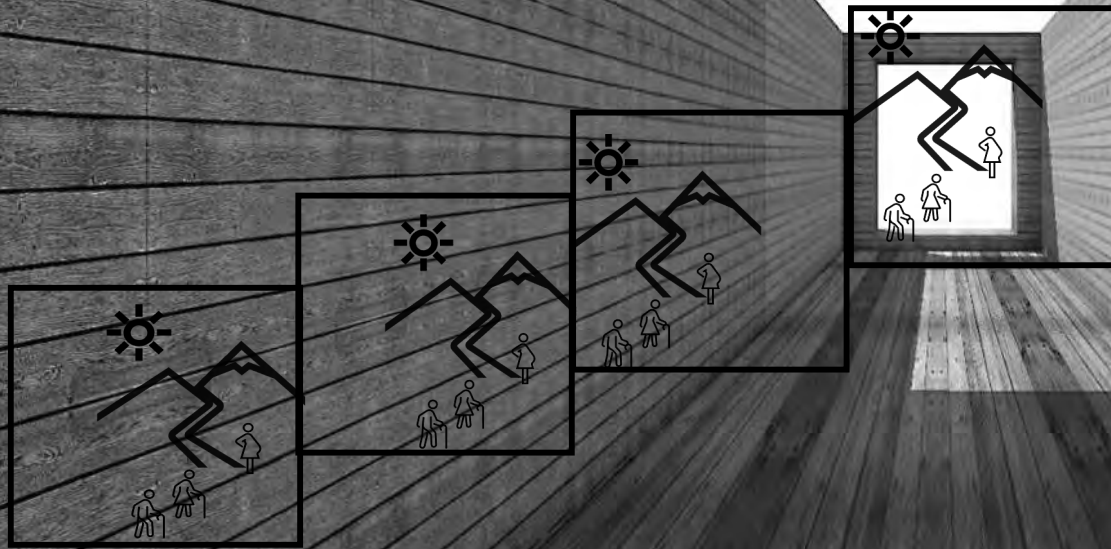


# CAN JOINT COMMITMENTS LIVE LONGER THAN INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS?

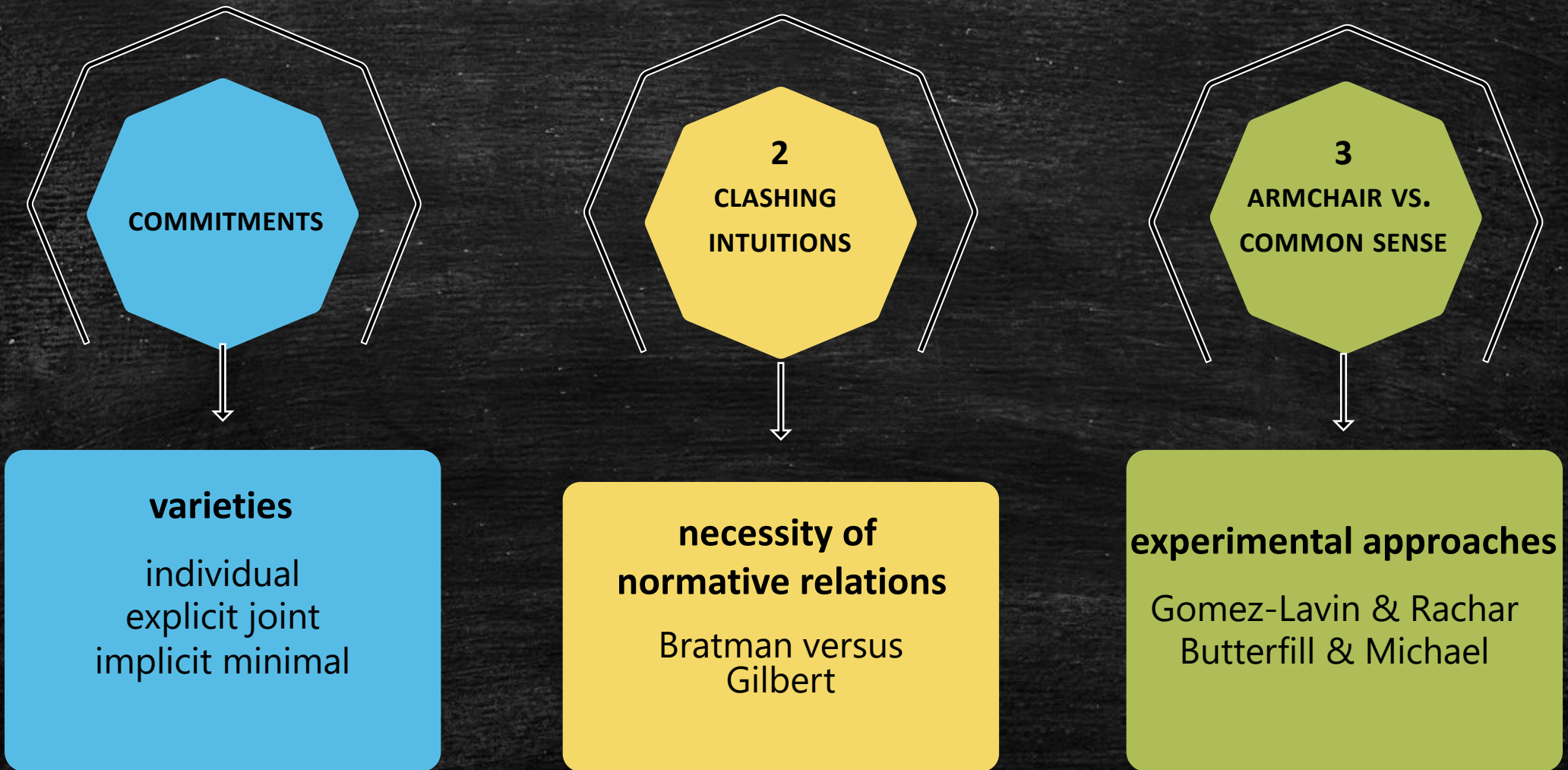


ANNA STRASSER





# OVERVIEW







# *Commitment – the social glue*

actions

individual  
actions

joint actions

individual  
commitment

joint  
commitment

minimal sense of  
commitment

**agents stand in a specific relation to their intentions**

- helps to plan individual actions unfolding over longer timescales
- enables individuals to resist temptations & distractions
- makes individuals' behavior predictable

**explicit group's relation to its shared intention**

- helpful for planning & coordinating joint actions unfolding over longer timescales
- facilitates cooperation by making people willing to perform actions that they would not otherwise perform

**one agent stands implicitly in a relation to the shared intention**

- expectations & motivation can be disassociated



# *Can joint commitments live longer than individual commitments?*

TO WHAT EXTENT INDIVIDUAL AND JOINT COMMITMENTS CAN FALL APART IN JOINT ACTIONS?

**NON-NORMATIVIST**  
there are joint actions  
without a joint  
commitment



**IN-BETWEEN**  
at least a minimal sense of  
commitment is to be found

**NORMATIVIST**  
all joint actions have  
necessarily a joint  
commitment



# Clashing intuitions

## WHAT HAPPENS IF ONE PARTICIPANT OF A JOINT ACTION IS CHANGING THEIR MIND?

**Bratman (2014)**

- ... necessarily destroys the shared intention and the joint commitment

There are minimal joint actions without joint commitment.



NON-NORMATIVIST



**Gilbert (2013)**

- .... there still is a joint commitment

All joint actions are necessarily based on joint commitments.



NORMATIVIST



2019 Lebowitz Prize of the American Philosophical Association for Philosophical Achievement and Contribution

**Michael Bratman and Margaret Gilbert**, "What is it to Act Together?"  
virtual meeting on 6 April 2021

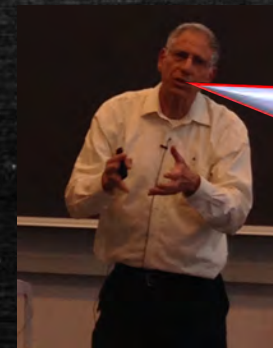
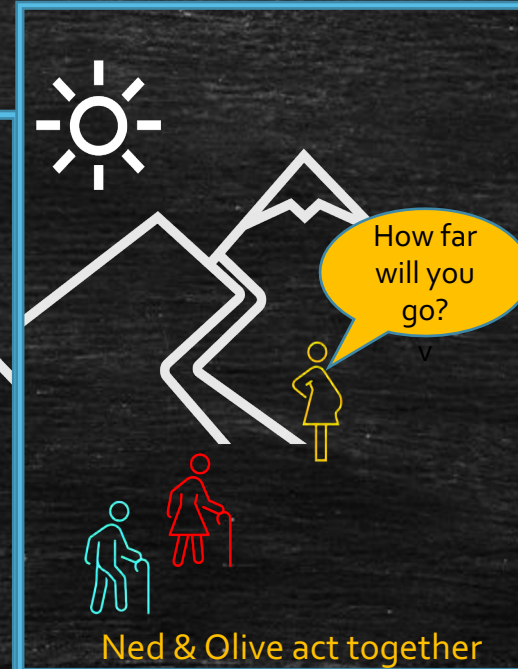
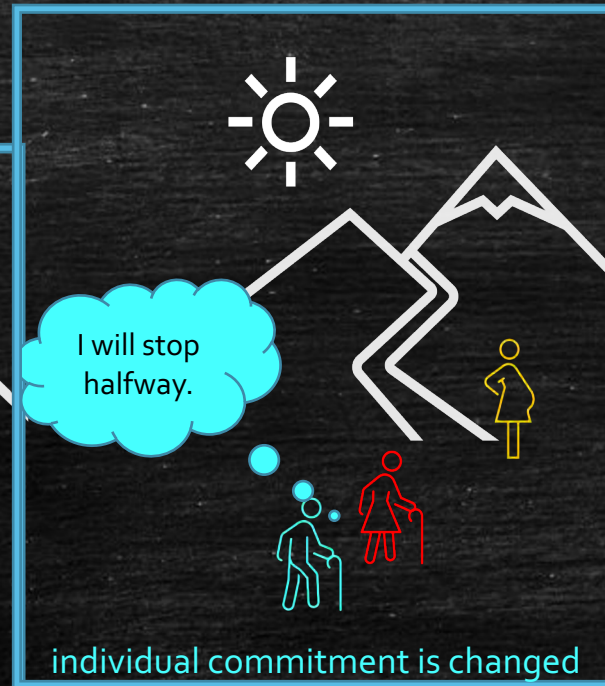
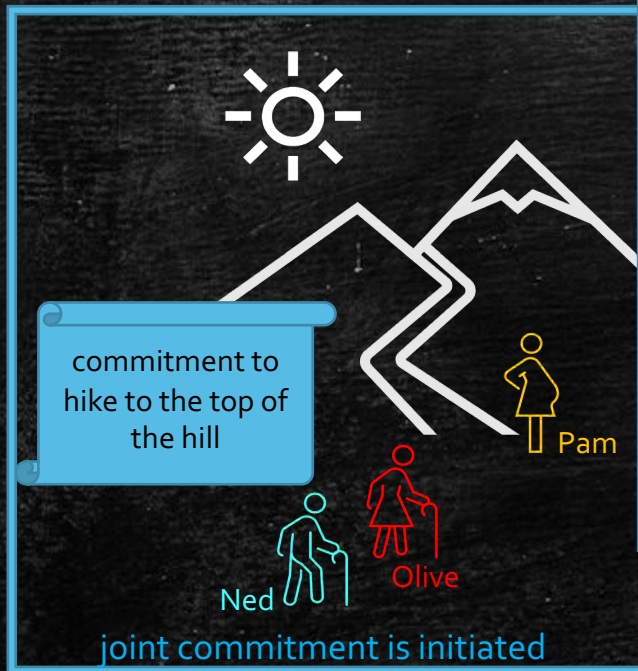




*Olive's statement  
to Pam at the end  
is accurate !*



Gilbert 2013, p. 8



Bratman 2014, p. 117

*As I see it, once Ned has  
changed his mind they no  
longer have a shared intention  
to climb to the top.*

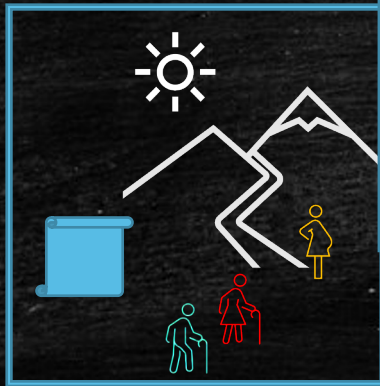


# *Is Olive justified to claim a joint commitment?*

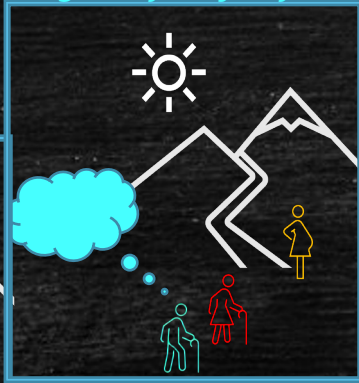
common knowledge !

~~common knowledge!~~

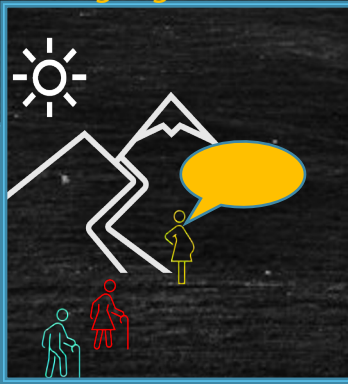
initial joint  
commitment  
is existent



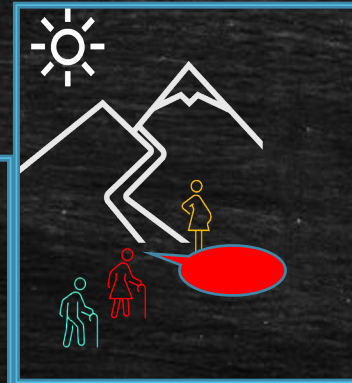
Ned didn't inform  
Olive that he decided  
to go only halfway



Pam assumes that  
Olive & Ned are  
acting together



according to Olive's  
knowledge the joint  
commitment holds





# Can such intuitions be experimental tested?

NON-NORMATIVIST

**Michael Bratman**



- lacking common knowledge condition initiates a minimal joint action
- there are minimal cases of joint action without normative relations

**Margaret Gilbert**

- common knowledge condition does not have to hold throughout the joint action
- actionrelative normative relations are inherent in joint action

NORMATIVIST



FORMAL APPROACHES TESTING INTUITIONS BY SYSTEMATICALLY SAMPLING NAIVE PARTICIPANTS' INTUITIONS ABOUT EXPERIMENTALLY CONTROLLED SCENARIOS

Gomez-Lavin & Rachar (2019)



SUPPORT NORMATIVE APPROACH

Butterfill & Michael (under review)



DID NOT SUPPORT NORMATIVE APPROACH



## *indicating the normativist paradigm*

3×1 between-subjects design:

**control condition (C):** no evidence of a joint action / **low condition (L):** low, joint action / **high condition (H):** high, joint action

	scenario	hypotheses	
1	helping (perspective of the helper)	JOINT ACTION → NORMATIVITY	<b>obligation</b> of the helper <b>to notify</b> the person being helped that he is leaving the joint action
2	helping (perspective of the helped)		having the <b>standing to rebuke</b> the helper for leaving the joint action
3	walking together (perspective of the participant that changes her intention)		having the <b>standing to rebuke</b> the other for leaving the joint action
4	walking together (perspective of the other participant)		<b>obligation</b> of the participant <b>to notify</b> the other person that he is leaving the joint action
5	elevator	NORMATIVITY → JOINT ACTION	evidence that a normative relations between two agents indicates that the two are acting together
6	ATM	OBLIGATION → MORALITY	obligation creates a moral obligation between actors engaged in a morally questionable joint action

**JOINT ACTIONS ARE INHERENTLY NORMATIVE, AND THIS  
NORMATIVITY IS DISTINCT FROM MORALITY.**



# *Behavior involving shared intentions, commitments, obligations*

3x1 between-subjects design:

(1) **baseline condition (B)**: joint action with no complications / (2) **test condition (T)**: joint action where one participant had secretly changed his individual intention / (3) **parallel condition (P)**: individual, NOT joint action

	scenario	test whether	hypotheses ( <i>median</i> )	relation to predict	
1	hiking (Gilbert version)	behavior is categorized as involving <b>shared intentions</b> , <b>commitments</b> , <b>obligations</b>	(T) = (B)	commitment → shared intention, obligation	Yes Yes Yes
2	hiking* (variation with changed wording)		(T) ≠ (P)	obligation → shared intention, commitment	
3	playing tennis		(T) = (B)	shared intention → obligation, commitment	

## RESULTS DO NOT SUPPORT THE HYPOTHESES

median of shared intention & commitment questions:

- (T) < (B)
- (T) not significantly different from (P)

median of obligation question

- (T) not significantly different from (B) and (P)

experiment 1 & 2:

- commitment → shared intention
- obligations did neither predict shared intention nor commitment

experiment 3:

- commitment do **not** predict shared intention
- obligation → shared intention
- obligation did **not** predict commitment

Yes

No

No

No

Yes

No



# Can we compare those results?


Gomez-Lavin & Rachar (2019)

Butterfill & Michael (under review)

DESIGN: 3x1 between-subjects design



SCENARIOS: – helping to push a broken car  
– walking down Fifth Avenue  
– two men speeding up to leave an elevator  
– taking money from an ATM



– hiking up the hill  
– playing a 5-set tennis match

scenario	walking	hiking
measure	<b>Rebuke</b> <i>Does the person who stays have the right to call out the person who peels off?</i>	<b>Commitment</b> <i>To what extent do you think that Ned and Olive have a commitment to walk to the top of the hill?</i>



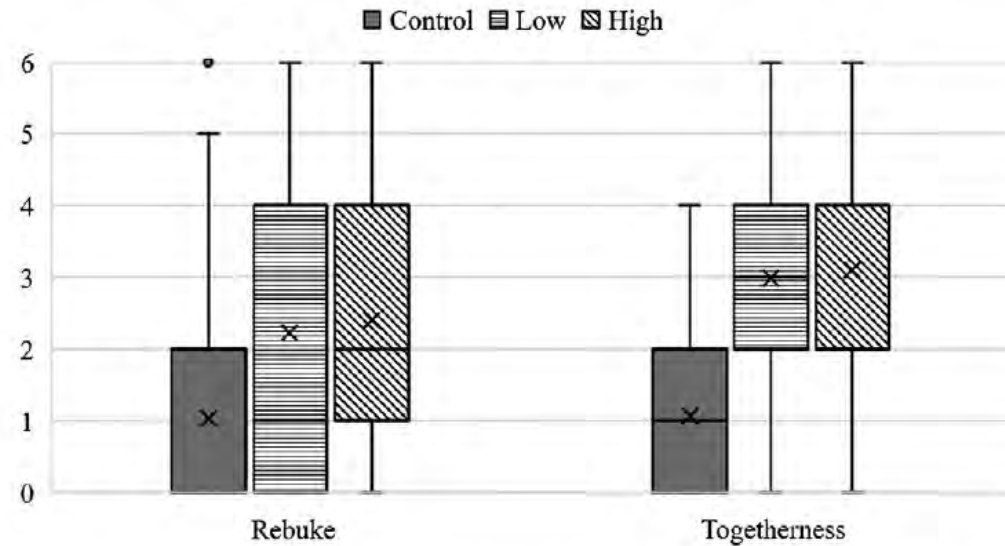
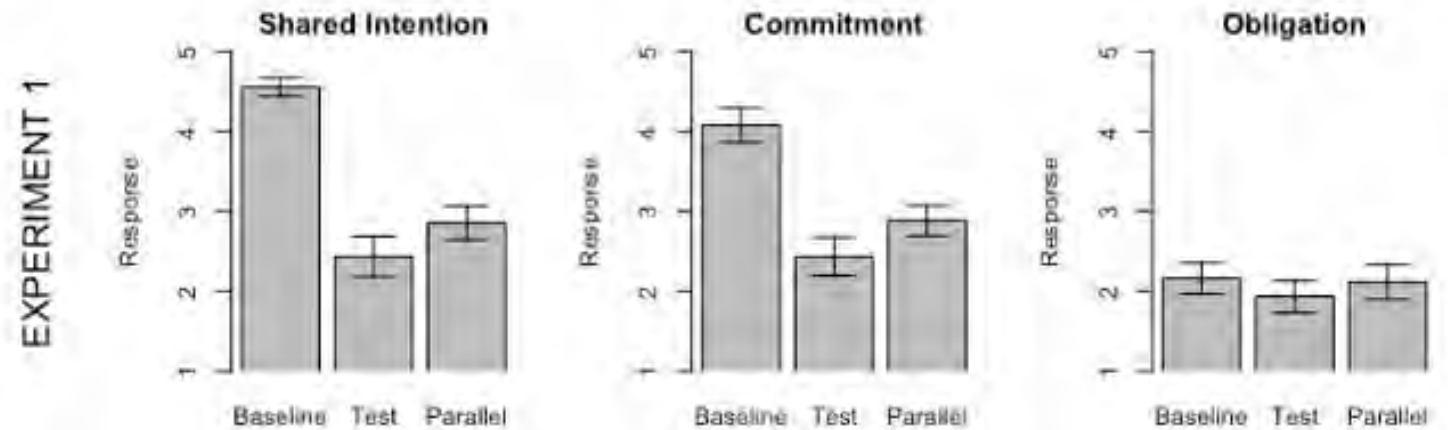


FIGURE 3 Box-and-whisker plot comparing dependent measures across our three conditions in Study 3. Bolded horizontal lines represent the medians of our measures, while "X" represents the means. Points represent furthest outliers where available

Figure 1. Mean responses for all three test questions in Experiments 1-3. The error bars represent standard errors.

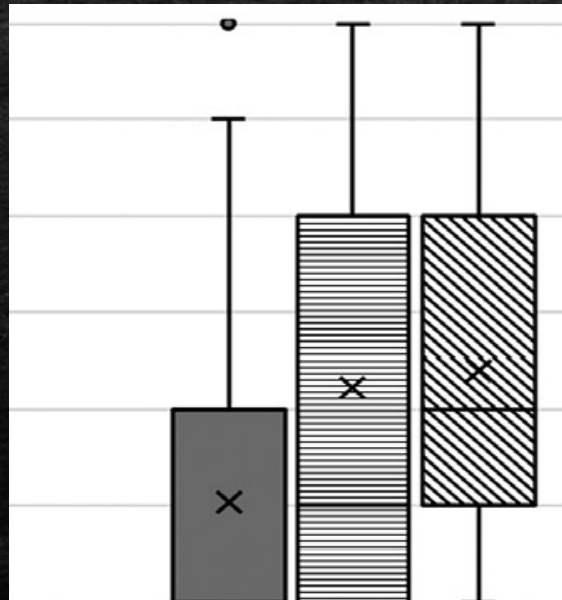




# Relationships between conditions

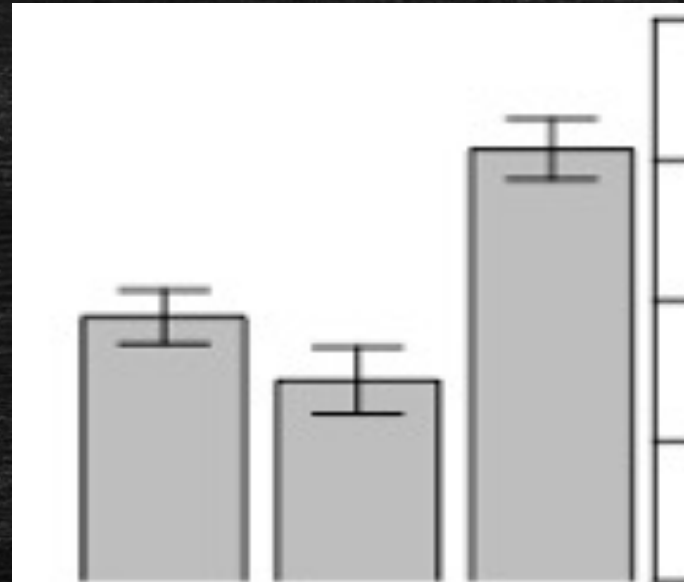
1. Relationship between **LOW** & **high** in study 1 is NOT similar to the relationship between **TEST** & **baseline**.
2. Relationship between **LOW** & **control** in study 1 is NOT similar to the relationship between **TEST** & **parallel**.

- NO difference between **low** & **high**
- difference between **low** & **control**



- difference between **high** & **control**

control low high  
results of the rebuke measure of experiment 3



- difference between **test** & **baseline**
- NO differences between **parallel** & **test**

- difference between **baseline** & **parallel**

parallel test baseline  
results of the commitment measure of experiment 1

Both studies agree on stating that the relationship between **baseline** & **high** involves a significant difference in the same direction (being higher) than **parallel** & **control**.



# *Interpretation of the pattern of results*

## participants in study 1

- took the scenarios describing the two kinds of joint actions (**LOW** & **high**) as somehow similar
- judged that the scenario describing **LOW** can be clearly distinguished from the scenario describing the non-joint action (**control**).

## participants in study 2

- did not see a similarity between the two scenarios describing the two kinds of joint action (**TEST** & **baseline**)
- judged that there is a similarity between the scenario describing the non-joint action case (**parallel**) and the scenario describing the joint-action condition **TEST**

OF COURSE, I DO NOT KNOW WHAT PARTICIPANTS ACTUALLY THOUGHT

- 1st study made it easier to recognize **LOW** as a joint action
- participants of the 2nd study might have doubted whether scenarios of the **TEST** condition illustrate a joint action



# Measures - questions

7-point scale anchored at 0

5-point scale anchored at 1

## Notification measure *(experiment 4)*



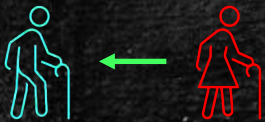
- *Should the person who peels off notify the other that they're leaving?"*
- points to a normative relation one could describe as a commitment of this person

## Rebuke measure



- *Has the person who stays the right to call out the person who peels off?*
- points to a normative relation one could describe as a commitment of one person expecting the other one to be committed

ask questions about one agent



## Commitment Question



- *To what extent do you think that Ned and Olive have a commitment to walk to the top of the hill?*
- seems to ask whether there a bi-directional joint commitment

ask questions about both agents



SURPRISINGLY, THE 1<sup>ST</sup> STUDY SEEMS TO EXAMINE THE PRESENCE OF A MINIMAL SENSE OF COMMITMENT, WHILE THE 2<sup>ND</sup> STUDY LOOKS FOR FULLY DEVELOPED JOINT COMMITMENTS.



# *What now?*

MAYBE,

GOMEZ-LAVIN & RACHAR MADE IT TOO EASY, AND BUTTERFILL & MICHAEL MADE IT TOO HARD.

Finding indicators for a minimal sense of commitment, makes it more likely to take a scenario as describing a joint action.

Not finding indicators for full-fledged commitment you might think that the scenario doesn't describe a joint action.

While waiting for further results assessing common-sense intuitions –  
I return to my armchair intuitions about Ned & Olive.

In favor of Gilbert, I claim that even minimal joint actions display a minimal sense of commitment.

**They are not free of commitments.**

by

emphasizing Pam's perspective

- there is a commitment in the sense
  - that she expects that Ned should feel committed and
  - that she herself feels committed

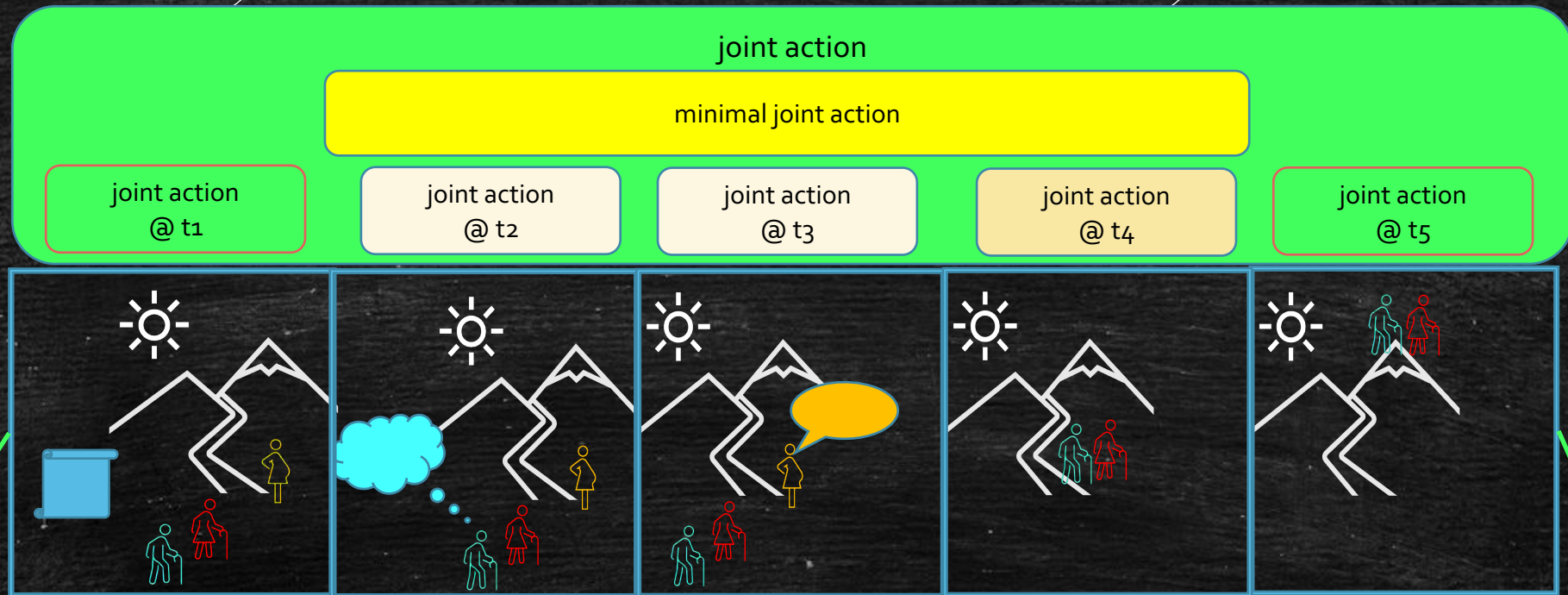
assuming, that Ned has a bad conscience for not informing Olive

- there is a commitment in the sense
  - that Ned thinks that Olive expects from him to be committed.

**A MINIMAL SENSE OF JOINT COMMITMENT CAN LIVE LONGER THAN INVOLVED INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS**



# *Some sort of commitment is always to be found*



joint action @ t1  
*start of the joint action*

- shared intention, joint commitment and obligations present

joint action @ t2 & t3:  
*acting on purpose together*

- varying strength of the joint commitment

joint action @ t4:  
*before the end of the minimal joint action*

- Ned thinks that Olive expects from him to be committed
- Pam feels committed

joint action @ t5:  
*before the end of the joint action*

- Pam expects that Ned should feel committed
- Pam feels committed



*Thanks a lot for listening & I hope I will meet you  
in the Q&A session!*

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## References

- Bratman, M. (2014). *Shared Agency: A Planning Theory of Acting Together*. Oxford University Press.
- Gilbert, M. (2013). *Joint Commitment: How We Make the Social World*. Oxford University Press.
- Gomez-Lavin, J. & Rachar, M. (2019). Normativity in joint action. *Mind and Language*, 34 (1), 97-120. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mila.12195>
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