Missouri State Human Subjects Protection Application

**Title:** Exploring Word Associates of Moral Foundations

**Description:** Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) was developed by Haidt (2012) to explain what concerns influence moral judgments. These concerns can be summarized in five categories, or foundations. The first of these foundations is harm/care involve moral judgments based on protecting others from harm. The second is fairness/reciprocity involving judgments based on equality and justice. The third foundation is ingroup/loyalty which involves judgments based on fidelity to the group. The fourth is authority/respect involving judgments based on respect for tradition. The last foundation is purity/sanctity involving judgment based on virtue. In addition to a 30 item moral foundations questionnaire (MFQ) measuring the extent to which a person endorses each foundation as a part of their moral judgments (Graham et al., 2011), Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009) developed a moral foundations dictionary (MFD) to measure moral language; the MFD contains 50-70 words or word stems for each foundation.

In a pilot study, we had 33 participants list words they associated with each of the five moral foundations (harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity). We then had participants rate their political orientation on a scale of 1 (conservative) to 10 (liberal) as well as identify the political party they most identify with. We found little overlap between the word associates and the MFD with on 5-9 word occurring in both. Furthermore, we found that the number of words participants associated with each foundation predicted their political orientation in ways suggested by previous research in MFT (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011). The more words associated with the ingroup foundation the more liberal the participant indicated their political orientation to be (*pr*2 = .18). More words associated with the purity foundation predicted a more conservative political orientation (*pr*2 = .14). More harm words predicted a more liberal orientation (*pr*2 = .07), and more authority words predicted a more conservative orientation (*pr*2 = .05). The number of fairness word associated did not predict political orientation.

The purpose of the current study is to explore the possibility of using word association to measure the extent to which people endorse each of the five moral foundations. Additionally, this study will examine the word associates to build on a dictionary measure of moral foundations.

**Protocol:**

**Participants:** Target sample will be the human subjects’ participant pool in the Psychology Department. Proposed sample size is 200-300. Participants will be recruited through the SONA system, which displays experimental options for participants to select.

**Materials:** The study will be conducted online using Qualtrics. A short-form of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham et al., 2011) will be used. This consists of 15 questions measure the extent to which different factors are relevant to moral judgments. Descriptions of each of the five moral foundations will be used as prompts for the word association task. After each description, directions will say to list all the words associated with this description. In addition, questions inquiring in political orientation and party affiliation will be used.

**Procedures:** After participants consent to participate in the study, they will be randomly given the short-form of the MFQ, the word association task, or the political orientation questions. By randomizing the order of these tasks, we can determine if the tasks affect each other.

**Study Completion:** After completion of this study, participants will be given course credit. If applicable, the project will be summarized for journal publication, as well as possible conference proceedings.

**Benefits:** Participants will receive course credit for their participant.

**Risks:** There are minimal risks. Participants may be asked to think about the sensitive topic of abortion. They may withdraw at any time with no penalty if they feel uncomfortable.

**Informed Consent:** Attached. Participants will be asked to provide consent at the beginning of the study. No penalty is given for withdrawing from the study.

I hereby agree to conduct this study in accordance with the procedures set forth in my project description, to uphold the ethical guidelines as set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46, 45 CFR 160 and 164, and the Missouri State University HIPAA Policy, and to report to the IRB any outcomes or reactions to the experiment which were not anticipated in the risks description which might influence the IRBs decision to sustain approval of the project.

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Erin Buchanan (PI)                                   Kayla Jordan (graduate student)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_