Missouri State Human Subjects Protection Application

**Title:** The Effects of Politics and Religion on the Language of War

**Description:** Politics and religion are two of the most divisive topics in society today. One possible explanation for this can be found in moral foundations theory. In this theory, Graham et al. (2011) propose that there are five foundational domains from which people reasoning about morality: harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity. Haidt (2012) cites numerous studies in which peoples’ use of these five domains differs according political and religious orientation. Liberal and non-religious people tend to only concern themselves with the harm/care and fairness/reciprocity foundations, whereas conservative and religious people tend to concern themselves with all five foundations. Kesebir and Pyszczynski (2011) discuss the possible role of each of these foundations in fostering intergroup conflict. The purpose of this study will be to determine how priming these foundations using differing political and religious orientations affect the language, specifically the use of function words, participants use when ask to write about possible intergroup conflict. According to Pennebaker (2011), those in power with high status tend to use more second and third-person pronouns and the use of third-person pronouns can also indicate greater identification with a group which seem to correspond to the authority/respect and ingroup/loyalty foundations, respectively. Hence, we hypothesize that participants who are shown a conservative, religious stimulus will use more second and third-person pronouns when writing about a possible intergroup conflict.

**Protocol:**

**Participants:** Target sample will be human subjects’ participant pool in the Psychology Department. Proposed sample size is 120-200. Participants will be recruited through the SONA system, which displays experimental options for participants to select.

**Materials:** Participants will read one of four news stories adapted from blogs from CNN and FoxNews. Participants will complete the Moral Foundations Questionnaire from Graham et al. (2011) and demographics questions including political and religious orientation (attached).

**Procedures:** Participants will be shown one of four new stories about the use of chemical weapons in Syria which will vary in their political orientation and use of religious language. The first IV will be political orientation of the news story from CNN (liberal) or FoxNews (conservative); the second IV will be religious language (presence, absence) (see attached). Participants will then be asked to write for 5 to 10 minutes on their thoughts on the use of chemical weapons by Syria and what actions should be taken by the United States. Participants will then complete a demographics section including political orientation and religious affiliation and the moral foundations questionnaire.

**Study Completion:** After completion of this study, participants will be given course credit. The effects of political orientation and religion on language will be examined. 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. Indirectly, this research may assist in the understanding of conflict perceptions and the interaction of beliefs and perception.

**Risks:** There are minimal risks. Participants will be asked to think about the unpleasant topic of warfare. They may withdraw at any time 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                                   Kayla Jordan

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

Appendix A

**Fox News** - Disturbing reports and video out of Syria this past week point to the fact that the Assad regime has engaged in the largest use of chemical weapons since Saddam Hussein attacked his people in Iraq 25 years ago. A senior White House official said there is “no doubt” that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons against his own people. The United States has that the use of chemical weapons would be a "red line" for American intervention in Syria. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) has stated, “We believe President Obama is correct that the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons requires a military response by the United States and our friends and allies. However, we cannot in good conscience support isolated military strikes in Syria that are not part of an overall strategy that can achieve the President's stated goal of Assad's removal from power, and bring an end to this conflict, which is a growing threat to our national security interests. Anything short of this would be an inadequate response to the crimes against humanity that Assad and his forces are committing.” Former President George W. Bush (R) said he was "not a fan" of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad during his eight years in office, recalling the "mischief" by the Syrian regime during the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Bush's Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (R) said, "When you think about what's really important in that region – it's Iran's nuclear program and the relationship between Iran and Syria, the Assad regime, with respect to terrorists that go around killing innocent men, women and children, including Americans." Religious figures have also weighed in on the developments in Syria. Pope Francis has said, "With utmost firmness I condemn the use of chemical weapons,” and that people who use chemical weapons - as the Syrian government has been accused of doing - will face divine judgment.

Appendix B

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Appendix C

**CNN** - There was a major chemical attack in Syria on Aug 21, 2013, and the United States has made clear that it blames the government of President Bashar al-Assad. For almost two years, the United States has avoided direct military involvement in Syria's civil war, only escalating aid to rebel fighters in June after suspected smaller-scale chemical weapons attacks by Syrian government forces. However, the attack on a Damascus suburb that reportedly killed and wounded more than 3,000 people obliterated the "red line" set by the US just over a year ago against the use of Syria's chemical weapons stocks. President Obama (D) has said, “This kind of attack is a challenge to the world. We cannot accept a world where women and children and innocent civilians are gassed on a terrible scale. This kind of attack threatens our national security interests by violating well established international norms against the use of chemical weapons by further threatening friends and allies of ours in the region, like Israel and Turkey, and Jordan and it increases the risk that chemical weapons will be used in the future and fall into the hands of terrorists who might use them against us. It's important for us to recognize that when over 1,000 people are killed, including hundreds of innocent children, through the use of a weapon that 98 percent or 99 percent of humanity says should not be used, even in war, and there is no action, then we're sending a signal that that international norm doesn't mean much, and that is a danger to our national security.” Former President Jimmy Carter (D) has said, “The use of chemical weapons in Syria was a grave breach of international law but that any U.S. action in the country should wait for ongoing investigations by United Nations inspectors to conclude. All should seek to leverage the consensus among the entire international community, including Russia and Iran, condemning the use of chemical weapons in Syria and bringing under U.N. oversight the country's stockpile of such weapons." Religious figures have also weighed in on the developments in Syria. Pope Francis has said, "With utmost firmness I condemn the use of chemical weapons,” and that people who use chemical weapons - as the Syrian government has been accused of doing - will face divine judgment.

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Appendix E

**Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ)**

**Part I: Moral Relevance**

Respond to using the following response options:

*Not At All Relevant Not Very Relevant Slightly Relevant Somewhat Relevant Very Relevant Extremely Relevant*

*Harm:*

EMOTIONALLY—Whether or not someone suffered emotionally

WEAK—Whether or not someone cared for someone weak or vulnerable

CRUEL—Whether or not someone was cruel

*Fairness:*

TREATED—Whether or not some people were treated differently from others

UNFAIRLY—Whether or not someone acted unfairly

RIGHTS—Whether or not someone was denied his or her rights

*Ingroup:*

LOVECOUNTRY—Whether or not someone’s action showed love for his or her country

BETRAY—Whether or not someone did something to betray his or her group

LOYALTY—Whether or not someone showed a lack of loyalty

*Authority:*

RESPECT—Whether or not someone showed a lack of respect for authority

TRADITIONS—Whether or not someone conformed to the traditions of society

CHAOS—Whether or not an action caused chaos or disorder

*Purity:*

DECENCY—Whether or not someone violated standards of purity and decency

DISGUSTING—Whether or not someone did something disgusting

GOD—Whether or not someone acted in a way that God would approve of

**Part II: Moral Judgments**

Respond to using the following response options:

*Strongly disagree (1)*, *Moderately disagree (2)*, *Slightly disagree (3)*, *Slightly agree (4)*, *Moderately agree (5)*, *Strongly agree (6)*

*Harm:*

COMPASSION—Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue.

ANIMAL—One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenseless animal.

KILL—It can never be right to kill a human being.

*Fairness:*

FAIRLY—When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated

fairly.

JUSTICE—Justice is the most important requirement for a society.

RICH—I think it’s morally wrong that rich children inherit a lot of money while poor children inherit nothing.

*Ingroup:*

HISTORY—I am proud of my country’s history.

FAMILY—People should be loyal to their family members, even when they have done something wrong.

TEAM—It is more important to be a team player than to express oneself.

*Authority:*

KIDRESPECT—Respect for authority is something all children need to learn.

SEXROLES—Men and women each have different roles to play in society.

SOLDIER—If I were a soldier and disagreed with my commanding officer’s orders, I would obey anyway because

that is my duty.

*Purity:*

HARMLESSDG—People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed.

UNNATURAL—I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural.

CHASTITY—Chastity is an important and valuable virtue.

Appendix F

**Demographic Sheet**

1. What is your gender? \_\_\_Man \_\_\_\_Woman
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What ethnicity do you most identify with? \_\_\_\_European American \_\_\_\_African American \_\_\_\_Hispanic American \_\_\_\_Native American \_\_\_\_Asian American \_\_\_\_Mixed(specify)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Not American(specify)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your academic classification? \_\_\_\_Freshmen \_\_\_\_Sophomore \_\_\_\_Junior \_\_\_\_Senior
5. What is your religious orientation?
6. Rate your political orientation on the following scale:

1 (Conservative) to 10 (Liberal)

1. What is your academic major? ­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. On a scale from 1(not at all involved) to 10 (highly involved), rate your level of political involvement. \_\_\_
3. On a scale from 1(not at all interested) to 10 (highly interested), rate your level of political interest. \_\_\_
4. Are you a registered voter? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No