**Moral Conviction Validation Framework Draft:**

What is the given purpose of this test?:

* Assess how open to change an individual may be regarding a given topic.
  1. ‘Openness to change’ is generally seen as a trait characteristic more broadly, ‘moral conviction’ is an analogous concept applied to a particular topic, the nature of which can of course vary between individuals, wherein high moral conviction represents resistance to change (specifically social pressures).
  2. We wish to assess ‘openness to change’ on this axis, in order to utilize some of the prior literature more broadly on ‘demoralization’ of belief, such that we can then increase relative openness to change (again, specifically through the mechanism of social pressure).

Interpretation Use Argument (IUA):

* Claims:
  1. **If** individuals score higher on our assessment for a given topic, **then** they experience greater ‘moral conviction’ towards that topic.
  2. **If** individuals experience greater moral conviction towards a given topic, **then** they will be more resistant to the effects of social consensus on their attitudes.
  3. **If** ‘moral conviction’ towards a given topic can be reduced, **then** individual attitudes will be more affected by a social consensus manipulation on the topic.
* Qualifiers:
  1. Our operationalization of ‘moral conviction’ is only applicable in circumstances where openness to attitude change is being assessed, and/or circumstances where interventions are being applied to change attitudes.
  2. Our estimate on the effects of moral conviction on resistance to attitude change will be based on a regression-based estimate, with our level of certainty defined by the standard errors of measurement in our parameters.
     + Our estimate on how moral conviction interacts with the effects of a social consensus manipulation, also a regression-based estimate, will have it’s level of certainty defined by standard errors of measurement.
  3. Our findings are only qualified to be interpreted with respect to our sample – primarily college-age students participating in research studies for class credit.

Process of Validation:

* Evaluate plausibility of our claims:
  1. This claim seems plausible, as it is a self-report measure wherein the individual assessed has no incentive to be dishonest. Furthermore, we can ‘define’ what moral convictions mean ahead of time, in order to align with the individual elements we are assessing in our test
  2. This claim is extremely plausible; prior research (Aramovich et al. 2012; Conover & Miller 2018; Hornsey et al. 2003, 2007) indicates that individuals who experience large amounts of ‘moral conviction’ are uninfluenced by ‘attitudinally dissimilar peers’, uphold views when their nonconformity is explicitly made public, even after controlling for the effect of strength of attitude.
  3. This claim is reasonable plausible; given prior research, there is evidence that high amounts of moral conviction inoculate individuals from the effects of social consensus. A-priori, in conditions of low or no moral conviction, one of the most common findings in psychology is that individuals tend to conform to social consensus in most circumstances (Asch 1956; Cialdini & Trost 1998)
* Scoring inference:
  1. We will use a multi-item scale, following best practices for scale development, with an initially broad array of items.
  2. Items will be scored on a 7-point likert scale with each point on the scale explicitly defined.
  3. All items will be equally weighted, and the final ‘moral conviction’ score will be the mean of our item scoring.
* Generalization:
  1. The sample of items we will use (nonrandom) will attempt to be as representative and generalizable as possible, by adopting a broad array of items intended to measure moral conviction (from the perspective of attitude change) from several commonly cited prior works in the literature.
  2. We will assess reliability by using a split-half reliability assessment (Spearman-Brown formula)
* Extrapolation:
  1. Our target domain (openness to attitude change from social consensus) is relatively narrow, thus, the relationship between our test items (which have been shown to reflect resistance to social consensus) and our target domain is direct and linear.
  2. We will additionally assess appropriateness of extrapolation by assessing correlation with another measure having an expected relationship (convergent – openness to change; divergent – attitude centrality, attitude strength).
* Implications:
  1. Those with high moral conviction scores, first should be subject to a ‘demoralization’ intervention, then influenced by the social consensus intervention, to affect attitude change.
  2. Those with low moral conviction scores can be directly influenced by the social consensus intervention, to affect attitude change.

Selected Items:

Three items taken from Reynolds et al., 2006

1. “There are very important ethical aspects to this situation.”
2. “This matter clearly does not involve ethics or moral issues.”
3. “This situation could be described as a moral issue”

Four items taken from Skitka et al., 2016: My attitude about \_\_\_\_ is…

1. A reflection of my core moral beliefs and convictions.
2. Connected to fundamental beliefs about right and wrong.
3. A moral stance.
4. Based on moral principles.

One item taken from Van Bavel et al., 2012:

1. How morally wrong/right would it be for you to \_\_\_\_ ?

Items 1-3 scored on a 7-point likert scale (0 = Strongly disagree, 3 = Neither agree or disagree, 6 = Strongly agree) with the second item reverse scored.

Items 4-7 scored on a 7-point likert scale (0 = Not at all, 3 = Somewhat, 6 = Very much).

Item 8 scored on a 13-point likert scale (- 6 = Very wrong, 0 = neither wrong nor right, 6 = very right) Scored as an ‘absolute value’ (- 6 would score the same as +6).

Total ‘Moral Conviction’ score would be the mean of all of these items.