



School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences  
Whiteknights, Reading, RG6 6AL

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**Study: Re-examining taboo, emotionally valenced,  
and emotionally neutral word norms**

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**DEBRIEF SHEET**

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**Experimenter:**

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Thank you for taking part in our study.

This study was investigating how people perceive swearwords across several different scales and how this may be influenced by our individual differences. The reason for this was to update and extend an American study, conducted over 15 years ago (Janschewitz, 2008). The original study by Janschewitz had been conducted on the West coast of America, using a sample of 80 US college students, who rated 120 American English focused swearwords as part of a much larger study. As a result, while the results published from that study were a good guide to how people perceive swearwords, full generalisability of the results to British English speakers was not possible due to the differences in what is/isn't considered a swearword across the two languages. For example, a swearword like "fanny" translates very differently in British English, compared to American English while other swearwords that are considered offensive/taboo in America may not even register in Britain and vice-versa. However, there is a lot of overlap in the words considered 'swearwords' between the two language bases and, therefore, beyond looking at how the participants within our sample have rated each word we have selected/tested, we are also interested to see whether the correlations between rating scales originally reported by Janschewitz still hold both in direction and strength.

You also completed a single item, self-report question regarding how religious you are. This matches a question originally included by Janschewitz, however, we added the single item, self-report question regarding how out of control you feel when vocalising a swearword in response to pain/frustration. This is because previous research has shown that there is a sex split in how out of control males and females feel when swearing and we are interested to see whether this holds for swearing within a specific context where people often swear out loud, as the original finding was just based on people's general perception of swearing in day-to-day life. Further to this, we added the questionnaires measuring your trait anger, verbal aggressiveness and the 'Big Five' personality traits of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These were included as research exists suggesting that these traits may directly impact whether someone is likely to vocalise a swearword and we are interested in seeing whether the personality traits also change how people perceive different swearwords and/or which swearwords they would be more likely to self-vocalise when in pain/frustration.

**Amazon Voucher and/or SONA Credits**

If you are a University of Reading Student completing this study for SONA credit, please ensure that you click the button below, which will return you to SONA and automatically award your credit. If for any reason that doesn't



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happen, however, please email the experimenter – Christopher Dobson ([c.g.dobson@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:c.g.dobson@pgr.reading.ac.uk)) who will manually award your credit.

If you were not completing the study for SONA credit, you will be automatically entered into a draw to win one of three, £75 Amazon gift vouchers. The draw will be made at the end of data collection later this year and the winners emailed by the experimenter.

### **Reminder: What will happen to my data/how will it be protected?**

Your data will be kept anonymous, confidential, and securely stored, with only your anonymous ID identifying it. The final dataset collected from this study will be preserved and made available in anonymised form, so that data can be re-used by others. Your individual consent form will be kept for 5 years after the completion of this study. Finally, if you agreed to be contacted about future studies whilst consenting to take part, you may remove this agreement at any point in the future by emailing Prof. Phil Beaman – [c.p.beaman@reading.ac.uk](mailto:c.p.beaman@reading.ac.uk).

*This study was reviewed by the School Research Ethics Committee and given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct 2024-014-PB; expiry date: 31/12/2025).*

Once again, thank you again for your participation.

Prof. Philip Beaman, Dr Rich Harrison, and Christopher Dobson