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**UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF DISGUST AND POLITICAL
IDEOLOGY ON MORAL JUDGMENT THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY**

by

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Abstract

Feelings of disgust may have effects on one's moral judgment; specifically that experience of disgust has linked to increased severity of moral judgments. Additionally, one's political beliefs may also affect one's moral judgment, such as conservatives tend to make harsher judgment toward moral situations and behaviors. A 2 x 2 x 2 factorial quasi-experiment has been proposed to study 420 participants, legal adults from both conservative and liberal neighborhoods, randomly assigned to one of two conditions, disgust-eliciting versus neutral. Participants will view either four disgust-eliciting photographs or four neutral photographs, and then complete survey questions on disgust rating, moral judgment, disgust sensitivity, and political self-identification. It is hypothesized that, participants who identify as liberals, will feel less disgusted by the photos than conservative participants, and have more lenient moral judgment, whereas participants who identify as conservatives, will feel more disgusted by the photos than liberals, and have much harsher moral judgment.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Imagine this, you are walking around your home, from your bedroom to the bathroom. You want to get something from the drawers so that you can shower and go on with the rest of your day. You quickly look into the drawer, and see something in the back corner. You hesitate but think, what harm can it be? You reach in and feel something furry and cold: a dead rat. You cannot help but react to what just happened; your body is overwhelmed with the desire to throw up; you have already squeezed your eyebrows together, raised your cheeks and curled your upper lip. You are disgusted. Everyone has experienced something similar to the hypothetical situation. Whether it is a pile of blood in the shower, or a swarm of maggots near the trashcan, many physical things disgust us. However, the feeling of disgust is not just limited to physical stimuli. We have all probably described a situation, or an act or even a person being disgusting. Is this the same as being disgusted by dead rat? Or are we just extremely judgmental? Maybe the answers to both of these questions explain extensively regarding how we react and feel about the society around us. Darwin has defined disgust as “something revolting, primarily in relation to the sense of taste, as actually perceived or vividly imagined; and secondarily to anything, which causes a similar feeling, through the sense of smell, touch and even of eyesight,” drawing attention to *physical disgust* (Darwin, 1965, p. 253). The current study intends to go beyond the biological, to understand *moral disgust*, along with political ideology, in relation to how we make moral judgment, through the use of photography.

Moral Judgment Theories

One aspect of people's daily life, that differentiates us from other animals, is our ability to make judgment based on morality. We make these kinds of judgment all the time. When we choose to help a car on the side of the road or when we choose not to help, we live our lives following certain rules, even outside of legal restraints. Because of this innate ability of human, our society functions in the way that it does. The current research is interested in understanding how certain elements affect our moral judgment. However, before proceeding to discussions of its relationship with other elements, we shall start by clarifying definitions and laying out important theoretical frameworks.

While early history of discussions of moral judgment involved philosophers like Aristotle, influential psychologists such as Freud have also attempted to understand the implications of morality for human social behaviors. Since then, there have been several theories developed, attempting to explain morality and moral judgment, and these theoretical models can be roughly categorized into two types with fundamentally different goals. Models that have focused on the first goal, that is "to account for the particular information content that underlies people's moral judgments," are referred as *information models* (Guglielmo, 2015, p. 2). The other category of theories concern with identifying psychological processes that generate moral judgment, and are collectively grouped as *process models*. Specifically, information models identify "an agent's behavior that shape people's moral judgments," whereas process models instead emphasize "the psychological processes that are recruited when people determine whether a behavior is immoral or worthy of blame" (p.2).

One of the information models that focus on "responsibility," differentiates between responsibility and blame judgments (Shaver, 1985). Other researchers add on to

the previous literature and bring the focus to the relationship between one's judgment of responsibility and their emotional and behavioral reactions to others' behavior (Weiner, 1995). According to more recent research on information-based approach, researchers argue that judgments of wrongness and blame are supported by beliefs and desires independently (Cushman, 2008). There are, of course, limitations to this type of approach, including but not limiting to difficulty to define responsibility, inability to differentiate consequences and causality (Guglielmo, 2015). However, for the purpose of current research, the other approach will be focused more.

A handful of researchers, those are interested in the topic of disgust, other emotional responses and how they affect the moral judgment process, have used Haidt's Social Intuitionist Model of moral judgment as the theoretical framework. Haidt (2001) argues that, "moral judgment is caused by quick moral intuitions and is followed by slow, ex post facto moral reasoning" (p. 817). Specifically, this model underlies two claims; one is that reasoning follows moral judgment, rather than precedes it; the other is that intuitions or emotional responses directly cause moral judgments (Haidt, 2001). Researches have been conducted since, in attempt to support this model, or in response to it. Kunda (1990) contributes to Haidt's model by discussing motivated reasoning and specifically drawing attention to self-serving biases. The logic is that when people want to draw a particular conclusion, they establish a justification or reasoning for that goal, by evaluating only a biased partial set of beliefs and rules (Kunda, 1990). The second claim regarding intuitions and emotional responses and their causal relationship to moral judgment, concerns the hypothesis of current research, therefore will be further analyzed and explained in the following sections of the writing. Although, there are limitations to

this model, such as its restriction to specific emotions and Haidt's procedures in his studies, the current research attempts to overcome some of these limitations and focus on understanding the relationship between emotional response/intuition such as disgust, and moral judgment.

Another distinction needs to be drawn before proceeding, which is one of moral judgment and moral emotion. The current research employs the definitions given by Chapman and Anderson (2013), that *moral judgments* are "assessments of moral value, such as right or wrong, good or bad and *moral emotions* refer to any emotion associated with a moral event.

Disgust

Answer these questions: what disgusts you? What do you think is disgusting? If your answers are rotten food, maggots, then you are referring the emotion of disgust in its biological sense. It is no doubt an innate biological response that is universally shared by humans of all ages, races, genders, with infants of a few hours old reacting to bitter tastes with a facial grimace (Steiner, 1973). With its original association with food rejection and disease avoidance, disgust is a negative emotion that is as simple and direct as a facial expression that we all recognize, the raising of the upper lip and/or the wrinkling of the nose (Ekman & Friesen, 1978). However, it is also as complex as any emotional response gets, difficult to tell apart from all the other negative emotions such as anger, as often these emotions appear together (Simpson, Carter, Anthony & Overton 2006). Researchers have expressed concerns regarding some of the past studies conducted on disgust, with certain approaches not distinguishing well between disgust and other negative emotions

(Chapman & Anderson 2013). Therefore some terms and concepts need to be explained and defined before proceeding to a more in-depth analysis of disgust in the social context.

First distinction needs to be made between disgust and distaste. The two are understood almost interchangeably, with distaste being a milder version of disgust to most people. According to past research, disgust is believed to have derived from distaste, a rejection impulse or mechanism caused by the oral ingestion of unpleasant substances, typically something bitter (Chapman, Kim, Susskind, & Anderson, 2009; Rozin & Fallon, 1987). However, disgust differs from distaste in a way that is less about the sensory characteristics of the stimuli; you do not need to taste something to be disgusted (Rozin & Fallon, 1987). Disgusting stimuli elicit a much stronger feeling of resentment that is subjective, and are more revolting and contaminating than distasteful objects (Rozin & Fallon, 1987; Rozin, Markwith, & McCauley, 1994). With this distinction established and explained, we can expand more specifically on what disgust means, and the different types of disgust.

Collectively, there are two kinds of disgust that past research has focused on: *physical disgust* and *moral disgust*. Physical disgust refers to the biological role of this negative emotion, serving a disease-avoidance purpose (Curtis, Aunger, & Rabie, 2004; Curtis & Biran, 2001; Oaten, Stevenson, & Case, 2009). We are often physically disgusted by objects that are potential carriers of disease, such as body products like feces and blood, or organic decaying matter (Curtis & Biran 2001), or stimuli that are associated with reduced biological fitness (e.g., incest; Fessler & Navarrete, 2004; Westermarck, 1891), and violations of the outer body envelope (injuries) (Rozin et al., 2000). Physiologically, disgust has shown to be a part of the parasympathetic nervous

system, one of three divisions of automatic nervous system (PNS; Ekman, Levenson, & Friesen, 1983; Levenson, Ekman, & Friesen, 1990). This further supports the role that disgust plays in food-rejection and disease avoidance, yet with one exception.

Besides its biological role, disgust can also be triggered by the violations of social and moral norms (Rozin et al., 2000). Researchers refer to disgust elicited by socio-moral transgressions, such as theft, lying and fraud, as *moral disgust* (Tybur, Lieberman, & Griskevicius, 2009). This can be explained as an example of exaptation (also known as preadaptation, Rozin et al., 2000), an evolutionary process where a trait assumes a new function without losing its original form (Bock, 1959; Mayr & Tax, 1960). However, some researchers argue that disgust can only be elicited by moral transgressions that contain physical stimuli (e.g., gory murders, sexual crimes; Bloom, 2004; Oaten, Stevenson & Case, 2009; Royzman & Sabini, 2001; Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999). Disgust as a moral emotion will be discussed more in the next section, in relation to the frameworks of moral judgment.

Disgust + Moral Judgment

As defined above, *moral emotion* refers to any emotion associated with a moral event, and this section will focus on disgust as a moral emotion and its relationship with moral judgment (Chapman & Anderson, 2013). Despite of numerous amount of evident literature that considers disgust as a moral emotion, many past researches have attempted to understand the role of disgust in our moral process, and some disagree entirely that it has any socio-moral implications. Several studies challenge that disgust is the only emotion elicited by moral transgressions, suggesting that anger is comparably associated

with actions such as violence toward others, betrayal, hypocrisy (Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994; Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, 1999). A study conducted in 2006 further provides evidence for the correlation of disgust and anger, with participants self-reporting emotional responses to photographs depicting physical disgust stimuli and pure moral transgressions (do not contain physical aspect), emphasizing the difference between physical disgust and moral disgust, as one being more isolated experience and the other being a complicated mix of multiple negative emotions (Simpson et al., 2006). Because of these findings, a previous researcher identifies insufficient linguistic ability to term the core and interpersonal disgust into one word, proposing an alternative word usage for socio-moral disgust, as terms such as grossed out, disgusted are unable to convey the theoretical meaning of the emotion (Nabi, 2002). However, some of the most prominent researchers in this field have conducted interviews with non-native speakers of English who lived in the United States, for the purpose of observing linguistic and cultural differences of disgust, and concluded that the concept of socio-moral disgust is universal among many languages and cultures, not just a linguistic confusion or mistake made by English speakers (Haidt, Rozin, McCauley & Imada, 1997).

In order to eliminate the verbal self-report bias, some researchers have focused on studying the particular facial expression that is correlated with disgust only, “pulling upward the central portion of the upper lip, raising and stretching the nostril wings, and deepening the nasolabial fold” (Ekman, Freisen, & Ancoli, 1980). We all have seen that face before, especially when it concerns unbearable gustatory and olfactory stimuli, yet whether this expressive measure can successfully identify moral disgust remains the question of interest for the current research. There are supporting literature such as a

study conducted by Chapman and colleagues, which recorded participants' activation of levator labii muscle region of the face by using electromyography (EMG) technology, while treated unfairly during the Ultimatum game. These researchers concluded their study with evidence supporting that moral transgression stimuli indeed trigger the particular facial motor activity associated with basic and physical disgust, therefore contributing to the idea that moral transgressions do in fact evoke disgust (Chapman et al., 2009).

Because of the emphasis of Haidt's Social Intuitionist Model on the casual relationship between moral intuitions and moral judgment, the reverse approach should work as well. To understand the role of disgust in moral judgment process, researchers also took the approach of disgust manipulation to attempt tackling the same issue. Wheatley and Haidt (2005) conducted a study, in which they performed hypnosis to highly susceptible participants with feeling of disgust. The results support that the manipulation of disgust can increase the severity of moral judgment. Since then, other researchers have replicated this kind of reversed study with different ways to induce disgust, and found a causal relationship between physical disgust and moral condemnation, while pointing out the stronger effect for people who are sensitive to their bodily cues (Schnall, Haidt, Clore & Jordan, 2008). Contributing to existing literature, another set of researchers show the casual relationship of induced emotions on moral judgment, while separating anger and disgust as approach emotion and withdrawal emotion and their different effects on the formation of moral judgment (Ugazio, Lamm, & Singer, 2012).

Political Ideology

People have feelings. People make judgments. Because of these shared biological and sociological processes, people identify with political ideologies. According to Erikson & Tedin (2003), political ideology is understood as a “set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved” (p. 64). Some emphasize the role of social groups, “ideologies are the shared framework of mental models that groups of individuals possess that provide both an interpretation of the environment and a prescription as to how that environment should be structured” (p. 24). Thus, there are those of us who share more similarly with conservative ideologies, and those who feel differently. Since the French revolution, political ideology beliefs have been labeled in terms of a left-right scale, with terms such as “left” and “liberal,” “right” and “conservative” used interchangeably (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Before relating these different political ideologies to the frameworks of moral judgment and the role of disgust, the two prominent sides of the political spectrum need to be defined and explained.

There are many different ways that people associate their political identities, such as moderates, radicals, liberals, left-wingers etc. For the purpose of current research, only two broad categories of political ideologies will be focused, conservative political beliefs and liberal political beliefs. Past research have defined political conservatism as “resistance to change and the tendency to prefer safe, traditional and conventional forms of institutions and behavior” (Wilson, 1973, p. 4). People who identify with liberal political ideologies believe the opposite; they want changes. Specifically, researchers have identified two core issues where conservatives and liberals feel strongly different

regarding: change, equality (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski & Sulloway, 2003). Conover and Feldman (1981) found that the primary basis for the way people define liberals and conservatives relies on the acceptance of, versus the resistance to, change. Another major criterion continually reappears in distinguishing left from right: attitudes toward equality,” according to Giddens (1998, p. 40). He then further explains the specific distinction between the two opposing beliefs, “the left favours greater equality, while the right sees society as inevitably hierarchical.”

To understand these differences better, the logic behind having certain political beliefs should be discussed. Researchers have recognized that “political attitudes may well be principled,” (Sniderman, Piazza, Tetlock & Kendrick, 1991; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986). Some believe that the different attitudes “are also at least partially responsive to reality constraints” (Kunda, 1990). Several theories have been established in attempt to explain political attitudes, such as individual differences approach (White, 1969), pure instrumental or self-interest theory of conservatism (Sears & Funk, 1991), and modeling or simple reinforcement. These theories of political attitudes specifically explain the phenomenon of growing conservative identifications among upper-class elites (Centers, 1949; Sidanius & Ekehammar, 1979). Because of the social pressure and constraints, those that are underprivileged may favor political conservatism to minimize anxiety, fear, instability (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon & Sullivan, 2003; Lane 1962; Nias, 1973). At the same time, the “advantaged may gravitate toward conservatism for reasons of self-interest or social dominance” (Centers, 1949; Sidanius & Ekehammar, 1979; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Interestingly, researchers found that “people projected different

emotions onto Republican and Democratic political candidates,” which may have many implications regarding the current 2016 presidential debate (Carlson & Brincka, 1987).

Chapter 2: Background of Original Photography

Pre-Production:

Edward Bulwer-Lytton, an English writer, wrote in his 1839 play, *Richelieu*, “the pen is mightier than the sword” (Lytton, 1912). After the invention of the camera, a Philadelphia photographer stated in 1866, “Who shall not say that the camera is mightier than the pen?” (Goldberg, 1991) Indeed, ever since the invention of the camera in 1839, “photographic images have been altering people’s minds and rearranging their lives for a long time” (Goldberg, 1991). In our 2016 world, there are more visual stimuli than ever. With fake news circulating conservative readers as an example, the power of media, specifically photography, in manipulating people’s minds and perception of the world needs to be analyzed and studied. The current study intends to address one of the ways that photography has been used to demonstrate scientific evidence and to influence people’s socio-cognitive processes.

Whether you realize it or not, photography has been shaping our understanding of the world and the many different events that take place, through technical creations such as Photoshop that questions our optical ability, political involvement like campaign propagated photos that encourage viewers to think a certain way, social and cultural implications such as the early use of photography began in war journalism, with American photographers’ documentation of the aftermath of the American Civil War, and then with photographic evidence of the Holocaust. These pictures changed many lives and their understanding of the world, and can be thought of as tools of manipulation, by some. Susan Sontag (1977) recalls her reactions to some of these images of the concentration camps:

Nothing I have seen— in photographs or real life – ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously. Indeed, it seems plausible to me to divide my life into two parts, before I saw those photographs (I was twelve) and after, though it was several years before I understood fully that they were about. (p. 15)

Despite much suspicion at first, these photographs confronted people at the time with the unbelievably horrendous truth about our morality. Of course, the content of photography goes far beyond its initial sphere of War documentation. From bringing attention to the preservation of natural land such as Yosemite, to aiding law enforcement to find suspects and the most wanted ones, to advancing the scientific fields with discovery like X-ray and positive electron, photography's power is unimaginable and fundamental to our society (Goldberg, 1991). It is clear that photography can be a tool of manipulation, for a greater cause or a politically messaged propaganda, and for my project, I want to utilize this power to my advantage as a researcher investigating moral judgment.

Past researches have shown evidence for correlation between disgust and political conservatism, and I have included political ideology as one of the variables in my experiment, therefore it is crucial to mention photography's role in the political world. Specifically, photography has proven to be crucial in the American democratic system since Lincoln's first election in 1860 (Goldberg, 1991). As important as public image is to any political candidate, Lincoln's success was made possible with the help of "photographic flattery;" "with some retouching, it softened the harsh lines of his face, making him look dignified, wise, statesmanlike, and compassionate. He was, at last, presidential" (Goldberg, 1991). This kind of retouching certainly questions photography's authenticity, yet the question of staging seems to be more significant to discuss, specifically in the context of politics and journalism. According to Paul

Messaris, a communication professor, “because the perception of skill clearly depends on an awareness of the conventions that the artist is following or breaking, enhanced awareness of conventions . . . can be expected to enhance aesthetic appreciation.” If aesthetic arguments can be accentuated by ways of manipulating conventions, can one say the same about the conceptual message of photographs? In other words, can a photographer successfully manipulate their photographs by emphasizing or breaking conventions, and purposely enhance viewers’ awareness for the conceptual message? I am interested in an artistic approach to this question and intend to experiment with some solutions in my thesis project, building on top of existing theoretical frameworks in the fields of psychology and media studies.

Since one of many differences that separate us apart from other animals is our ability to make judgment based on morality, many people before me have tried to understand this process. Early history of discussions of moral judgment involved philosophers like Aristotle, influential psychologists such as Freud have also attempted to understand the implications of morality for human social behaviors. In the field of psychology, several theories have been developed, attempting to explain morality and moral judgment. For the purpose of the current research project, Haidt’s Social Intuitionist Model of moral judgment is used as the theoretical framework. Haidt (2001) argues that, “moral judgment is caused by quick moral intuitions and is followed by slow, ex post facto moral reasoning” (p. 817). Specifically, this model emphasizes two claims; one is that reasoning follows moral judgment, rather than precedes it; the other is that intuitions or emotional responses directly cause moral judgments (Haidt, 2001). Researches have been conducted since, in attempt to support this model, or in response to

it. Some has focused on motivated reasoning and self-serving biases, showing that when people draw a particular conclusion, they establish a justification for that goal, by evaluating only a biased partial set of beliefs and rules (Kunda, 1990). Others have researched regarding intuitions and emotional responses and their causal relationship to moral judgment. Extensive information regarding the psychological frameworks and the connections among the different topics that I am exploring in this project are defined and explained in detail in the previous chapter of my thesis. In short, my project intends to understand the process of moral judgment, and contribute to the existing psychological research, as it consists of a series of 8 photographs, carefully designed and staged for the purpose of the experiment. Because that past literature has focused on the casual relationship between physical disgust stimuli, such as blood and body parts, with one's moral judgment, my current research intends to contribute to past literature by emphasizing on pure moral transgressions, those socio-moral topics of events and behaviors without displaying any graphic stimuli. I predict that those participants with liberal beliefs will feel less disgusted by the photos than conservatives and have more lenient moral judgments, whereas those with conservative beliefs will feel more disgusted by the photos than liberals and produce much harsher judgments. The 8 photographs are in fact two groups of photos, ones with disgust-eliciting stimuli, which will be shown in the senior exhibition and ones without (neutral), which will simply be used in the experiment. They will be staged, in styles inspired by artists such as Jeff Wall and Yinka Shonibare. The content of the four disgust-eliciting photos will be scenarios of murder, betrayal, lying, and stealing, specifically without physical stimuli. For example, the murder scenario photo will not include any blood or dismantled body parts, or any

physical stimuli that have been shown to trigger disgust and are correlated with a level of moral judgment. The emphasis of my experiment will be solely the moral transgressions, such as the act of murdering, or the act of betrayal. Participants will answer survey questions regarding their disgust rating, disgust sensitivity, political self-identification and level of moral judgment after viewing either of two series of photographs, providing data to draw conclusion about the current hypothesis. I have included the method, procedure, and materials within the experimental proposal in the next chapter. The current section will focus more on the literature from the fields of media studies and art.

According to Roland Barthes in his book *Camera Lucida*, there are three practices, three emotions, three intentions involved in photography, “to do, to undergo, to look” (Barthes, 1981). He defines the photographer as *the operator*, the viewers as *the spectators*, and the referent, “a kind of little simulacrum, any eidolon emitted by the object” as *the spectrum*. Specifically, he believes that there are two general elements of photography, *studium* and *punctum*. By *studium*, “a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity,” a spectator like Barthes becomes interested in so many photographs, and is able to develop an inconsequential taste that involves the choosing of “I like/ I don’t like.” Barthes compares this unconcerned desire with “the same sort of vague, slippery, irresponsible interest one takes in people, the entertainments, the books, the clothes one finds ‘all right’,” differentiating it from the *punctum*. At the same time, *studium* allows spectator “to discover the operator, to experience the intentions which establish and animate his practices.” *Punctum*, on the other hand, disturbs *studium*, and presents itself as an arrow that pierces the spectator, instead of being observed or sought out. It is “the accident that pricks, and bruises” the

spectators. While *studium* allows investigation of operator's intention and learning of the political and cultural references, *punctum* is a detail that is personal, and can wound the spectators. Barthes believes in its power of expansion, "while remaining a detail, it fills the whole picture." Although Barthes stresses the unintentional nature of *punctum*, this discussion of details interestingly corresponds with my project, as I intend to provoke certain emotional and moral responses. With Barthes' analysis in mind, I want to borrow and challenge the theoretical analysis of *punctum* in my own project. Instead, I aim to create a *punctum*, and stage a detail, which is intentional in nature but is still able to "prick and bruise" spectators with its socio-moral significance in the same powerful way as Barthes has described in his writing. This detail will be the one element that will differentiate the disgust eliciting photos and from the neutral ones, and ultimately completes the whole picture.

Lewis Hine, the photographer who was responsible for social reforms regarding child labor law in the United States, said in 1909, "While photographs may not lie, liars may photograph" (Goldberg, 1981). Interestingly enough, as the supposedly most truthful medium of all, lies have existed in photos since the very beginning of photography. In 1840, Hippolyte Bayward, who blamed the failure of the French government to recompense him for his role in the invention of photography, created an interesting self-portrait titled *Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man*, in which he is depicted as a corpse. Drawing influences from theatre, the staged photographs from the Victorian era had been "frozen in place on a horizontal line across a shallow stage." Having the parlor game of tableau vivant as inspiration, where hosts and guests participate by dressing up and posing as famous paintings, staged photography was intended to tell a story.

Interestingly, because of the limited technological advancement at the time, photographers were restricted from taking spontaneous images as we do nowadays with our phones. Back then, big and bulky cameras required people sitting still for up to a few minutes, thus all early photographs were staged. Again, because of the invention of cinematography and the technological advancement of cameras, “photographers became less concerned with trying to tell the whole story in one picture,” and staged photography evolved to “a distinct genre and ultimately an inferior one for being artificial and less ‘truthful’” (Pauli, 2006). Over the course of almost two hundred years, staged photography has been seen as “retrograde in one country,” and “avant-garde in another,” continuously trying to understand camera as a tool of artistic expression (Garcia, 2010).

Being able to control lights, actors, cameras, settings, artists are able to make their individual commentary on social circumstances through staged photography. In *Souvenirs of the Self* by Jin-me Yoon, a Korean-Canadian, the artist poses “in the ambiguous position of insider and outsider” in front of iconic Canadian landmarks, providing commentary on identity and ethnicity in Canada. Similarly, Yinka Shonibare also comments on issues of race and class in Western history by reversing the stereotypical roles and posing as the powerful black man surrounded by white servants, in *Diary of a Victorian Dandy*. One of the prominent figures in contemporary staged photography, Jeff Wall considers documentary photography as relying on the “fragmentary,” while he believes in staged photography’s ability to make a completed visual statement (Pauli, 2006). This idea is apparent in his works, such as *Picture for Women*, where he challenges photographic traditions and techniques by using a lightbox. Another example is Wang Qingsong’s *Begger*, in which the artist poses as an oppressed

street beggar asking for money from a Caucasian woman dressed in exoticized Chinese clothing, followed by a dog. The divide between the different races and classes is quite clear, so is the artist's intention. These artists and their photographs are inspiring me to embark on my project in similar style, which will be depictions of socio-moral issues, intended to trigger certain emotional and moral responses in viewers.

With these fascinating and meaningful works of art in mind, I want to mirror these artists in their production quality and their imagery. More specifically, I want to represent reality, navigating between a single moment, a split second of time, and an organic motion of event. According to Andreas Feininger, a prominent photographer from the twentieth century, which most photographers agree, "a well-composed photograph is more effective and makes a stronger impression than a badly composed one" (Feininger, 1972). Due to the detailed nature of my project, I especially understand the importance of composition in relation to my own project. First and foremost, I want to use diffused light, as it is "particularly suitable in all cases in which an unusually detailed rendition of the subject is required," in conjunction with spotlight to emphasize a contrast look. Secondly, I want to also isolate the subject and the important elements, especially the *punctum*, from the rest of the photo by exploring with depth of field, as well as perspective. Thirdly, possibly the most challenging is organization, as the photographs will take a relatively realistic approach on representing the scenarios. To face the challenge, I want to focus on the use of lines, shapes and color to group certain elements together while bringing the attention to the focus. Since I have the control over every element in my frame including props in the background and the lights, I have designed all the placement and details of the shots prior to shooting. Another technique

that I want to focus on is dynamic composition. “A dynamic composition is almost a necessity if a photographer wishes to evoke feelings of action, motion, drama and violence,” and Feininger explains further by saying, “a composition in dynamic balance is analogous to a scale loaded with equal weights of difference specific gravity” (Feininger, 1972). With these techniques and rules in mind, I also want to challenge them in a way that will dramatize the content and provide commentary on the genre of staged photography as an invisible yet absolutely crucial genre.

Post-Production:

While designing my project, I had already anticipated potential problems, such as coordinating with models, reserving locations, etc. These issues, in fact, came up during the actual production and made the process relatively difficult for me, looking back. Since my project draws inspirations from artists like Jeff Wall, whose works such as *Insomnia* and *Invisible Man* involve extensive planning of location and props prior to production, I knew that I needed to figure out all the small details that would be included in the shots. Therefore, during pre-production, I designed each of the four shots with help from Professor Jonas Becker, and had a relatively clear vision of how I want each of the shots to turn out. Interestingly, even with so much pre-planning, the process still did not go completely smoothly. However, it has been a wonderful learning experience for me as it is my first time attempting staged photography. In this section of my paper, I will be going over my experience with the production of each photograph, relating my personal experiences with the theories and history discussed in previous writing.

Upon finalizing the designs, I was very eager to get started. I chose the location for the first shot to be inside the studio, due to various reasons, such as the ability to

control lighting. I worked with a friend as my model and contacted maintenance ahead of time to move a classroom chair all the way to the studio. As I began to shoot, I realized to the extent of how clueless I was on the spot. Having designed everything, thinking that I had it all figured out, I felt extremely discouraged on the first night of my shoot. I had borrowed two constant light sources from the media services office and overestimated how cooperative these old-school lights would be. As I played around with different light set ups, one of the lights would fail to turn on. After working through the technical difficulties, I got a few decent shots. However, after viewing them on my computer, I was not quite pleased. I knew that I either had to edit extensively using Photoshop or to consider reshooting. I eventually decided to re-shoot with a total of three models, which made the subject of cheating on an exam look a lot more realistic, and at an actual classroom with appropriate desks and chairs, instead of one simple chair in the studio. Now, I am much more pleased.

In the second shot representing ignorance, we encountered even more problems than the first one. This shot involved a total of three people, and of course, out of convenience, I asked my friends, who showed up late. During the shoot, again, I struggled with lighting. The location that I had selected had limited amount of natural light, yet it quickly disappeared, as it was approaching sunset. Consequently, I had difficulties with navigating through depth of field. Having planned out all the details that I thought were important worked to an extent, but when it came down to the details, such as lenses and techniques, I knew that I had much room to improve as a photographer. Luckily, with the help of Photoshop, I composited two photos together into one, combining the different sections that were in focus and making it uniform overall. This

process of post-production deepened my editing and retouching skills on the computer, and also expanded the concept of photographic manipulation within my project. This final product will no longer be real in the dictionary sense. However, it articulated the overall theme of my project, which is intentionally creating a reality through staged photography.

The third shot focused on the topic of betrayal and troubled me the most prior to production. I had envisioned this shot clearly in my head, yet struggled to reserve an appropriate location. Although it simply takes place outside a bedroom door, I looked around many of my friends' rooms and decided to use my suitemate's room. Unfortunately, right before the shoot, the location fell through. At this stage of my project, having already presented my work-in-progress and wanting to finish it as soon as possible, I was overcome with anxiety. My natural reaction was to take some time off from the project and come back with a fresh set of eyes. I did and returned to it a week later, shooting both the betrayal shot and the last one, poisoning, all on the same day, along with reshooting the cheating shot. With the help of a fellow classmate, I gathered models, reserved locations, and got the shots I wanted.

For the senior gallery show, these four photographs are printed as 20 x 30 inch large, and will be hung on the wall, with 3-inch distance apart. The title of each print will be placed right below each print. A brief introduction of my project will be printed and handed out to viewers as they walk pass. Overall, I think that these prints will produce interesting reactions, whether or not if they successfully provoke disgust among viewers will remain a question until the exhibition. However, this body of work sheds light toward future direction for me as an artist, a photographer, and as a researcher, to

continue doing work within the intersection of the two disciplines and relate my work to a larger political, social context.

Throughout my project, I encountered many issues along the way and realized how naïve I was to think that I was prepared each time. I made mistakes, yet found ways to correct them or acquired enough help and courage to reshoot. Overall, I gained even more respect for photographers, especially in this genre, like Jeff Wall, and also learned valuable lessons about staged photography production in general.

Chapter 3: Experimental Methodology

Proposed Method

Participants

Most researches (David & Olatunji, 2011; Eskine et al., 2011; Wheatley & Haidt, 2005), conducted regarding similar topics had recruited between 50 to 200 participants. Therefore the current study will need a comparable sample size. The current researcher performed a power analysis in order to determine the number of participants needed for this study. First, the current researcher determined a medium effect size from previous research on manipulating disgust effects on moral judgment conducted by Wheatley and Haidt (2005). Using Cohen's (1992) power table, for a power of .77 with a medium effect size and an alpha of .05, researcher established that this 2 (disgust vs. neutral photo condition) x 2 (liberal vs. conservative political ideology) x 2 (more disgust sensitive vs. less disgust sensitive) factorial design study would need 52 participants per cell and a total of 8 conditions would need roughly 416 participants. Taking into consideration the amount of politically "neutral" participants that will be excluded from the data, approximately 420 participants will be recruited. Participants will be legal adults, over the age of 18, living in the United States. The researchers hope for a balanced racial and gender breakdown of the sample. More importantly, approximately 50% of the sample will identify more closely with liberal ideology, while the other half identify more closely with conservative ideology. To ensure this, sample will be recruited based on locations of residency, half of the sample from more conservative precincts and the other half from more liberal precincts, utilizing data established by an article (Schleuss, Fox & Krishnakumar, 2016) by the L.A. Times. According to the results of 2016 presidential

election, areas such as Antonio Heights and Alta Loma, general north of Rancho Cucamonga and Upland, will serve as locations for recruiting more conservative participants, while areas such as Pomona, Rancho Cucamonga, Claremont, and Chino, which indicated more votes for the Democratic Party, will serve as locations for recruiting more liberal participants. Participants will be recruited through social media channels, such as Facebook posts, Twitter tweets, and email references, as well as through community center programs and flyers around the neighborhoods. Participants will be compensated with entering into a raffle to win \$50 Amazon gift cards.

Materials

Stimulus Materials

Photographs. Participants will view either four disgust-eliciting photographs, or four neutral photographs. The four disgust-eliciting photographs each represent one of following moral transgression topics: cheating, betrayal, poisoning, and ignorance. These disgust-eliciting photographs include no physical stimuli, meaning that there is no blood, dismantled body parts, or anything physically disgusting. The neutral photographs mirror the exact setup with the same models, simply missing the one piece of information that determines the immorality of a certain action, such as in the neutral photo in response to the cheating photo, there will simply be students taking an exam, without any indication of cheat notes. All photographs are produced by the researcher for the purpose of this study, and will be checked for dependent measure prior to study, ensuring that these photos truly prompt disgusted reactions. More information regarding the production of these photographs is included in the previous chapter.

Measures

Moral Judgment Measure. Participants will read modified one-sentence descriptions of 6 moral offenses adapted from past literature (Wheatley & Haidt, 2005). The original six vignettes were designed to test the causal relationship between disgust and moral judgment. They were modified to be more ambiguous moral transgression topics, therefore more relative to the current hypothesis. The current topics include shoplifting, lying on a job application, littering, lying to one's significant other, walking past a protest by a group of White supremacists and doing nothing, and students stealing food from the dining hall. Two rating scales will follow each of the descriptions, one for rating "how morally wrong" the behavior was and the second for rating "how disgusting" the behavior was. These ratings are indicated by "not at all morally wrong" and "extremely morally wrong" or "not at all disgusting" and "extremely disgusting" on a 5 point Likert scale.

Disgust Sensitivity Measure. Participants will complete the revised version of the Disgust Sensitivity Scale (See Appendix). The original scale was developed by Haidt and colleagues and was later modified in 2007 (Haidt et al., 1994, modified by Olatunji et al., 2007). This revised scale contains 25 items that measure disgust sensitivity across domains of core, animal reminder, and contamination disgust. The scale includes 13 true-false items (scored 0 or 1) and 12 items that are rated on a 3-point scale (scored 0, 0.5, 1). The 12 items rated on a 3-point scale assess the extent to which participants find a given experience "not disgusting at all, slightly disgusting, or very disgusting." Three of the true-false items are reverse scored. The DS-R scale has been shown to have good convergence with other disgust-related measures with an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of

.87 (Olatunji et al., 2007). Further, the three DS–R subscales demonstrated acceptable internal consistency estimates: Core Disgust, $\alpha = .80$; Animal Reminder Disgust, $\alpha = .82$; Contamination-Based Disgust, $\alpha = .71$ (Olatunji et al., 2007).

Disgust Rating Measure. Participants will answer the question referencing each of the four photographs, “how disgusting did you feel about each of the photograph you saw?” as a manipulation measure. Answers will be on a 5-point Likert scale, including options such as “not at all disgusting, not that disgusting, neutral, slightly disgusting, very disgusting” for all four, disgust-eliciting or neutral, photographs.

Political Ideology Measure. Participants will answer the question, “when it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as liberal, neutral, conservative?” Answers will be on a 5-point Likert scale, including options as “very liberal, liberal, neutral, conservative, and very conservative.”

Procedure

The study will take place inside a laboratory and the researcher will meet the participants, one at a time. After giving informed consent, participants will be randomly assigned to one of two conditions, the disgust-eliciting or neutral condition. They will view either four disgusting or four neutral photographs. Then, they will answer the disgust rating measure, a manipulation check, first, and then the moral judgment survey, disgust sensitivity survey, and political self-identification question in random order. Finally, the participants will be fully debriefed.

Ethics

The current study includes aesthetically pleasing photographs, which are designed to elicit feeling of disgust and may contain distressing stimuli. Thus, emotional discomfort is a potential risk to the study. But participants will not be put in any physical danger, as they do not need to perform any tasks other than answering surveys about their reactions to the photos, judging different ambiguous moral situations, as well as disgust sensitivity scale. Additionally, the content of the photographs will not include any graphic stimuli such as blood, body parts. Therefore the visual stimuli are not expected to provoke more than minimal risk. The participants are asked to answer questions regarding their political ideologies and their judgment on socio-moral issues, which may create stress or other emotional responses, but the discomfort is no more than what one experiences in everyday life. When at the same time, the anonymity of the participants and the voluntary nature of the experiment will be guaranteed, reducing possible pressure associated with responding to questions. Informed consent will be collected at the beginning of the experiment, outlining any possible risk for participants to be aware of. While, there is no deception within the study, no personal information, other than participants' political associations and age, will be collected either. The study will not recruit participants from protected populations or collect any sensitive information.

In fact, participants may benefit from viewing these photographs because of their artistic value and the artist's intention to break conventional rules in order to emphasize the content. Participants may also benefit from the debriefing as they learn more about the role of disgust, and their own emotional sensitivity in their own moral judgment making. The current study may contribute to existing literature on the topics of disgust and moral judgment as it focuses on pure moral transgressions, which has not been the

focus of most past research. The current study also engages in an interdisciplinary experimental approach to the topics of interest, which very little past research has done, drawing relatively well-rounded and more wholesome arguments. Society at large may also benefit from the current study, as the research sheds light on one's moral decision-making process in relation to disgust, specifically its implication to media use in the political context, which may lead to a better understanding of biases concerning moral issues, aiming toward a better and more equal society. Therefore the benefits outweigh the risks, and the study is ethical to be conducted.

Predicted Results

The current hypothesis predicts that, participants who self identify as liberals will feel less disgusted by the photos than those who identify as conservatives, and have less harsh moral judgment.

Manipulation Check

A manipulation check will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the photographic materials of the experiment. To ensure that, mean disgust rating measure of the test group, those who will view the disgust-eliciting photos, and the control group, those who will view the neutral photos, will be compared. It is predicted that those, who will view disgust-eliciting photos, will have a significantly higher disgust rating of the photos than those who will view neutral photos.

Pearson's Correlation

Additionally, participants' disgust sensitivity will be measured and interpreted along with the disgust ratings of the photographs. A Pearson's correlation test will be run

to compare disgust sensitivity measure and disgust rating of the photos to understand the relationship between the two data. Those who are sensitive to disgust stimuli are expected to feel more disgusted by photos, which are designed to prompt disgust, therefore generating a higher disgusting rating for the photos, while those who are low on disgust sensitivity, will still rate the disgust-eliciting photos higher than neutral photos, with a smaller difference. Therefore, it is predicted that there will be a positive correlation between disgust sensitivity and disgust rating of photographs among participants.

Three -Way ANCOVA

A three way ANCOVA will be performed to investigate the effects of all three predictor variables of the current quasi-experimental study, 2 (photo condition: disgust vs. neutral photo condition) x 2 (political ideology: liberal vs. conservative political ideology) x 2 (disgust rating: more disgust vs. less disgust), on the dependent variable, moral judgment, while controlling for the covariate, the disgust sensitivity measure. The main effects of each of three independent variables on the DV and their specific interactions will be analyzed.

Main Effects

First, as suggested by past research, people exposed to disgust manipulations such as reading vignettes with disgust stimuli, or exposure to unpleasant odor, report to judge more harshly (Wheatley & Haidt, 2005; Schnall et al., 2008). Therefore it is predicted that the sample mean for the DV will be significantly harsher among participants viewing disgust-eliciting photos, than those who will view neutral photos.

Secondly, past research has defined political conservatism as “resistance to change and the tendency to prefer safe, traditional and conventional forms of institutions and behavior” (Wilson, 1973). In other words, violations to social or moral norms are expected to be less acceptable to conservatives than liberal. Therefore, it is predicted that the main effect of the political ideology measure on DV would be significantly higher for conservative participants than liberal participants, meaning that conservatives will generally have harsher moral judgment.

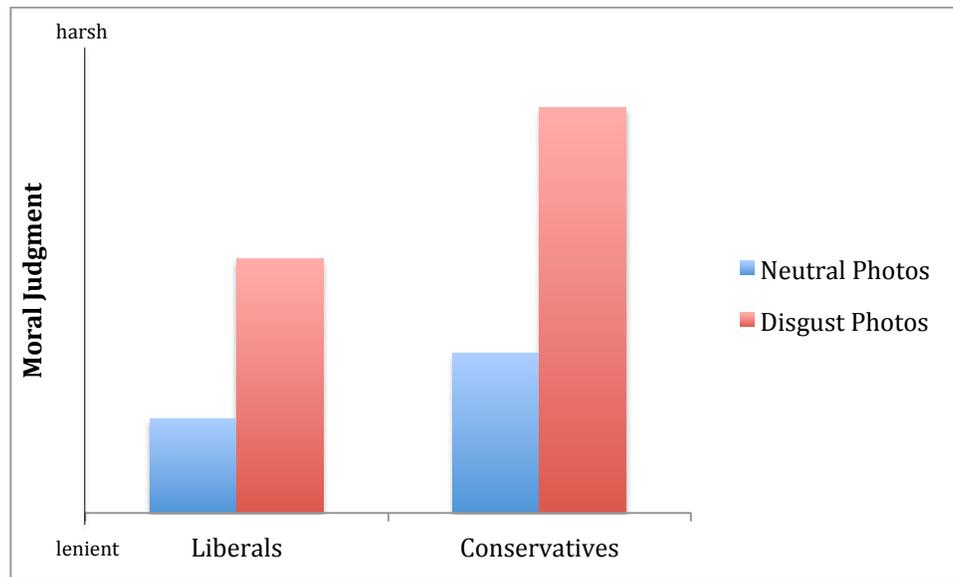
Thirdly, as indicated by past research, the manipulation of disgust can increase the severity of moral judgment (Wheatley & Haidt, 2005). Consequently, the main effect of disgust rating on moral judgment is predicted to be significantly higher for those who rate the photos to be more disgusting.

Interactions

Then, the particular interactions between the predictor variables will be analyzed as well. According to the results of the study by Inbar and colleagues (2016), more conservative participants were more disgust sensitive, while the manipulation check will show that the disgust-eliciting photographs will produce more feelings of disgust among participants overall. Thus, while controlling for disgust sensitivity, the interaction between photo conditions and political ideology is predicted to be significant, such that among liberal participants, those viewing disgust-eliciting photos will have a harsher moral judgment than those who view the neutral photos, and among conservative participants, those viewing disgust-eliciting photos will have a much harsher moral judgment than those who view neutral photos with a significantly larger difference

between the photo conditions than that of liberal participants. Figure 1 indicates the predicted interaction.

Figure 1. Interaction Between Photo Condition and Political Ideology



Next, while controlling for disgust sensitivity, it is predicted that the interaction between photo conditions and levels of disgust rating will be significant, such that among participants who view neutral photos, those who rate as being more disgusted will have a slightly harsher moral judgment than those rating as less disgusted, and among participants who view disgust-eliciting photos, those who rate as being more disgusted will have a much harsher moral judgment than those rating as less disgusted.

Thirdly, the interaction between political ideology and disgust rating is predicted to be significant as well. Among liberal participants, those who rate as being more disgusted will have a harsher moral judgment than those who feel less disgusted. Similarly, among conservative participants, those who are more disgusted will also have a harsher moral judgment than those who feel less disgusted, with a significantly larger difference than their liberal peers.

At last, the interaction between photo conditions, political ideology, and disgust rating is predicted to be significant. The interaction that researcher expects to see between political ideology and disgust ratings on moral judgment for neutral photos will be significantly different from that for disgust photos. Specifically, within the neutral photo condition, liberal participants who rate themselves as being more disgusted will have a harsher moral judgment than those who feel less disgusted by the photos, while conservative participants who rate themselves as being more disgusted will also have a harsher moral judgment than those who feel less disgusted by the photos, though with a much larger difference than their liberal peers. At the same time, here is the interaction that the current researcher predicts to see between political ideology and disgust ratings on moral judgment for disgust photos: liberal participants who report to feel more disgusted will have a harsher moral judgment than those who feel less disgusted by the photos, while conservative participants who rate as being more disgusted will have a much harsher moral judgment than those feeling less disgusted by the photos, with a much larger difference than their liberal peers. More importantly, the differences between the liberal participants and conservative participants and their disgust ratings, will be significantly larger for those in disgust photo condition than those in neutral condition. Therefore, the three-way interaction is predicted to be significant.

Discussion

Many scholars and researchers have been fascinated by humans' ability to make moral judgment. While some have identified disgust to be one of the factors that directly affect this moral cognition process, large amount of past researchers have focused on manipulating physical disgust to influence severity of moral judgment. However, the

current study investigates the effects of disgust and political ideology on moral judgment, through manipulating moral disgust stimuli, specifically ones without any graphic or physical cues.

The results of the current study will indicate the effects of disgust-priming visual stimuli on one's moral judgment, generally the more disgusted they will feel, the harsher they will judge others. Furthermore, one's political associations will reflect largely how one approaches conclusions regarding some of the ambiguous moral situations considered in the photographs and in the surveys, with liberal-identifying participants tolerating more disgust and more immoral behaviors. The current research focuses on pure moral stimuli in its design and will provide evidence for the specific kind of disgust, therefore adding to the existing literature on the broad relationship between feeling of disgust and moral judgment, as well as to the limited researches studying specifically the concept of moral disgust (Rozin et al., 2000; Tybur et al., 2009). The current study connects the two otherwise separated fields of study, the effects of disgust on moral judgment, and the relationship between moral judgment and political ideologies, contributing an interdisciplinary approach to the understanding of moral judgment with visually related theories of Media Studies. The results will demonstrate the power of photography as a medium, and its potential in manipulating one's moral perception, shedding light on the influence of politically fueled media content, specifically through photography.

Despite the significance of the results, there are without a doubt some limitations to the study itself. First, for example the current study considers the implications of linguistic use in disgust related description, yet lacks the appropriate step to evaluate the

language use in the one-sentence descriptions of moral situations. Such limitation introduces potential linguistic confounds that may influence one's perception of how immoral the situations are. This limitation shall be improved by more focused research in language used to describe disgust. Secondly, the current study, out of convenience, recruits nearby participants, generating results that may be geographically applicable. Future researchers should consider obtaining a more geographically diverse sample, such as population outside of United States, in attempt to provide evidence for a universal population. Thirdly, the study relies on self-report data, for feeling of disgust and for moral judgment, which cannot be guaranteed to be truthful reflection, especially when participants may have individually different definitions of disgust. Researchers should consider using available neuro-imaging technologies for more accurate data. Lastly, the current study only considers political ideologies as a predictor variable, and fails to recognize other potential predictor variables such as participants' gender, age, or level of education, which may also have direct implications on one's moral judgment.

At the same time, the current study suggests many potential directions for future research. As much insight as the current study has provided on the power of photography in shaping people's minds, more research can be done specifically on how much one's perception can be manipulated using propagated visual stimuli or photographs with certain purposes, like the ones in the current study. This shall be beneficial to identifying propagandas, biased media content in the current time. Future researchers should also focus on providing evidence for a universal population. Most of the researches done in this field have focused on a Caucasian U.S based sample, and the conclusions driven cannot be entirely generalized to other populations. Additionally, confounds such as

gender, age, level of education and their potential effects on one's moral judgment need to be researched extensively. Therefore, future researchers should consider replicating the current study while including age difference, gender difference, and education as predictor variables.

Overall, while there are many other potential factors to be considered in understanding one's moral judgment, the current study provides evidence for the effects of moral disgust and political ideology, confirming many of the existing literature. In order to better understand this moral cognition process, the current study expands the topic of interest with an interdisciplinary approach, combining literature from the field of psychology and the field of media studies. With the development of technology, new forms of media have been proven to be much more powerful in influencing one's moral cognition and moral perception than people realize. It is crucial for studies like this one to focus on the intersection between the two disciplines, to better understand the power of media, as it toys with people's emotions, in directing people what to believe, how to judge behaviors, and in shaping their morality at large.

Appendix Disgust Scale—Revised (DS–R): Items, Scaling, and Scoring

DS–R Part I: Please indicate true or false for the following statements: (true = 0, false = 1; (R) = reversed scoring)

1. I might be willing to try eating monkey meat, under some circumstances. (R)
2. It would bother me to see a rat run across my path in a park.
3. Seeing a cockroach in someone else's house doesn't bother me. (R)
4. It bothers me to hear someone clear a throat full of mucus.
5. If I see someone vomit, it makes me sick to my stomach.
6. It would bother me to be in a science class, and see a human hand preserved in a jar.
7. It would not upset me at all to watch a person with a glass eye take the eye out of the socket. (R)
8. It would bother me tremendously to touch a dead body.
9. I would go out of my way to avoid walking through a graveyard.
10. I never let any part of my body touch the toilet seat in a public washroom.
11. I probably would not go to my favorite restaurant if I found out that the cook had a cold.
12. Even if I was hungry, I would not drink a bowl of my favorite soup if it had been stirred with a used but thoroughly washed flyswatter.
13. It would bother me to sleep in a nice hotel room if I knew that a man had died of a heart attack in that room the night before.

DS–R Part II: Please rate how disgusting you would find the following experiences. (0 = Not Disgusting, 0.5 = Slightly Disgusting, 1 = Very Disgusting)

14. If you see someone put ketchup on vanilla ice cream and eat it.
15. You are about to drink a glass of milk when you smell that it is spoiled.
16. You see maggots on a piece of meat in an outdoor garbage pail.
17. You are walking barefoot on concrete and step on an earthworm.
18. While you are walking through a tunnel under a railroad track, you smell urine.
19. You see a man with his intestines exposed after an accident.
20. Your friend's pet cat dies and you have to pick up the dead body with your bare hands.
21. You accidentally touch the ashes of a person who has been cremated.
22. You take a sip of soda and realize that you drank from the glass that an acquaintance of yours had been drinking from.
23. You discover that a friend of yours changes underwear only once a week.
24. A friend offers you a piece of chocolate shaped like dog-doo.
25. As part of a sex education class, you are required to inflate a new lubricated condom, using your mouth.

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