



# UNDERSTANDING HOW JURORS WEIGH AGGRAVATING EVIDENCE: A MORAL FOUNDATIONS APPROACH

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and Broaden 2.0 award



# PERSONNEL

- PI: Logan A. Yelderman, PhD
  - Associate Professor of Psychology at Prairie View A&M University
    - Social Psychologist
- Co-PI: Jamie S. Hughes, PhD
  - Professor of Psychology, Psychology Department Chair, Department of Literature and Language Interim Chair, University of Texas, Permian Basin
    - Social Psychologist
- Consultant: Matthew P. West, PhD
  - Assistant Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice
    - Criminologist
- Tiffany Williams
  - Doctoral student in the Prairie View A&M University Clinical Adolescent Psychology PhD Program
- Mackenzie Vaught
  - Masters student in the University of Texas, Permian Basin Psychology MA Program

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

- Assess the impact of aggravating (and mitigating) evidence in capital jury trials using a mock juror design
- Uses the Moral Foundations Theory to hypothesize value and impact of evidence
  - Tests person by evidence interactions
- Establishes initial tests of a novel theory about evidence valuation in capital cases
- Involves a series of experimental studies
- Uses large diverse sampling frames

## CURRENT STATUS

- Study 1 data have been collected and analyzed
- Study 1 data have been used to develop the materials for Studies 2-6
- Studies 2-3 have been approved for funding by PVAMU procurement office and are awaiting final processing
- Studies 4-6 are awaiting funding approval from PVAMU procurement office
- We have held weekly collaborative lab meetings between PVAMU, UTPB, and the consultant (when necessary)

## INTELLECTUAL MERIT

- One of the first studies to systematically test moral valuation of evidence in an experimental mock juror framework
- Contributes directly to the current debate as to how morality is constructed in people's minds and how moral decisions are made
- Tests initial elements of a novel theory of capital trial decision-making
- Contribute to the shift in focus from dichotomous decision focus in DP research to evidence weighing
- Use non-college student samples to advance theory and literature, which is especially important in mock juror research since enrollment in higher education is

## BROADER IMPACTS

- Provide a large representative dataset to the public to use ( $N_{\text{Total}} = 7600$ )
  - Can be used as a benchmark for U.S. based mock juror studies
- Provide a complete set of mock juror decision-making materials to the public
- Train a Masters and Doctoral student
  - Experimental design
  - Advanced statistical techniques
- Establish an inter-university collaborative lab
  - Fountainhead for other research and further training of graduate (and undergraduate) students, particularly at an HBCU and HSI
- New modules developed for under graduate and graduate level psychology and law courses
  - Psychology and Law, Forensic Psychology, etc.

## CURRENT OUTPUTS/INFLUENCE

- First large external grant for both the PI and Co-PI
- Established avenue for future collaborative work
- Presentation from Study 1 data submitted to the APA Division 41 American Psychology-Law Conference
- Grant awarded months before PI went up for tenure
- Grant awarded shortly after first year of Co-PI's full professorship
- Grant has generated additional unrelated research ideas for graduate students and PIs
- Boosts confidence in research agenda and encourages future proposal submissions