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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 40(0)

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Publication Date

2018

Peoples (inconsistent) attitudes about foundational moral beliefs

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Abstract

The idea that morality depends on God is an intuitive and widely held lay belief. Does this belief affect peoples intuitions about foundational moral claims (e.g., it is morally wrong to kill someone just for fun)? Here, we discuss data across multiple studies which investigate how considering Gods omnipotence may affect peoples intuitions about basic moral claims. Our evidence suggests that people think it is impossible to alter foundational moral truths that is, it is impossible for moral wrongs to ever be right and for moral rights to be wrong. Yet, people also maintain that God could change the truth-values of these same propositions, regardless of their own religious views. We discuss the implications of this inconsistency both in peoples moral beliefs and in underlying cognitive mechanisms.