

Trust your gut? Study explores religion, morality and trust in authority

September 14 2009

In a world filled with dogma, doctrine and discipline, it is accurate to say most of us strive to do what we believe is "right." These convictions and beliefs permeate every aspect of our lives, including education, ethics and even common law.

Psychologists Daniel C. Wisneski, Brad L. Lytle and Linda J. Skitka from the University of Illinois at Chicago explored this interplay of moral convictions and religious beliefs as it relates to our trust in authority. Specifically, the researchers provided a nationally-represented sample of adults--53% female, 72% White, 12% Black and 11% Hispanic--with an online survey about the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on physician-assisted suicide.

As the findings suggest in a recent issue of [Psychological Science](#), a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, the more religious participants tended to trust the Supreme Court's ability to make the right decision while the group with strong moral convictions felt distrust. And both groups, as it turned out, based their beliefs on a gut reaction rather than on thoughtful, careful deliberation.

Participants took a survey designed to measure their support of or opposition to physician-assisted suicide, the extremity of their attitude, their moral convictions, their religiosity, their issue-specific trust in the [Supreme Court](#) and the time it took them to answer each question.

Participants who reported feeling strong moral convictions against

physician-assisted suicide showed a greater distrust in the Supreme Court to make the right decision, and those who had high scores in religiosity tended to trust the Supreme Court. In addition, both the religious group and the group with strong moral convictions responded quickly to the question of trust in the Supreme Court.

As the authors concluded, people with strong moral convictions seem to not only base their trust in judgment on a gut reaction, "they do not trust even legitimate authorities to make the right decision in the first place."

Source: Association for Psychological Science ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Trust your gut? Study explores religion, morality and trust in authority (2009, September 14) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-09-gut-explores-religion-morality-authority.html>

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