

UC Merced

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

The emotional ties that bind us to concerns of harm and fairness

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0pr768nm>

Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 36(36)

ISSN

1069-7977

Author

Kelly, Deirdre

Publication Date

2014

Peer reviewed

The emotional ties that bind us to concerns of harm and fairness

Deirdre Kelly

Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Abstract: The present research examines evidence for the sentimentalist claim that emotions are the foundation of moral judgment. It considers the psychopath, known for his deficient emotional capacities, as a case study to test intuitions about the emotion's role in moral judgment. Graham and colleagues (2009) examined moral judgment differences between psychopaths and non-psychopaths. Psychopaths showed lack of concern for moral fairness and harm. However, they showed as much concern as non-psychopaths for moral foundations of in-group loyalty, purity, and authority. I propose that a sentimentalist theory best explains these findings. It is a result of psychopaths' deficient guilt and sympathy that they are unable to develop appreciation for harm and fairness. The other foundations are tied to emotions that remain intact in psychopaths; for example, psychopaths have appropriate disgust reactions and purity is tied to disgust. These intact emotions result in their ability to express according moral judgment.