

# **Relationship between Moral Judgment Development and Political Attitude**

**Jiyoung Choi\***

*Education Research Institute, Seoul National University*

## *Abstract*

*The purposes of this study were to examine the emotional/political reactions to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the USA and to look at the relationship among moral judgment development, attitude toward to human right and political reactions to terrorist attacks. The current study's results demonstrated that with respect to emotional responses to terrorist attacks, 'angry' and 'sad' appear at the same frequency while the least emotional response is 'confused'. Females report sadness more than males while males report anger more than females in a certain situation. With respect to political action choices to terrorist attack, males tend to consider a retaliatory response when they make political decision while females tend to consider more considerable ways in which we can overcome terrorist situation. Students who get higher moral judgment scores are less likely to insist that "we must fight back" while students who get lower moral judgment scores are less likely to insist that "we should not make hasty decisions." However it is not a significant difference, so we need to have more data and should explore in detail this relationship.*

*In addition, people who have higher scores on attitude*

---

\* Contact E-mail: [cjiyoung7@gmail.com](mailto:cjiyoung7@gmail.com)

*on human rights are more likely to consider innocent people's lives when they make political decisions. People who are more considering human rights tend to disagree with action choice 3 "we must fight back." Because the survey was administered to dentistry students in January 2002, their emotional responses and their political action choices could be different from what they thought right after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. Finally generalizability issue of the current study is discussed.*

*Key words: moral judgment development, political attitudes, human rights, emotional responses*

## **I. Introduction**

The purposes of this study were to examine the emotional/political reactions to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the USA and to look at the relationship among moral judgment development, attitude toward to human right and political reactions to terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the U.S.A. Researchers have long been interested in the relationship between moral judgment and political attitude or political decision making (Emler et al., 1983; Emler et al., 1998; Narvaez et al., 1999; Rest et al., 1999). Much of the research regarding this issue has focused on the similarity of moral reasoning and political attitude evoked by people who consider moral judgment the same as political attitude. What is the theoretical rationale for this argument?

With respect to this issue, Candee (1974) insisted that these two domains, moral judgment and political attitude, are related explicitly with justice (Thoma, 1993). Basically, the concept of justice is about the balancing of individual interests and the benefits of cooperation. First of all, moral judgment is concerned with how the benefits and burdens of social cooperation are to be distributed fairly (Rest, 1979). Thus, moral judgment is related to justice and fairness. In addition, many researchers have insisted that political decisions and policies are attempts to establish just and fair solutions to social problems (Weinreich-Haste, 1986 as cited in Thoma, 1993). Based on the characteristics of justice and fairness, which are the main elements of moral judgment and political judgment, it is assumed that when someone makes a political decision, his/her moral judgment development may influence the solution proposed for solving a social problem. On the other hand, when someone makes a moral judgment, his/her perspective on society or policy may affect his/her moral judgment. As Rest (1979) mentioned, because the concept of justice is about the balancing of individual interests and the benefits of cooperation, this justice concept can be applied to both domains, moral judgment and political judgment. However, Thoma et al., (1999) argued that even though we agree that political reasoning and moral judgments overlap in terms of meaning of justice, it may be dangerous to say that they are the same thing. Therefore, in the current study, the relationship between students' moral judgment development and their political attitude to the real terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, in the U.S.A. was explored.

In addition, students' emotional responses to the terrorist attack were examined. With respect to emotional responses, there are several researchers who insist that there is a gender difference in the emotional response to a certain situation (e.g., Oliver & Green, 2001; Hubbard, 2001). For example, Oliver & Green (1990) found that females were more likely than males to report sadness when they see sad animated scenes. On the other hand, Hubbard (2001) found that males showed more anger than females when they were involved in competitive games. In the current study, based on previous research studies, it is hypothesized that females and males may show different emotional responses patterns to a terrorist attack.

## **II. Review of Related Literature**

There are a few studies showing the relationship between moral judgment development and political judgment. Candee (1975) conducted a study in which persons who had been given Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) were asked to make decisions based on some of the same dilemmas, which confronted the Watergate Participants. Based on the results of the study, Candee found that survey responses of 370 persons not involved in Watergate demonstrated that those who reasoned at stages 3 and 4 agreed with the decisions of the participant more often than did their stage 5 counterparts. Candee's study was unique considering that he used Kohlberg's MJI to see the relationship between moral judgment development and political attitude. Because Kohlberg's MJI scoring system is subjective,

complex and time-consuming, Rest developed a questionnaire based on Kohlberg's MJI.

Afterward, several researchers using Defining Issues Test (DIT) showed a relationship between moral judgment and political judgment. Thoma (1993) conducted one study about the relationship between moral judgment and political choice variables prior to the U.S. presidential election of 1988. He found that a curvilinear function was the most appropriate fit to the data. In other words, his finding confirmed Rest's expectation that subjects with middle range P scores (i.e., conventional reasoners) should find the conservative candidate/position more appealing than would subjects at both the low and high ranges (Thoma, 1993).

Furthermore Thoma found that the common links between political party identification, liberal versus conservative ideology, and political variables could not account for the moral judgment and political choice relationship. Participants who differed on the DIT attended to different election issues in defining their election decision (Thoma, 1993). According to Rest et al., (1999), four studies have assessed political attitude, positions on public policy issues, and DIT scores (Getz, 1985; Rest et al., 1974; Rest, G., in Rest, 1979; Thoma, 1993 as cited in Rest et al., 1999). These four studies showed that DIT scores are uniquely related to political issues and attitudes after controlling for subjects' liberalism/conservatism. From this finding, we can conclude that moral judgment development is a stable correlate of political attitudes and is not redundant with one's perceived conservatism or liberalism (Rest et al., 1999). Based on these results, political attitude is not the same as moral judgment development even though

there is a stable correlation between the two concepts.

On the other hand, the issue of whether "moral judgment development is the same as political judgment" has been discussed. Some researchers (e.g., Emler, Resnick, & Malone, 1983) have criticized, that "Moral judgment is really liberalism-conservatism masquerading as developmental capacity. Because Kohlberg himself preferred liberal political views, in effect he was claiming that liberalism was more highly developed than conservatism." (Emler, Resnick, & Malone, 1983, p. 1075) In a similar vein, Lind insisted that DIT and MJI shared the same characteristics in terms of the fact that both are preference measures. Emler & his colleagues' argument may be related to Lind's (1995) idea that DIT and MJI are preference measures.

In addition, Emler, Resnick, and Malone (1983) insisted that actually what information we can get from DIT is the same as asking a person whether or not they are liberal or conservative. If it is true, using DIT is a very expensive and time consuming way to get the same information as asking people one simple question, whether or not they are liberal or conservative (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999). The point of their argument is that DIT is for measuring political attitude. They see that higher DIT scores represent the political attitude of liberal persons rather than conservative persons.

One interesting fact is that their study (Emler et al., 1983) was actually a "faking" study. As a "faking" study, special test-taking instructions are provided such as "fake like a radical liberal" (increase p score) or "fake like a conservative" (decrease p score) asking a subject to respond as a liberal or a conservative produced a range

of DIT scores. It is unclear, however, whether the same results would have appeared from the actual study.

As I mentioned earlier, Lind (1995) discussed this issue from a slightly different perspective. Lind said that DIT and MJI are preference measures, which means both are measuring attitude rather than moral judgment. He insisted that "the proper way to assess a cognitive developmental construct is by assessing the consistency of ratings, not attending to the preferences of stage endorsement"(Rest et al., 1999, p109). With respect to Lind's argument, Rest et al., (1999) demonstrated that scores based on preference measures outperform scores based on a consistency algorithm, stating that "Lind-like stage consistency measures show poorer trends on all six validity criteria<sup>1)</sup> than the usual stage-preference indexes" (Rest et al., 1999, p109).

In a similar vein, Emler et al., (1998) conducted a study where participants were asked to systematically rate candidates for political party who endorse certain DIT items. For example, candidates who represent items at stage 4 were rated as more suitable for the Conservative party and candidates who endorse items at stage 5 were rated as more suitable for the Liberal party. Emler et al.'s argument goes along with reductionist's critique implying that there is no special moral or developmental aspect of DIT scores because verbal ability and/or political attitudes underlie these indices.

Narvaez, Gets, Thoma, & Rest (1999) conducted a study on the relationship between political/religious ideology and moral judgment. In this study, the

---

1) Six validity criteria are correlations with moral comprehension, differentiating known groups, longitudinal trends, sensitivity to intervention, correlations with political attitudes and choices, and correlations with behavior (Rest et al., 1999).

dependent variable includes Attitudes Towards Human Rights Inventory (ATHRI), which measures the subject's opinions on controversial public policy issues (e.g., abortion, prayer in state-supported schools, rights of homosexuals, women's roles, rights of the accused, etc). The independent variables are political ideology, religious ideology and moral judgment. The results of their study showed that political/religious and moral judgment variables can not be reduced to one common variable of liberalism/conservatism. Rest et al., (1999) mentioned that based on the results of the Narvaez et al.'s study, although various political and religious ideology variables are significantly correlated with moral judgment, they each contain independent information and do not reduce to the common variable of liberalism/conservatism.

The interesting point is that people interpret the same thing in different ways when they see the same phenomenon. For example, how can we interpret high correlations of the DIT with political attitudes? When we have .60s correlation coefficient about the relationship between moral judgment development and political judgment, Emler et al., (1983, 1998) insisted, "DIT is the same as political attitude." On the other hand, Rest et al., (1999) interpret that DIT's p score is especially sensitive to the shift from maintaining norms to the post-conventional schema 'authority' (shifting from unquestioning support to holding authorities accountable).

The assumption of the current study is that students with more mature levels of moral judgment will be more future oriented in their emotional responses, less concerned with personal privacy and comforts, and more concerned with actions that support nations to move forward to bring terrorists to justice. For example, it is

expected that moral judgment development is related to these choices with the individuals with higher p scores going more for option 2. Students at stage 4s might go for 1. Students at low stages, I assume, will go for 3. The assumption of each option (statements) will be described in the measures section.

The purpose of the current study is to examine the students' emotional/ political reactions to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the relationship among moral judgment development, attitude toward human rights and political reactions to terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the U.S.A.

The following are specific research questions of interest.

1. What are emotional/ political reactions on terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001?

1-1. What are the most and least students' emotional responses on terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001?

1-2. What are the most and least students' political responses on terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001?

2. What is the relationship among moral judgment development, attitude toward human rights and political reactions to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001?

### **III. Method**

#### **A. Participants**

The participants of the study were forty six freshman dentistry students (Males: 18, Female: 28). Participants in the study were recruited from the School of Dentistry, at one university in midwestern USA.

#### **B. Procedures**

Each year, students who enrolled in the school of dentistry are asked to complete the DIT (Defining Issues Test) for measuring their moral judgment development as part of a course assignment. In the current study, previous DIT scores for dentistry students were obtained from the school of dentistry if students agreed to participate in this study. With respect to using DIT data, consent forms were directly collected from participants. Among 80 students who took the DIT test before, 46 students agreed to participate in this study. Therefore, the responses of 46 participants were used in the data analyses.

#### **C. Measures**

The instruments used in the current study were the Defining Issues Test (DIT, Rest, 1979) and Reactions to Terrorists Scale (Thoma, Hestavold, & Crowson, 2001).

### **1. Defining Issues Test (DIT, Rest, 1979).**

The DIT included six stories, each with 12 items, for a total of 72 items. There are no stage 1 items in the DIT since the reading and understanding level is so high (about an eighth grade reading level) for the people who might respond to stage 1 (Rest 1979). With respect to six stories, three stories come from Kohlberg's work (the Heinz, Prisoner, and Doctor dilemmas) and other three stories come from Lockwood's work (the Student, Newspaper, and Webster dilemmas). These six stories were created by extensive interview (Rest, 1979). Following each story, students are asked to decide an appropriate solution to the dilemma and then to rate 12 issues according to the decision. And then students are asked to rank the four most important issues (Thoma, 1993). The DIT does not stage-type subjects. Instead, the primary index of moral judgment development is the P score. This score summarizes the ranking data and is defined as the weighted sum of the ranked principled issues (Kohlberg moral judgment stages 5 and 6; Thoma, 1993).

### **2. Reactions to Terrorists Scale (Thoma, Hestavold, & Crowson, 2001)**

The scale, developed by Steve Thoma at the University of Alabama, takes about five minutes to complete. The scale is comprised of three parts including emotional reactions, action choices, and human rights. Part I is designed to assess emotional reactions to the tragedy and the perceived source of that reaction. Students were asked to respond on one of 4 options:

angry, confused, sad, and worried. The example of the items is "Which label is MOST like your feelings?" Participants were asked to circle one possible label among angry, confused, sad, and worried.

Part II of this scale is about action choice. It is related to the participant's interpretation of what we should do as a response to the terrorist attack. Students were asked to read each statement and then to rate their response a 5-point Likert scale (i.e., very similar to very dissimilar). Following this decision, participants were asked to rate the most similar statement and the least statement to their own positions. These statements were derived from American reactions and represent three perspectives that seemed to be main issues debated soon after the tragic events.

The first statement (we should use a court of law) addresses the issues of justice as only mediated through a court of law, and notices that we can use the support of nations around the world to move forward to bring terrorists to judgment. The second statement (we should not make hasty decisions) addresses the fact that we need to make sure that we consider not making a hasty decision that starts an endless cycle of terror. It also highlights that if we kill innocent people then we will fall to the level of the terrorists. The third statement (we must fight back) is based on what many have said can be captured by the phrase, "enough is enough." These individuals highlight the fact that sometimes in history, the forces against the US have been so evil and operating out of so different an ethic that reason and law cannot help us and we must fight back. These people raise the issue of Hitler as the best example when fighting is necessary. Original full statements of three action choices

are described in the APPENDIX.

Part III of this scale deals with civil human rights and what the participant sees is necessary on the short term (7 items) and over the long term (6 items). Participants were asked to read each statement and then rate themselves on a 4-point Likert scale (strong agree (1) to strong disagree (4)). The items of this part consisted of modified ATHRI focusing on what the government or country should do in order to protect US citizen or US from terrorists. Originally, Attitudes Towards Human Rights Inventory (ATHRI), devised by Getz (1985), asked people's positions on abortion, free speech, and the like using a 5 point Likert scale (Rest et al., 1999). In the current study, instead of 5 point Likert scales, a 4 point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) was used to clarify the degree of their agreement and disagreement for each items. For the analysis, 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were combined as a position of agreement while 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' were combined as a position of disagreement. One of the items (#2) in section 1 and two items in section 2 (#3 and #5) should be reversed scored.

The example of human rights items in terms of the short term is "Despite the possible violation of American citizens' right to privacy, the unrestricted search for information leading to the capture of those involved in the attack is a higher priority." The example of human rights items in terms of the long term is "We no longer have the luxury of debating every issue in our country and must now trust and support our leaders to do what is right."

## **D. Analysis**

Descriptive statistics for emotional/ political responses were addressed first, and then the Pearson chi-square test was conducted to examine whether or not there is gender difference of emotional/ political responses regarding the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. In order to examine the relationship among moral judgment development, political responses, and attitude toward human right, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and correlational analysis were conducted. SPSS for windows version 11.5 was used for the statistical analysis.

## **IV. Results**

In this section, each research question is restated and accompanied by the results associated with these research questions.

### **A. Emotional Reactions/ Political Action Choices**

#### **1. Emotional reaction to terrorists: What are the most and least students' emotional responses on terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001?**

With respect to emotional responses to terrorist attacks, 'angry' and 'sad' appear at the same frequency (respectively, 17 (37.8%), 17 (37.8%)). The least emotional response is 'confused' (27 (60%)) (See Table 1).

Table 1. Emotional Responses to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001

Variables	Frequencies	%
Which label is MOST like your feelings?		
Angry	17	37.8
Confused	4	8.9
Sad	17	37.8
Worried	7	15.6
Which label is LEAST like your feelings?		
Angry	3	20.0
Confused	27	60.0
Sad	1	2.2
Worried	8	17.8

Pearson's chi-square test for a two-way contingency table was performed in order to examine whether or not any differences were statistically significant by gender. For males, most emotional responses are angry, followed by sad, worried, and confused. On the other hand, for females, most responses are sad, followed by angry, worried, and confused. Table 2 and Table 3 show the percentage of each emotional response to terrorist attack by gender.

From the results, there was no significant difference of the most emotional responses ( $\chi^2$  (3, N=46) = 7.321, ns; see Table 2). On the other hand, the students showed statistically significant differences in terms of the proportions of the four types of the least emotional responses ( $\chi^2$  (3, N=46) = 8.889,  $p < 0.05$ ; see Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of MOST Emotional Responses to the Terrorist Attack by Gender

Emotional Responses	Female (%)	Male (%)	$\chi^2$	df	p
Angry	25.0	61.1	7.321	3	.062
Confused	10.7	5.6			
Sad	50.0	16.7			
Worried	14.3	16.7			

Table 3. Percentage of LEAST Emotional Responses to the Terrorist Attack by Gender

Emotional Responses	Female (%)	Male (%)	$\chi^2$	df	p
Angry	32.1	0	8.889	3	.031
Confused	53.6	72.2			
Sad	3.6	0			
Worried	10.7	27.8			

For Chi-square test, cells with less than 5 are commonly required. Note that with respect to this, one should be careful to interpreting the results.

**2. Political Action choice to the terrorist attack: What are the most and least students' political responses on terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001?**

Based on Table 4, with respect to political action choices to terrorist attacks, 'we should use a court of law' is the most frequent response, followed by 'we must fight back' and then 'we should not make hasty decisions'. On the other hand, the least political action choice is 'we must fight back.'

Table 4. Political Action Choices to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001

Variables	Frequencies	%
Which statement is MOST similar to your own?		
• We should use a court of law	18	39.1
• We should not make hasty decisions	13	28.3
• We must fight back	15	32.6
Which statement is LEAST similar to your own?		
• We should use a court of law	8	17.4
• We should not make hasty decisions	16	34.8
• We must fight back	22	47.8

Pearson's chi-square test for a two-way contingency table was performed in order to examine whether or not there is any statistically significant difference by gender. As noted in Table 5 and 6, there are significant differences of political action choices to terrorists attack by gender. From the results, there was a significant difference in the most political action choices ( $\chi^2(2, N=46) = 6.084, p < 0.05$ ; see Table 5). In addition, the students showed statistically significant differences in the least political action choices ( $\chi^2(2, N=46) = 10.140, p < 0.01$ ; see Table 6).

Table 5. Percentage of **Most** Political Actions Choices to the Terrorist Attack by Gender

Attitude	Female (%)	Male (%)	$\chi^2$	df	p
We should use a court of law	44.8	27.8	6.084	2	.048
We should not make hasty decisions	34.5	16.7			
We must fight back	20.7	55.6			

Table 6. Percentage of **LEAST** Political Actions Choices to the Terrorist Attack by Gender

Attitude	Female (%)	Male (%)	$\chi^2$	df	p
we should use a court of law	20.7	16.7	10.140	2	.006
we should not make hasty decisions	17.2	61.1			
We must fight back	62.1	22.2			

For males, the most common response is 'we must fight back', followed by 'we should use a court of law', and then 'we should not make hasty decisions'. For females, the most response is 'we should use a court of law', followed by 'we should not make hasty decisions' and then 'we must fight back'.

## **B. Relationship among moral judgment development, political action choices and attitude toward to human rights**

Participants in this study obtained an average of p-score of 40.89, and this is a slightly lower score for professional students than reported in Rest (1994)'s study. Based on correlational analysis (Table 7), there is no significant relationship between moral judgment development and political action choices and human rights. There is a significant positive relationship between attitude toward human rights (short term) and action choice 2 "we should not make hasty decisions" as well as the relationship between attitude toward human right (long term) and action choice 2 "we should not make hasty decisions." On the other hand, there is a significant negative relationship between attitude toward human rights (short term) and action choice 3 "we must fight back" as well as the relationship between attitude toward human rights (long term) and action choice 3 "we must fight back."

Table 7. Intercorrelations Among Moral Judgment (P scores), Action Choice scores, and Attitude Toward to Human Rights of Short term & Long term.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Moral Judgment Development	—	0.13	0.07	-0.07	0.05	0.03
2. action choice 1: we should use a court of law		—	0.02	-0.28	0.05	0.06
3. action choice 2: we should not make hasty decisions			—	-0.55**	0.48**	0.51**
4. action choice 3: We must fight back				—	-0.42**	-0.66**
5. human rights (short term)					—	0.63**
6. human rights (long term)						—

\*\* p < .01

For the further analysis, in the current study, students' P scores were used to identify three different groups, high, medium, and low P-score group. If students' P-scores are less than 40, they are labeled as the low group and if students' P-scores are between 40 and 50, they are labeled as the medium group. When students' P-scores are greater than 50, they are labeled as the high group. This criterion was used in a previous study (e.g., Sisola, 1995). One way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether or not any differences in agreement in human rights and political action choices scores by threemoral judgment development groups (high, medium, low). There was no statistically significant result (Table 8).

Table 8. Agreeability in Human Rights and Political Action Choices Scores by Three Moral Judgment Development Groups (high, medium, low)

Moral Judgment development group	Low	Medium	High
Agreeability in Action choice 1	3.23	3.55	3.46
Agreeability in Action choice 2	2.77	3.00	3.38
Agreeability in Action choice 3	3.14	2.27	2.85
Human rights (short term)	9.33	9.27	10
Human rights (long term)	8.96	9.40	9.42

Furthermore one way ANOVA was conducted to see if there is any difference of moral judgment development and attitude toward human rights of three action choice groups.

Table 9. Mean Differences among Three Political Action Choice Groups on Moral Judgment and Attitude toward Human Rights.

Measures	Action choice 1: Action choice 2: Action choice3:			F value
	We should use a court of law	We should not make hasty decisions	We must fight back	
Moral Judgment Development (DIT score)	39.17	42.32	39.33	
Human rights (short term)	9.94 <i>b</i>	10.15 <i>b</i>	8.47 <i>a</i>	5.421**
Human rights (long term)	9.38 <i>b</i>	10.31 <i>c</i>	7.87 <i>a</i>	15.645**

Note: Means with different subscripts within a row differ (LSD comparison,  $\alpha = .01$ )

As a result, students who responded to the most action choices with statement 2 shows highest moral

judgment development compared to students in other groups (mentioned action choice 1 or action choice 3 as the most important action choices). There is no significant difference of P scores by three groups. On the other hand, there is significant difference in terms of attitude toward human rights (short term & long term) by three political action choice groups.

## **V. Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine emotional/political responses to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the relationship among moral judgment development, political action choice, and attitude towards to human right.

### **A. Emotional responses/ political reactions on terrorist attacks**

With respect to emotional responses to terrorist attacks, angry and sad appear at the same frequency (respectively, 17 (37.8%), 17 (37.8%)). In the current study, it is hypothesized that females and males may have different emotional response's patterns to a terrorist attack. The current study's results demonstrated significant difference in terms of the least emotional responses although it seemed there was no significant difference of the most emotional response. This result is consistent with previous research studies'(e.g., Oliver & Green, 2001; Hubbard, 2001) argument that females report sadness more than males while males report anger

more than females in a certain situation. With respect to political action choice to terrorist attack, males tend to consider a retaliatory response when they make political decision while females tend to consider more considerable ways in which we can overcome terrorist situation.

### **B. Relationship among moral judgment development, political action choice, and attitude toward human right**

In the current study, there is no significant relationship between moral judgment development and political action choice and agreeability in human rights. For the further analysis, three different moral judgment developmental groups (low, medium, and high) do not show difference of their political action choices, and positive attitudes toward human rights (short term & long term). It should be considered carefully why we cannot see a significant relationship between moral judgment development and political action choices and agreeability in human rights. For the future study, action choices, representing a qualitatively different level of morality, should be considered, so that we can expect a difference. Other variables which seem to affect the relationship among these variables should be also considered.

Considering Thoma's argument (2001) that high scores on ATHRI (representing human rights) should be related to moral judgment development, the result of the current study is inconsistent with Thoma's research study. On the other hand, the current study shows the evidence of the relationship between political action choices and positive attitude to human rights. In other

words, the current study proves that people who have higher scores on attitude on human rights are more likely to consider innocent people's lives when they make political decisions. In addition, people who are more considering human rights tend to disagree with action choice 3 "we must fight back."

Does moral judgment development measure the same thing as political attitude? The current study intends to examine the relationship between moral judgment development and political judgment to a real political situation. Given that there are common areas between moral judgment development and political attitude, we still need more data about how moral judgment development affects political attitude in a real situation. In the current study, students who got higher moral judgment scores were less likely to insist that "we must fight back" while students who got lower moral judgment scores were less likely to insist that "we should not make hasty decisions." However it is not a significant difference, so we need to have more data and should explore in detail this relationship.

### **C. Limitations of the study and suggestions for a future study**

There are two limitations of this study. First of all, the participants in this study were from a school of dentistry, which may result in small amounts of variance in the moral judgment development scores and actions choices. The overall school climate may have affected student's moral judgment development and political perspectives. Therefore, less clear is the study results'

generalizability to other schools. In addition, small number of sample size may interfere with generalizability. Studies including other samples are necessary in order to extend generalizability to any results in a future study.

Second, because the survey was administered to dentistry students in January 2002, their emotional responses and their political action choices could be different from what they thought right after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. Furthermore, how emotional responses affect the relationship between moral judgment development and political attitude needs to be systematically explored in future studies.

## References

- Candee, D. (1975). The moral psychology of Watergate. *Journal of Social Issues*, 31 (2), 183-192.
- Crowson, H. M. (2004). Human rights attitudes: dimensionality and psychological correlates. *Ethics & Behavior*, 14 (3), 235-253.
- Derryberry, W. P., & Thoma, S. J. (2005). Functional differences: comparing moral judgment developmental phases of consolidation and transition. *Journal of Moral Education*, 34 (1), 89-106.
- Emler, N., Palmer-Canton, E., & St. James, A. (1998). Politics, moral reasoning and the Defining Issue Test: a reply to Barnett et al. (1995). *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 37, 457-476
- Emler, N., Renwick, S., & Malone, B. (1983). The relationship between moral reasoning and political orientation, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45, 1073-1080.
- Hubbard, J. A. (2001). Emotion expression processes in children's peer interaction: the role of peer rejection, aggression, and gender. *Child Development*, 72 (5), 1426-38.
- McFarland, S., & Mathews, M. (2005). Who cares about human rights? *Political Psychology*, 26 (3), 365-385.
- Narvaez, D., Getz, I., Rest, J., & Thoma, S. J. (1999). Individual moral judgment and cultural ideologies. *Developmental Psychology*, 35, 478-488.
- Oliver, M. B., & Green, S. (2001). Development of gender differences in children's responses to animated entertainment. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 45 (1-2), 67-88.

- Rest, J. (1979). *Development in Judging Moral Issues*: University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN
- Rest, J. (1983). Morality. In P. Mussen (Series Ed.), J. Flavell & E. Markman (Vol. Eds.), *Handbook of Child Psychology, Vol. 3: Cognitive Development*, New York: Wiley.
- Rest, J (1994). Background: theory and research. In D. Narvaez, & J. Rest (Eds.), *Moral Development in the Professions: Psychology and Applied Ethics*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale NJ.
- Rest, J., Thoma, S. J. & Edwards, L. (1997). Devising and validating a measure of moral judgment: stage preference and stage consistency approaches. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89, 5-28.
- Rest, J., Narvaez, D., Bebeau, M. J., Thoma, S. J. (1999). *Postconventional Moral Thinking*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Inc. Mahwah, NJ.
- Sisola, S. W. (1995). *Principled Moral Reasoning as a Predictor of Clinical Performance in Physical Therapy*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Minnesota, MN 79-101.
- Thoma, S. J. (1993). The relationship between political preference and moral judgment development in late adolescence. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 39 (3), 359-374.
- Thoma, S. J., Barnett, D., Rest, J. & Narvaez, D. (1999). What does the DIT measure? *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 38, 103-111.
- Thoma, S.J., Hestavold, & Crowson (2001). *Reactions to Terrorists Scale*. Unpublished Manuscripts, University of Alabama.
- Thoma, S. J., Narvaez, D., Rest, J., & Derryberry, P. (1999). Does moral judgment development reduce to

political attitudes or verbal ability? *Educational Psychology Review*, 11(4), 325-342.

## **APPENDIX**

Here are some statements of people concerning the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on New York and Washington. Please read one and rate them on how close the statement is to your own position by CIRCLING the appropriate label from very dissimilar (1) to very similar (5).

1. "I believe a reasonable response to the horrible events of September 11<sup>th</sup> would be to use the support given to the US by other governments in order to gather all the available evidence against the perpetrators and put them on trial before an international court of law. A thoughtful response using the court of law is the only way to win this battle in the long run."

2. "Starting a full attack on those responsible more innocent people will lose their lives no matter how careful we are. We will, therefore, create people who are willing to engage in revenge attacks against us in the future. Also if we do assassinate Bin Laden or other such people, we could create new martyrs and even more support for his cause. Bin Laden himself has said that he wishes to die a martyr, if we carry on with this action aren't we just going to be helping him to fulfill his wishes?"

3. "Fight violence with violence! I am sick of hearing these romantic views on how we must mentally rise above these terrorists in order to defeat them. No extradition, no trial, this has to be the work of more

than one person, more than one group. These terrorists most likely had significant help from other countries. Countries and groups who protect these people must go down with them. A visual deterrent is needed-hit Afghanistan and Iraq hard if need be. We must not forget that Hitler didn't listen to reason and used our good intentions against us."