



LEHIGH  
UNIVERSITY

## *Department of Psychology*



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*In Sickness and In Filth: Children's  
Developing Disdain of Dirty People*

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3:10 PM

STEPS, Rm. 101

Purity is universally valued, and slurs designed to emphasize the dirty or disgusting nature of marginalized individuals or groups has historically served as a powerful means of dehumanization and vilification. In this talk, I will present evidence demonstrating the power of disgust to diminish moral concern. First, I will briefly review my findings that testimony about disgust can lead children to moralize harmless actions. Next, I will present new research measuring attitudes toward dirty and unhealthy individuals, finding that both implicit and explicit biases against physically unclean and unhygienic people emerge by the age of 5 and persist through adulthood. I will then discuss these results in light of my theoretical work proposing that disgust evolved not merely as a mechanism for avoiding physical toxins and contaminants, but also as a parochial emotion adapted for social exclusion.

*All are welcome*

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