

# Morality in Lyrics Codebook

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## Background info

We have analyzed these lyrics already by counting the number of words that fall into various categories. The idea is that if the lyrics include words that relate to a topic, the lyrics are probably about that topic. The problem is that the meaning of a word depends on the way it is used; we can't know if it is used in the way we think by just counting.

Your job will be to look at these keywords in the context they appear in the lyrics and decide whether they are being used in the way we assume.

Our more specific goal in analyzing these lyrics is to see what kind of moral viewpoints they express. We have given you the details about this in another document, but we think there are 5 categories of moral viewpoints that might appear in the lyrics. We have 5 sets of words that we think signify each of those categories. You will be verifying that the words have something to do with the kind of morality that we think they do.

## Basic procedure

You will get a spreadsheet in which each row has a keyword and then the 15 words that occurred before and after it in the song. Sometimes, there won't be 15 words because the keyword came at the beginning or end of the song. The reason you get these words is they will (hopefully) help you to understand the meaning of the keyword.

Using what you know about the keyword with help from the surrounding context (the words before and after), you will decide whether the word seems to relate to one of the moral foundations. Not just that, but you will need to identify which moral foundation you think the word relates to. There will be many situations in which the word doesn't relate to any of the foundations and you will be able to indicate that. If the word seems to be able to relate to most or all of the foundations, and it seems very hard to distinguish which foundation, it may actually not really relate to any foundation.

Once you have identified which moral foundation the word relates to—if it relates to any of them—you will have a second judgment to make. Now that you've established the word relates to a foundation, you will indicate whether the passage endorses the foundation or rejects it.

## Step 1: Choosing a category

When you see the keyword, the first step is determining which, if any, of the foundations it relates to. Sometimes you will be able to guess what the computer thought the word meant, but don't base your decision on that—after all, if we thought the computer was always right we wouldn't need to have humans look at it! Your goal is to determine, using the surrounding lyrics (as minimally as possible, in many cases focusing only on the line or phrase in which the word is contained), whether the literal meaning of the word in the context relates to a foundation.

You will enter one of the following in the “foundation” column for each keyword:

0 = Not relevant to any foundation

1 = Care/harm

2 = Fairness/cheating

3 = Loyalty/betrayal

4 = Authority/subversion

5 = Purity/degradation

For example, the computer thinks “wound” relates to Care/harm. That seems reasonable, since being wounded means the same thing as being harmed. But if the lyric is “I’m all wound up,” that has nothing to do with being hurt. For another example, the word “fair” logically appears in the set of words that the computer believes reflects Fairness/cheating. But if the lyrics use the word “fair” to say that somebody looks pretty, that isn’t related to Fairness/cheating. In both cases, the correct categorization is that it relates to no foundation.

There are also keywords included that the computer doesn’t think relate to any foundation; that is, they don’t appear in any of the sets of words that are supposed to relate to the foundations. Part of the process of checking how well the computer does is not just checking whether it’s right or wrong when it assigns words to a foundation, but also whether it’s right when it doesn’t put words in a category. With that in mind, you should expect some of the words to not relate to the foundations at all sometimes.

As a general rule, try to focus only on the meaning of the word. And, while using some of your contextual knowledge is useful, don’t go too far in making inferences about meaning that aren’t explicitly there. You will usually need some of the surrounding lyrics to determine the meaning of the word, but sometimes you might accurately realize that the entire passage might seem to be about a moral foundation but the keyword isn’t. To give an exaggerated example, if the keyword is “the,” it doesn’t matter what the surrounding words are because the meaning of the word “the” never relates to the foundations. Another way to think about it is for this initial step, the surrounding lyrics should help you to understand the meaning of the keyword—otherwise, don’t get caught up in what those other lyrics seem to mean.

Some useful rules to keep in mind as you do your coding:

- If it seems like a word could apply to most or all the foundations, it probably doesn’t really communicate any of them (so choose zero).

- Words like peace(ful) and (dis)respect can relate to different moral foundations in different contexts. Think back to what these words mean within the (close) context of the word in the lyric.
- When you can read a word in multiple ways (including but not limited to slang, such as “sick” or “wicked” or “hit”) and the context is really ambiguous as to whether the explicit or slang meaning is being used (e.g., “I’m going to hit that” or “he’s sick”), favor the explicit or standard meaning over the slang. If it’s clear from the context the slang or an alternative meaning is being used, of course consider that definition.
- Sometimes the keyword will appear as part of a proper noun. Often when that happens, it probably means the word is not being used in a moral way. With that said, do consider whether it does despite being part of a proper noun. A lyric may reference the songtitle “Cleaning Out My Closet,” but in this case the word “cleaning” still evokes purity/degradation.
- References to mothers and fathers in particular can be tricky. As a rule, if these words are referencing those specific people, they should be treated as references to authority. The same should apply to “God” and “Jesus,” including exclamations like “God damn!” and “Jesus Christ!” One exception is “mother fucker,” which you will sometimes see written as “motherfucker” in which case it should be treated as an instance of the Purity dimension.
- The word “together” usually will be treated as Loyalty/betrayal. The main exceptions are the cases where “together” doesn’t refer to multiple people. For example, “putting the pieces back together” or “pulling myself together” are better described as not related to any particular foundation.
- The word “dirty” (and sometimes its counterpart “clean”) is sometimes used in a non-literal way (e.g., “she’s a dirty girl”). Both types of uses, though, should be categorized as Purity/degradation.
- The word “honest” and its variants (e.g., “honestly”) are almost always references to Fairness/cheating. We often say things like “honestly” almost as filler words, but it still imparts meaning in that context: It means the speaker wants you to trust them!