General Description of Project

The research in my social psychology lab examines the structure of the self-concept, specifically in relation to a person’s emotional experience and their ethical behaviors. Generally speaking, we collect data from human participants (usually college students) using a self-descriptive card sorting task as our basic measure. We then test other aspects of their behavior, either by creating online or laboratory-based activities that they can complete in about an hour, or by asking the participants to report or record how they typically behave. The basic model focuses on how a person organizes positive and negative beliefs about the self, and how that organizational structure influences their emotions and behavior. From 2012-2015, I received funding from the National Institutes of Health to apply this model to the case of ethical behavior. That series of studies demonstrated an association between a person’s self-structure and their likelihood of lying for personal gain. This semester we are involved with two specific studies. The first involves data analysis for one of the ethical behavior studies. The other involves design and implementation of a laboratory protocol that will focus on the experience of awe in response to natural beauty, the effect of that emotion on the self-concept, and the consequences for the likelihood of ethical behavior.

Description of Student Role

The undergraduate research assistant will help with design and implementation of online protocols for data collection, will code existing and new data from human subjects, and will be involved in scheduling and conducting sessions with research participants once institutional approval for the procedures are obtained. The assistant will be exposed to all phases of research in a social psychology lab, from the proposal and design phase to data collection, data processing, data analysis, and interpretation of results. The assistant will work collaboratively with the faculty member and at least one graduate student. All necessary training will be provided, but enthusiasm, positive work ethic, and cooperative demeanor are a must!