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The Relationship between Conceptions of Free Will and Meaning in Life

Sofia Softas-Nall, *Psychology & Philosophy*

Faculty Sponsor: Nancy Matchett

Current research asks the question: 'How do our conceptions of free will influence our sense of meaning in life?' (Caruso, 2014; Pereboom, 2014). Many philosophers and psychologists fear that if people cease to believe in free will they will be subject to feelings of meaninglessness (May, 1953; Strawson, 1962). Others argue that people without a belief in free will would not lack one's sense of meaning in life (Caruso, 2014). I aim to investigate this debate empirically and I hypothesize that people with stronger conceptions of free will report higher levels of meaning in life. In order to examine this relationship, data will be collected through two measurements: The Free Will Inventory (FWI) (Nadelhoffer et. all, 2014) and The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) (Steger et. all, 2006). The participant pool will be recruited from the philosophy and psychological sciences departments at the University of Northern Colorado. Data will be analyzed through analysis of variance (ANOVA). Probing people's conceptions of free will and sense of meaning in life via survey data can help us to further understand human consciousness and the structure of our world.