

Outline

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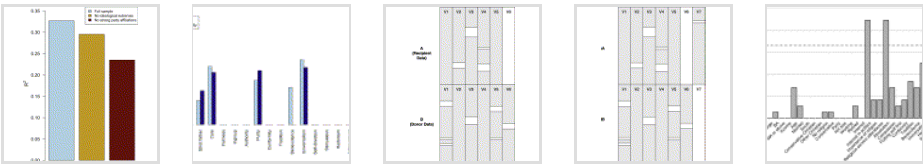
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Morality and politics: Comparing alternate theories

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Highlights

- We compare how well four theories of morality predict political orientation.
- Moral differences are better predictors of political difference than demographics.
- Three dimensions (Order, Other-focus, Self-focus) cross-cut all four theories.
- Order and Other-focus predict political orientation, as do theory-specific measures.
- Future work should move toward unifying theories and measures of moral difference.

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contribution of morality to explaining political variation. This study uses nationally representative data to compare the utility of 19 moral constructs from four research traditions – associated with the work of Hunter, Lakoff, Haidt, and Schwartz – for predicting political orientation (liberalism/conservatism). Results indicate that morality explains a third of the variation in political orientation – more than basic demographic and religious predictors – but that no one theory provides a fully adequate explanation of this phenomenon. Instead, political orientation is best predicted by selected moral constructs that are unique to each of the four traditions, and by two moral constructs that crosscut them. Future work should investigate how these moral constructs can be synthesized to create a more comprehensive theory of morality and politics.

Keywords

Morality; Politics; Political orientation; Conservatism; Liberalism; Moral foundations theory; Values; Moral absolutism; Hunter; Lakoff

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