

# Moral Foundations of Political Reasoning

## Investigating the Moral Underpinnings of Political Judgment

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# Open-ended survey response in 2012 ANES

Is there anything in particular about [Candidate] that might make you want to vote for him? What is that?

*"I think he represents a far more healthy vizsion for the country on a lot of levels, economically, environmentally, the vision he represents for the future of the country is much more in line with the country I hope to leave for my grandchildren, socially - protecting the rights of individuals, specifically the rights of women and individuals, the right to choose, picking a Supreme Court Justice and developing a tax system that is fair to everyone. A better vision than what we have right now."*

# Questions

- ▶ Do individuals rely on **moral foundations** when evaluating political parties and candidates?
- ▶ Are there systematic differences between **liberals** and **conservatives**?
- ▶ Are moral values **determinants** of political thinking, or only a **rhetorical device** that citizens learn to bolster their political views?

# Moral Foundations Theory

- ▶ Moral thinking is structured by 5 central **innate intuitions** (Haidt and Joseph, 2008):
  - ▶ Harm / Care
  - ▶ Fairness / Reciprocity
  - ▶ Ingroup / Loyalty
  - ▶ Authority / Respect
  - ▶ Purity / Sanctity
- ▶ **Liberals** and **conservatives** rely on different sets of moral foundations (e.g Graham, Haidt and Nosek, 2009; Haidt and Graham, 2007)

# Hypotheses

1. **Liberals** are more likely to emphasize moral foundations of **harm/care** and **fairness/reciprocity** than conservatives when evaluating political parties and candidates. On the other hand, **conservatives** are more likely to emphasize moral foundations of **ingroup/loyalty**, **authority/respect**, and **purity/sanctity** than liberals.
2. Individuals who have more experience and are more engaged in the political system (i.e. with higher **political sophistication**, high **media exposure**, frequent **political discussions**, prior **participation**) are more likely to emphasize moral foundations when evaluating political parties and candidates.

# Overview

- ▶ 2012 + 2008 American National Election Study (pre-election)
- ▶ Computer assisted face-to-face interviews (+ Internet panel)
- ▶ Major dependent variable: **open-ended questions** where respondents were asked what they **liked** and **disliked** about the parties and candidates
- ▶ Moral Foundations **dictionary** proposed by (Graham, Haidt and Nosek, 2009) to look for **signal** words.
- ▶ Model individual response patterns for each of the moral foundations

# Analyzing Open-Ended Survey Responses

Is there anything in particular about [Candidate] that might make you want to vote for him? What is that?

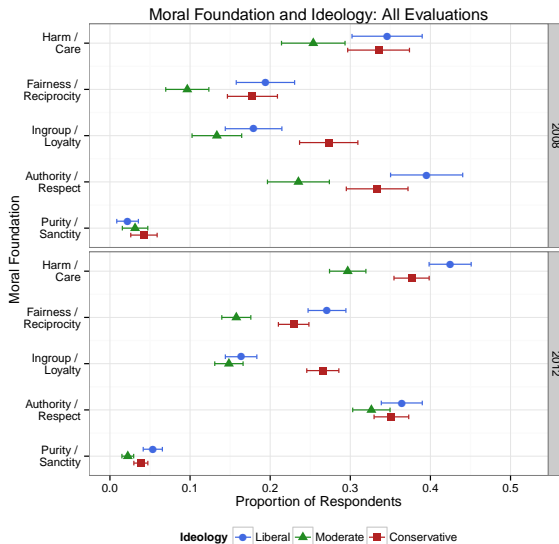
*"I think he represents a far more healthy vision for the country on a lot of levels, economically, environmentally, the vision he represents for the future of the country is much more in line with the country I hope to leave for my grandchildren, socially - **protecting** the **rights** of **individuals**, specifically the **rights** of women and **individuals**, the right to choose, picking a Supreme Court **Justice** and developing a tax system that is **fair** to everyone. A better vision than what we have right now."*

- *Moral Foundations:* **Harm**, **Fairness**, **Ingroup**

# Descriptive Results

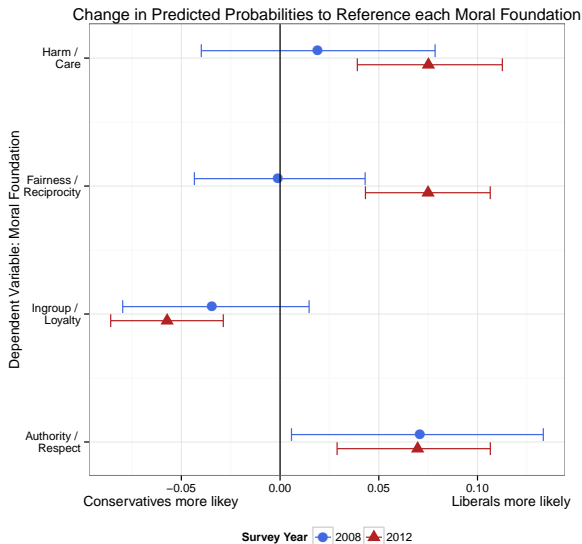


# Descriptive Results



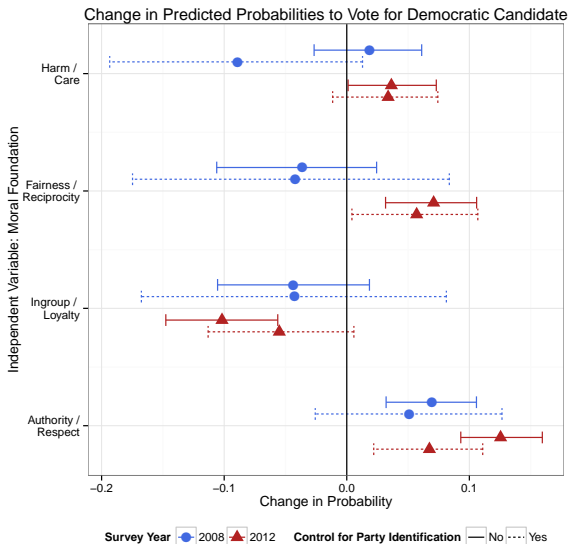
# Predicting References to Moral Foundations

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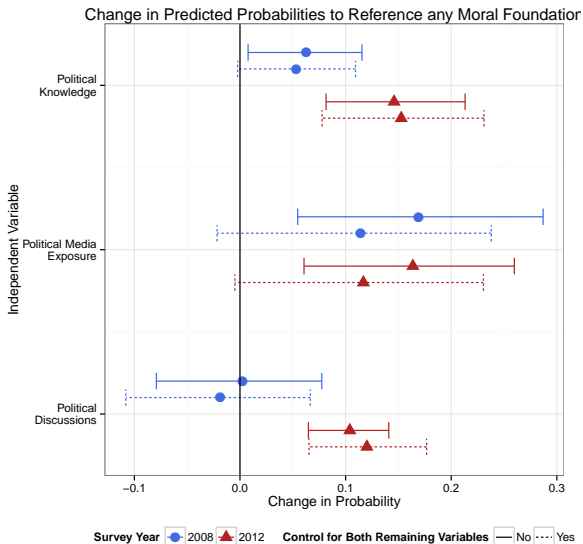
# Predicting Vote Choice using Moral Foundations

# Predicting Vote Choice using Moral Foundations



# Moral Reasoning as a Political Learning Process

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# Conclusion

- ▶ Liberals and conservatives differ in their emphasis on moral dimensions
- ▶ Differences not always consistent with Moral Foundations Theory (measurement error etc.)
- ▶ Political learning process
- ▶ Further developments:
  - ▶ Experimental designs
  - ▶ Revise dictionary
  - ▶ Differentiate between rejection and approval to moral foundations
  - ▶ Differentiate between in-party / out-party, candidate vs. party, etc.
  - ▶ Structural topic models (Roberts et al., 2014)



# Open-ended survey response in 2008/2012 ANES

Is there anything in particular about [Candidate] that might make you want to vote against him? What is that?

*"nostradaumas, supposedly they say he is the anti christ."*

Is there anything in particular about [Party] that might make you want to vote against him? What is that?

*"The party is run by Satan - it's filled with liars, cheaters, murderers, the sexually immoral, etc. Should you reject God in life, I am sure you'll be joined alongside in hell by most Democrats, with all of you fighting to be lord of that domain also."*

# Moral Foundations Dictionary (c.f. Graham, Haidt and Nosek, 2009)

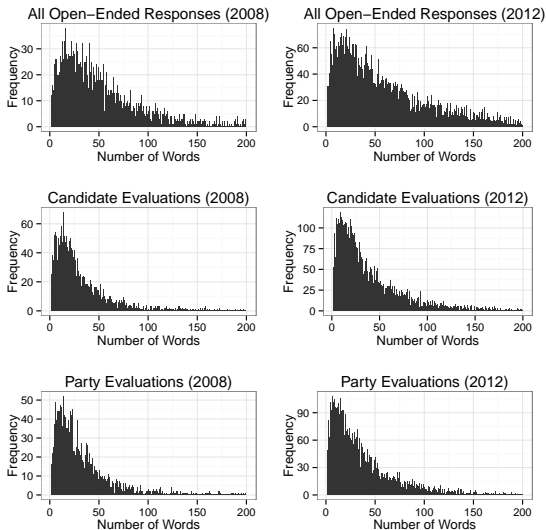
- ▶ **Harm:** safe\*, peace\*, compassion\*, empath\*, sympath\*, care, caring, protect\*, shield, shelter, amity, secur\*, benefit\*, defen\*, guard\*, preserve, harm\*, suffer\*, war, wars, warl\*, warring, fight\*, violen\*, hurt\*, kill, kills, killer\*, killed, killing, endanger\*, cruel\*, brutal\*, abuse\*, damag\*, ruin\*, ravage, detriment\*, crush\*, attack\*, annihilate\*, destroy, stomp, abandon\*, spurn, impair, exploit, exploits, exploited, exploiting, wound\*
- ▶ **Fairness:** fair, fairly, fairness, fair\*, fairmind\*, fairplay, equal\*, justice, justness, justifi\*, reciproc\*, impartial\*, egalitar\*, rights, equity, evenness, equivalent, unbiass\*, tolerant, equable, balance\*, homologous, unprejudice\*, reasonable, constant, honest\*, unfair\*, unequal\*, bias\*, unjust\*, injust\*, bigot\*, discriminat\*, disproportion\*, inequitable, prejud\*, dishonest, unscrupulous, dissociate, preference, favoritism, segregat\*, exclusion, exclud\*
- ▶ **Ingroup:** together, nation\*, homeland\*, family, families, familial, group, loyal\*, patriot\*, communal, commune\*, communitt\*, communis\*, comrad\*, cadre, collectiv\*, joint, unison, unite\*, fellow\*, guild, solidarity, devot\*, member, cliqu\*, cohort, ally, insider, foreign\*, enem\*, betray\*, treason\*, traitor\*, treacher\*, disloyal\*, individual\*, apostasy, apostate, deserted, deserter\*, deserting, deceiv\*, jilt\*, imposter, miscreant, spy, sequester, renegade, terroris\*, immigra\*
- ▶ **Authority:** obey\*, obedienc\*, duty, law, lawful\*, legal\*, duti\*, honor\*, respect, respectful\*, respected, respects, order\*, father\*, mother, motherl\*, mothering, mothers, tradition\*, hierarch\*, authorit\*, permit, permission, status\*, rank\*, leader\*, class, bourgeoisie, caste\*, position, complian\*, command, supremacy, control, submi\*, allegian\*, serve, abide, defere\*, defer, revere\*, venerat\*, comply, defian\*, rebel\*, dissent\*, subver\*, disrespect\*, disobe\*, sediti\*, agitat\*, insubordinat\*, illegal\*, lawless\*, insurgent, mutinous, defy\*, dissident, unfaithful, alienate, defector, heretic\*, nonconformist, oppose, protest, refuse, denounce, remonstrate, riot\*, obstruct
- ▶ **Purity:** piety, pious, purity, pure\*, clean\*, steril\*, sacred\*, chast\*, holy, holiness, saint\*, wholesome\*, celiba\*, abstention, virgin, virgins, virginity, virginal, austerity, integrity, modesty, abstinen\*, abstemiousness, upright, limpid, unadulterated, maiden, virtuous, refined, intemperate, decen\*, immaculate, innocent, pristine, humble, disgust\*, deprav\*, disease\*, unclean\*, contagio\*, indecen\*, sin, sinful\*, sinner\*, sins, sinned, sinning, slut\*, whore, dirt\*, impiety, impious, profan\*, gross, repuls\*, sick\*, promiscu\*, lewd\*, adulter\*, debauch\*, defile\*, tramp, prostitut\*, unchaste, wanton, profligate, filth\*, trashy, obscen\*, lax, taint\*, stain\*, tarnish\*, debase\*, desecrat\*, wicked\*, blemish, exploitat\*, pervert, wretched\*

# Missing Open-ended Responses

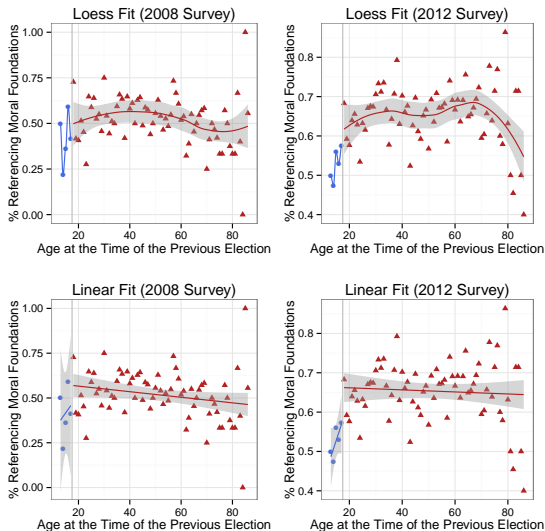
	N	Percent
Spanish Interview (2008)	94	4.05
Spanish Interview (2012)	228	3.86
No Responses (Overall, 2008)	158	7.09
No Responses (Overall, 2012)	392	6.89
No Responses (Candidate Evaluations, 2008)	328	14.13
No Responses (Candidate Evaluations, 2012)	761	12.87
No Responses (Party Evaluations, 2008)	584	25.15
No Responses (Party Evaluations, 2012)	1503	25.41

**Table:** Overview - Missing Open-Ended Responses

# Length of Responses



# Regression Discontinuity Design I



# Regression Discontinuity Design II

	Bandwidth	Obs.	Est.	SE	Pr( $> z $ )	CI (low)	CI (high)
LATE	2.5302	166	0.5277	0.2016	0.0088	0.1327	0.9227
Half-BW	1.2651	51	0.3135	0.1345	0.0198	0.0499	0.5771
Double-BW	5.0604	268	0.1204	0.1333	0.3666	-0.1409	0.3817

Table: Regression Discontinuity Estimates Based on Age (2008)

	Bandwidth	Obs.	Est.	SE	Pr( $> z $ )	CI (low)	CI (high)
LATE	2.9949	415	0.1310	0.1090	0.2293	0.1327	0.9227
Half-BW	1.4974	136	0.1089	0.0853	0.2019	0.0499	0.5771
Double-BW	5.9898	672	0.0701	0.0848	0.4085	-0.1409	0.3817

Table: Regression Discontinuity Estimates Based on Age (2012)

# References

- Graham, Jesse, Jonathan Haidt and Brian A. Nosek. 2009. "Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 96(5):1029–1046.
- Haidt, Jonathan and Craig Joseph. 2008. The moral mind: How five sets of innate intuitions guide the development of many culture-specific virtues, and perhaps even modules. In *The innate mind*, ed. P. Carruthers, S. Laurence and S. Stic. Vol. 3 Oxford Univ Press pp. 367–391.
- Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham. 2007. "When morality opposes justice: Conservatives have moral intuitions that liberals may not recognize." *Social Justice Research* 20(1):98–116.
- Roberts, Margaret E., Brandon M. Stewart, Dustin Tingley, Christopher Lucas, Jetson Leder-Luis, Shana Kushner Gadarian, Bethany Albertson and David G. Rand. 2014. "Structural Topic Models for Open-Ended Survey Responses." *American Journal of Political Science* forthcoming:n/a.  
**URL:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12103>