

Moral Foundations of Political Reasoning

Investigating the Moral Underpinnings of Political Judgment

Patrick Kraft

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Stony Brook University

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 et al., 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. The ideological differences in references to moral foundations are **moderated by individual political interest**. Higher political interest increases the gap between liberals and conservatives in their relative emphasis on the moral foundations described in hypothesis 1.

Overview

- ▶ 2012 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 et al., 2009) to look for **signal** words.
- ▶ Model individual response patterns for each of the moral foundations

Analyzing Open-Ended Survey Responses

- ▶ **Example:** *Is there anything in particular about Barack Obama that might make you want to vote for him? What is that?*
- ▶ **Original statement:**
“He has qulification to be a leader, things he has accomplished he is qualified to be a leader, for women rights doing something for middle class”
- ▶ **Processed statement:**
“he has qualification to be a **leader** things he has accomplished he is qualified to be a **leader** for women **rights** doing something for middle **class**”
- ▶ **Moral Foundations:** **Authority**, **Fairness**

Descriptive Results I

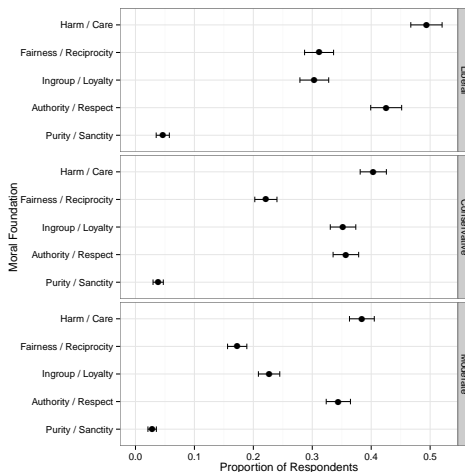


Figure : Moral Foundations and Ideology (All Statements)

Descriptive Results II

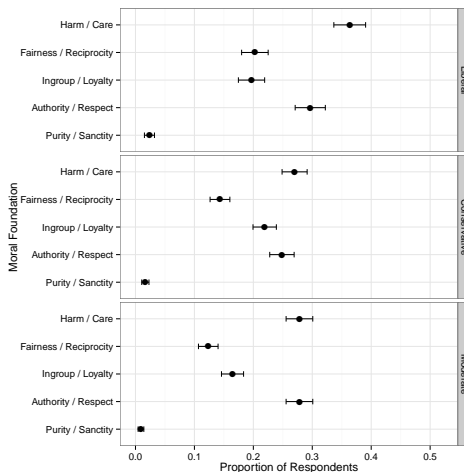


Figure : Moral Foundations and Ideology (Party Evaluations)

Descriptive Results III

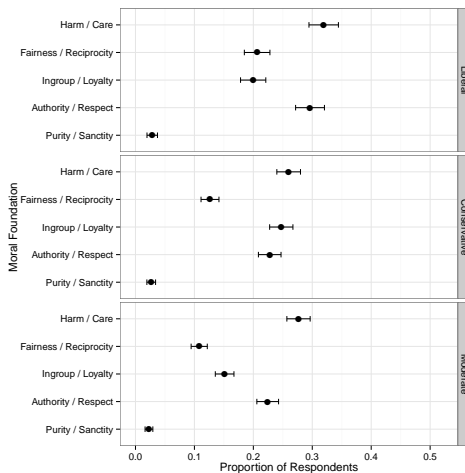


Figure : Moral Foundations and Ideology (Candidate Evaluations)

Logit Model I - Model Specification

$$P(\text{MF}) = \text{logit}^{-1}(\beta_0 + \beta_1 C + \beta_2 M + \beta_3 PI \\ + \beta_5 C * PI + \beta_6 M * PI \\ + \beta \mathbf{X})$$

- **Controls:** Church attendance, education, age, gender, race

Logit Model II - Results

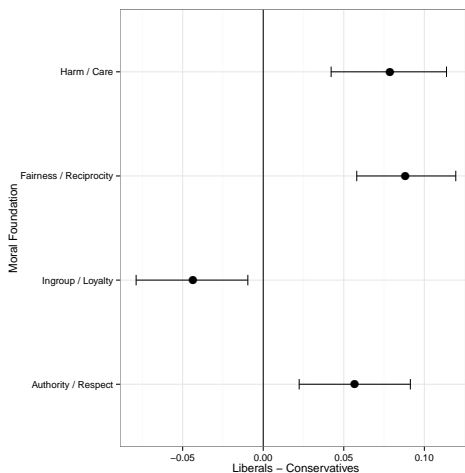


Figure : Moral Foundations and Ideology (Candidate Evaluations)

Potential Improvements and Future Analyses

- ▶ Control for answer length (!)
- ▶ Other ways to demonstrate that moral foundations are universal. Experimental designs?
- ▶ Revise dictionary
- ▶ Multi-dimensional conceptualization of ideology?
- ▶ Measure of political sophistication?
- ▶ Differentiate between rejection and approval to moral foundations?
- ▶ Differentiate between in-party / out-party, candidate vs. party, etc.
- ▶ Effects of campaign exposure, political discussion etc.
- ▶ Structural topic models (Roberts et al., 2014)

Moral Foundations Dictionary (c.f. Graham et al., 2009)

- ▶ **Harm:** safe*, peace*, compassion*, empath*, sympath*, care, caring, protect*, shield, shelter, amity, secur*, benefit*, defend*, 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, unbiased*, tolerant, equitable, 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*, communit*, 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, rever*, 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, obscene*, lax, taint*, stain*, tarnish*, debase*, desecrat*, wicked*, blemish, exploitat*, pervert, wretched*

References

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