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. [...]"*

Questions

- ▶ Do individuals rely on moral foundations when evaluating political parties and candidates (Haidt and Joseph, 2008)?
- ▶ Are there systematic differences between liberals and conservatives (Haidt and Graham, 2007; Graham, Haidt and Nosek, 2009)?
- ▶ Are moral values determinants of political thinking, or only a rhetorical device that citizens learn to bolster their political views?

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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.

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Overview

- ▶ 2012 + 2008 American National Election Study (pre-election)
- ▶ 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.
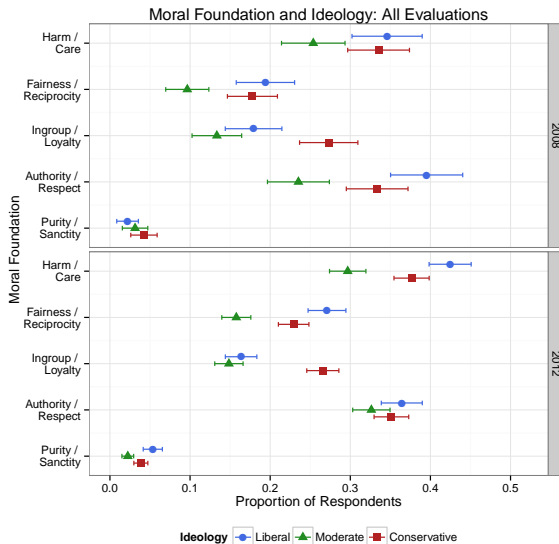- ▶ Model individual response patterns for each of the moral foundations

Analyzing Open-Ended Survey Responses

Is there anything in particular about [Candidate] that might make you want to vote for him? What is that?
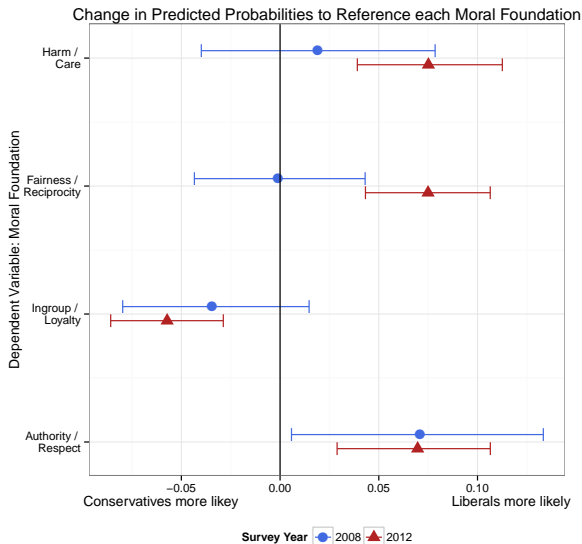
"I think he represents a far more healthy <u>vision</u> for the country on a lot of levels, economically, environmentally, the vision he represents for the future of the country is much more in line with the country I hope to leave for my grandchildren, socially - protecting the rights of individuals, 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. [...]"

▶ Moral Foundations: Harm, Fairness, Ingroup

Descriptive Results

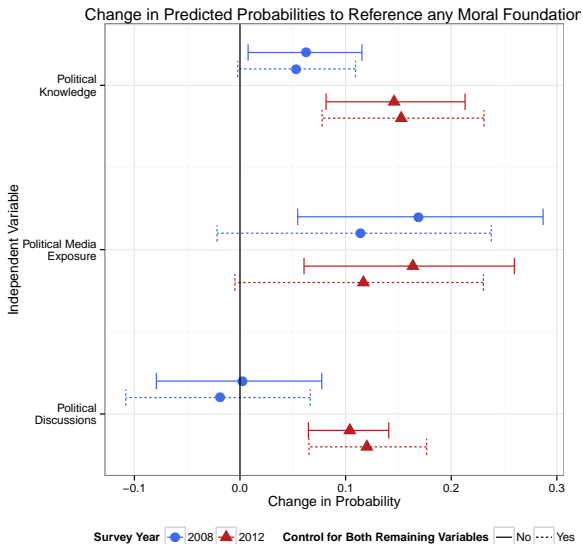Moral Foundation and Ideology: All Evaluations

Predicting References to Moral Foundations

Change in Predicted Probabilities to Reference each Moral Foundation

Moral Reasoning as a Political Learning Process

Change in Predicted Probabilities to Reference any Moral Foundation

Conclusion

▶ Open-ended survey responses provide a useful unobtrusive measure to investigate the relationship between moral considerations and political reasoning

▶ Liberals and conservatives differ in their emphasis on moral dimensions

▶ Differences not always consistent with Moral Foundations Theory (fuzzy measurement etc.)

▶ Political learning process

▶ Further developments:
  ▶ Revise dictionary
  ▶ Differentiate between rejection/approval of moral foundations, in-party/out-party, candidate vs. party, etc.
  ▶ Development over longer time period, effect of polarization
  ▶ Structural topic models (Roberts et al., 2014)
  ▶ Experimental designs

Open-ended survey response in 2012 ANES

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 [members of party], 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, unbias*, 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*, 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*, obedien*, 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*, debauche*, defile*, tramp, prostitut*, unchaste, wanton, profligate, filth*, trashy, obscen*, lax, taint*, stain*, tarnish*, debase*, desecrat*, wicked*, blemish, exploitat*, pervert, wretched*

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Missing Open-ended Responses

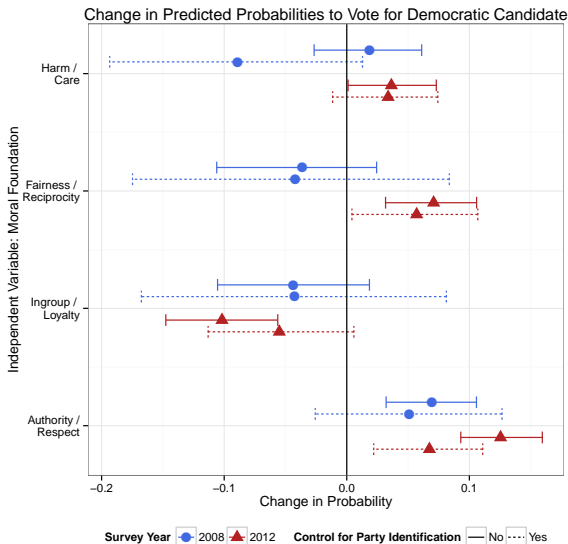|	N	Percent
Spanish Interview (2008)	94	4.05
Spanish Interview (2012)	228	3.86
No Responses (Overall, 2008)	158	7.09
No Responses (Overall, 2012)	392	6.89
No Responses (Candidate Evaluations, 2008)	328	14.13
No Responses (Candidate Evaluations, 2012)	761	12.87
No Responses (Party Evaluations, 2008)	584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

Table: Overview - Missing Open-Ended Responses

Length of Responses

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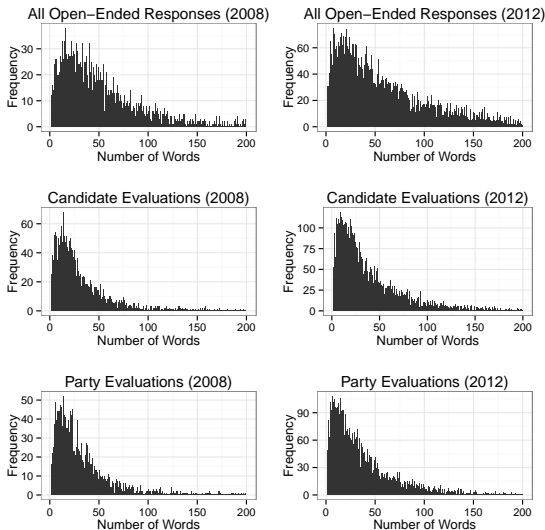
Predicting Vote Choice using Moral Foundations

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Regression Discontinuity Design I
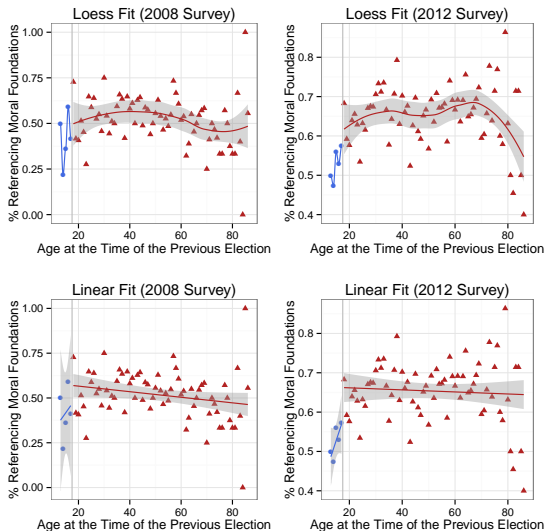
Regression Discontinuity Design II

	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.

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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*