

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?

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

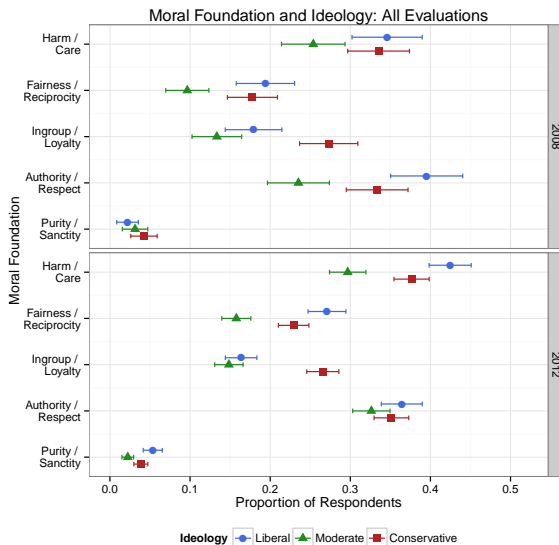
Analyzing Open-Ended Survey Responses

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

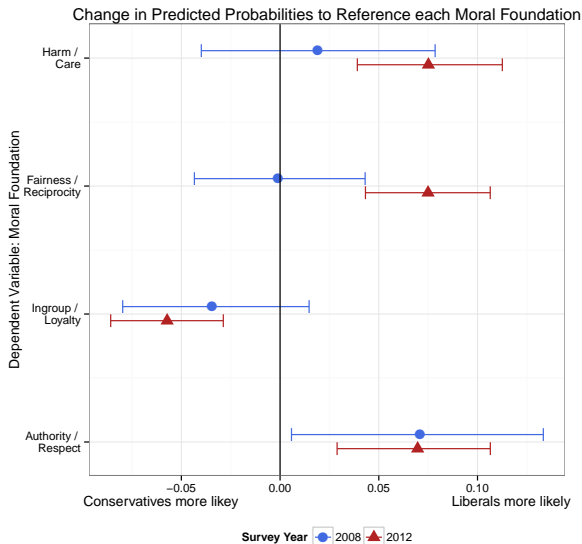
*"I think he represents a far more healthy vision for the country on a lot of levels, economically, environmentally, the vision he represents for the future of the country is much more in line with the country I hope to leave for my grandchildren, socially - **protecting** the **rights** of **individuals**, 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. [...]"*

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

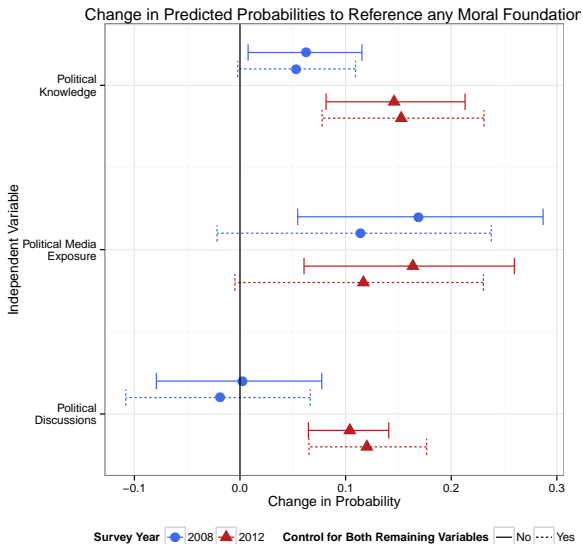
Descriptive Results



Predicting References to Moral Foundations



Moral Reasoning as a Political Learning Process



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)

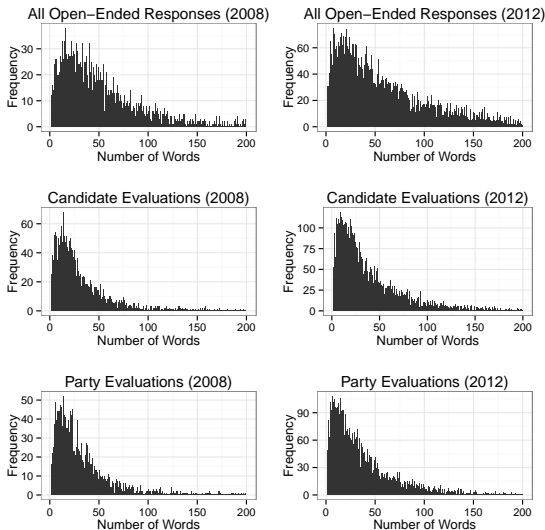
- ▶ **Harm:** safe*, peace*, compassion*, empath*, sympath*, care, caring, protect*, shield, shelter, amity, secur*, benefit*, defen*, guard*, preserve, harm*, suffer*, war, wars, warl*, warring, fight*, violen*, hurt*, kill, kills, killer*, killed, killing, endanger*, cruel*, brutal*, abuse*, damag*, 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, 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

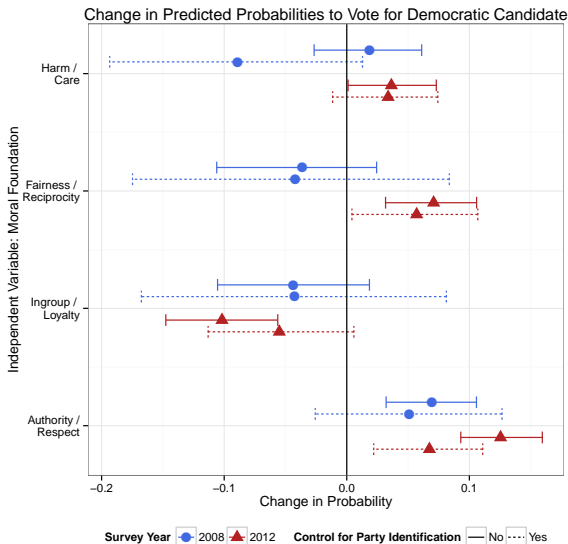
| | N | Percent |
|--------------------------------------------|------|---------|
| Spanish Interview (2008) | 94 | 4.05 |
| Spanish Interview (2012) | 228 | 3.86 |
| No Responses (Overall, 2008) | 158 | 7.09 |
| No Responses (Overall, 2012) | 392 | 6.89 |
| No Responses (Candidate Evaluations, 2008) | 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

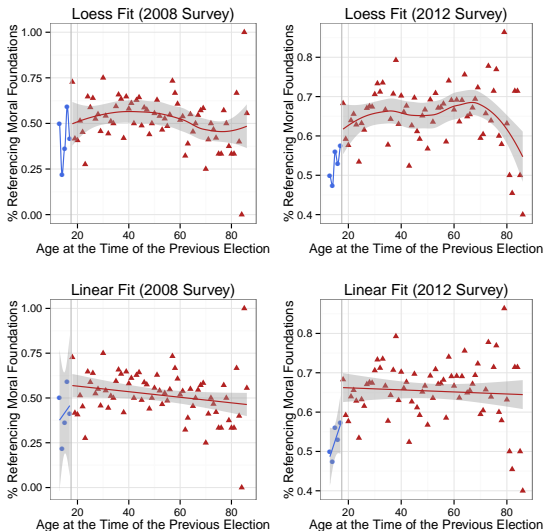
Length of Responses



Predicting Vote Choice using Moral Foundations



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.
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