



Discursive or intuitive moral differences? Liberals predict right-wing responses on Haidt's Moral Foundations Questionnaire

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Abstract

Psychological studies of morality have traditionally focused on harm/care and justice/fairness as the product of developed, epistemic reasoning processes by which people arrive at a consensual code of behavioural conduct. In contrast to this, the Social Intuitionist Model (SIM) emphasises the role of intuition and post-hoc justification to explain moral choices. Jonathan Haidt's Moral Foundations Theory is a development of the SIM which suggests that alongside the individualising moral foundations of care and justice there are three binding foundations of purity, respect for authority and loyalty to the ingroup. Haidt suggests that individuals who consider themselves to be right-wing (conservatives) value all five foundations and are therefore fully virtuous while those who consider themselves to be left-wing (liberals) place much greater value on the individualising foundations. He devised the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ) to test this, finding strong evidence to support his theory. He suggests that liberals misunderstand conservative views on social justice because they dismiss the conservative stance as immoral and unreasonable instead of recognising that conservatives, along with most societies and cultures, value the binding foundations as morally significant. To explore this idea, liberal participants completed the MFQ and then completed it again from the perspective of a far-right political candidate. The results of these two tests were analysed for significant differences using a repeated-measures MANOVA and a significant multivariate difference was found ($F(5, 71) = 89.1, P = <0.05$). It was also found that the liberal participants correctly predicted that conservatives would rate the binding foundations highly (in comparison to liberals) for moral relevance. This suggests that liberals do understand the importance of the binding foundations to conservative opinions on social justice and brings in to question the assertion of the SIM that unconscious intuition has primacy in determining moral perspectives.

KEY WORDS:	MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY	JONATHAN HAITD	MORAL REASONING	POLITICAL ORIENTATION	SOCIAL INTUITIONIST MODEL
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Introduction

Psychological and philosophical studies of morality have traditionally focused on the reasoning processes by which individuals arrive at a consensual code of behavioural conduct that they consider to be proper or correct. The reasoning that underlies this code of conduct has been termed 'moralisation' (Pinker, 2008) and is comprised of normative beliefs about how everyone should behave. Universal beliefs about moral behaviour are usually considered to be informed by considerations of justice (Kohlberg, 1973) and care or fairness (Gilligan, 1982) and there is considerable evidence for the existence of this universal understanding. The moral reasoning which underpins these convictions has often been claimed to be a consequence of cognitive development, the stages of which were famously identified by Kohlberg expanding on Piaget's two stage process theory of moral maturation. In Kohlberg's six stage theory, divided into three levels, individuals progress from conventional reasoning about how to behave (focused primarily on conformity and appreciation of authority or maintaining social order) to post-conventional reasoning (including the realisation of a social contract which recognises individual rights and universal principles that take precedence over laws and rules). Moral maturity, in this model, is therefore a form of social intelligence in which an individual's ability to relate in a mutually satisfactory and respectful way is dependent upon the ability to empathise with the individual wishes and needs of other members of society and recognise that individual rights should inform the laws and rules established to maintain order and enforce civic stability. This argument has been criticised as displaying cultural bias because the assumption that valuing individual rights displays advanced moral reasoning could be seen as implicitly supporting an ideology favourable to Western liberal philosophy as opposed to other more collectivist cultures (Buck-Morss, 1975). For example, studies dealing with the accepted ideological left-right (liberal-conservative) political divide in contemporary society tend to highlight and reinforce the relative discrepancy in moral reasoning between individuals who adhere to these culturally polar positions, primarily because those of left wing orientation tend to value individual civil rights (social contract) while those of right wing orientation value tradition and community (conformity).

As a result of this it has been argued that those who lean towards the left on the political spectrum do so because they reason at a post-conventional level whilst those who are more right wing in their views are more likely to reason at a conventional level (Emler, Renwick & Malone, 1983). Therefore, the universal considerations of individual justice and care are considered to have been abandoned rendering the right wing stance as immoral. The reasons often cited for this moral difference are the influences of social and cultural factors such as religious beliefs, language and expectations or shared perceptions which inform moral reasoning especially on matters of social, rather than individual, justice (Jaafar, Kolodinsky, McCarthy & Schroder, 2004) Furthermore, a study by Emler and Stace (1999) found that the moral 'stages' associated with contrasting political positions are in fact contrasting politico-moral ideologies and that people choose the form of moral reasoning which best expresses their own political identity. This further supports the notion that social and cultural factors play a major role in the moral reasoning differences between left and right wing adherents. There is however contemporary opposition to this model of moral reasoning in the form of Jonathan Haidt's moral

intuitionist theory in which social and cultural influences are also integral but in a more instinctive and less ideological way (2001). He emphasises the cultural bias underpinning the the Kohlbergian model of moral development as being too narrow and he attempts to correct and expand on this by introducing the concept of individualising and binding universal moral foundations as the intuitive roots of political attitudes and behaviours.

Haidt notes how Piaget's cognitive-developmental approach was a direct response to sociologist Emile Durkheim's argument that the central question regarding moral development is how children develop respect for rules (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010). But whereas Piaget saw this phase of respect for authority as a temporary phase in the development of a more mature understanding, Durkheim saw this as a functional and necessary human trait that assists in ensuring society has a cohesive structure within which roles and expectations are clearly defined. Haidt argues that this aspect of morality (respect for authority) is a natural product of evolution and uses multi-level selection theory to support the notion of respect being important for groups to function and survive. Most importantly, this respect is not a consequence of reason but instinct and it is universally shared. Haidt accepts the common factors of morality as being justice and care (which he labels individualising foundations) but he says that it is necessary to include respect for authority (which he labels as a binding foundation) as another universal factor which has been overlooked due to the heritage of the cognitive-development model. Additionally, Haidt has identified another two factors or binding foundations as loyalty to the group and purity or sanctity. Haidt and Joseph (2004) devised a Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ) to test the importance of these traits in moral considerations and installed it on a website through which results were collected worldwide. Internal and external validity of the model was found by providing empirical justification through comparative model fitting of confirmatory factor analyses. The authors also argued that they found convergent/discriminant validity evidence for moral concerns predicting personality features and social group attitudes not previously considered morally relevant (Graham, Iyer, Nosek, Haidt, Koleva & Ditto, 2011). It was found that there was a significant difference between those who labelled themselves as right wing (conservatives) and those who identified themselves as left wing (liberals), with conservatives regarding all foundations as important and liberals placing importance on just the individualising foundations. The questionnaire was divided into two categories with the first half examining the relevance of the foundations to an individual's morality and the second half examining the importance of moral judgements regarding issues dealing with the five foundations.

The SIM, with its five instinctive and universal foundations, is a reaction to what Haidt calls the 'great narrowing' of western moral philosophy and psychology to simplistic considerations of justice and care and it has led him to conclude that liberal considerations of right wing reasoning as immoral as mistaken and deeply flawed. He argues that right wing morality actually incorporates all five moral foundations, while left wing or liberal reasoning only incorporates the first two. Consequently, those on the right have a broader moral outlook that incorporates the binding foundations whereas liberals have a narrower understanding of morality based on the individualising foundations. Because these foundations are intuitive or instinctive, to characterise them as the product of cognitive reasoning is counter-productive in discussions of morality as the reasons given by adherents of each political orientation for their outlook is actually a post-hoc justification or rationalisation and

not a coherent developed result of a reasoning process. For Haidt, the 'strict father' model of political rule favoured by the right is explained by cultural comparisons with ancient and foreign societies in which members instinctively value loyalty and respect in order for society to function cohesively whereas the 'nurturing parent' model favoured by liberals is a product of societies in which individualism is favoured and achievable. For issues of social justice, Haidt argues that liberals simply misunderstand right wing motives because they suppress their binding instincts and therefore interpret right wing motives as selfish, unjust and immoral leading to frequent examples of liberals labelling political conservatives as immature or even unintelligent.

There is considerable support for Haidt's argument that emotions and instincts precede or give rise to cognition. One strand of evidence concerns the argument that often people cannot explain or justify their moral choice as shown by Hauser (2006) and Mikhail (2007) who demonstrated that moral rules or codes are analogous to rules of grammar that many native speakers follow instinctively without being able to articulate why and with having never been explicitly taught them. Therefore, socialisation is suggested as a prominent factor in the development of accepted rules and their subsequent justification. Further support for the primacy of intuition comes from studies dealing with the manner in which people arrive at the justification for their moral behaviour and outlook or how they search for the evidence to support the views they instinctively hold. It has been found that people often accept whatever evidence they can find to support their current outlook (confirmation bias) and only scrutinise evidence when they are criticising another's viewpoint. Mullen and Skitka (2006) found that this effect is even stronger in cases of moral judgement due to the significant emotional factors involved and they labelled this the moral mandate effect. They tested this by presenting fake newspaper accounts of criminal trials to participants who were then asked to rate whether or not they considered the trial and outcome to have been fair. The results showed that when the crime committed was particularly morally offensive to participants they would rate both the trial and outcome as unfair if the defendant was cleared, leading Mullen and Skitka to propose that the anger hypothesis is the most important factor in the moral mandate effect. Ditto, Pizarro and Tanenbaum (2009) claim, upon reviewing several studies in this area, that motivated reasoning might seem fundamental in issues of morality but that emotion or instinct is what leads to and shapes this motivation. Accordingly, Van Leeuwen and Park (2009) found that participants who scored highly on the MFQ's binding foundations scale also scored highly on the Belief in a Dangerous World (BDW) scale (Altemeyer, 1988), suggesting that the socially binding instincts are intuitive codes of tribal animals such as humans. The higher perception of social dangers that conservative participants displayed in the results was argued by Van Leeuwen and Park to indicate how the preference for binding instincts was a result of the belief that group loyalty and cohesion was important to protect against potential social threats.

Further evidence in studies dealing with the role of moral intuition in political reasoning comes from Westen's study (2007) in which he reviewed empirical literature dealing with voting behaviour and found that the ideas expressed by politicians were far less relevant than the emotional appeal they held for the voters. There is also compelling evidence from neurobiological studies in which patients who had damage to the ventro-medial prefrontal cortex were shown to lose the ability to instinctively know when actions largely considered ethically suspect should not be

undertaken, this is despite their knowing and understanding the norms of their society as shown by their scores on tests of moral reasoning (Damasio, 2006). In the light of these strands of evidence, Haidt concludes that the primacy of emotional intuition is paramount but he does suggest that there is not sufficient evidence presently to assert this with absolute confidence although he predicts such evidence will be forthcoming (Haidt, 2007). He also asserts that intuition may have primacy but it does not have dictatorship although his opponents still claim he overstates the role of instinct and emotion and that reasoning plays a much bigger role.

The central criticism of the reasoning-primacy arguments that Haidt uses is that epistemic functionalism, as favoured by Kohlberg, regards a person's accurate representation of the world as the key factor in moral development while social functionalism, as favoured by Durkheim and Haidt, regards success in the social order as the key determinant of moral reasoning and therefore what is most useful for the individual is more important than what is true so cognitive reasoning reflects this in considerations and justifications of political orientation. In criticising Haidt's theories, Bloom and Pizarro (2003) reject this understanding of the post-hoc cognitive role. Instead, they claim that emotional and intuitive judgements are actually shaped by prior reasoning and that there is considerable evidence to support the notion that, when faced with real world moral dilemmas, people actively engage in moral reasoning. In defending the rationalist theory, Bloom and Pizarro agree that many principles are intuitive but stress the role of deliberative reasoning in the formation of moral judgements. In particular they stress the importance of cognitive flexibility in the ability to take the perspective of others as a crucial factor in the determination of moral judgements. Dandoy and Goldstein (1990) conducted an empirical study which highlights the importance of perspective taking. They showed participants film of accidents in factory setting and instructed them to take either a detached perspective or to focus on the pain of those involved. The results suggest that emotional involvement in considering the plight of others can affect appraisal of a situation and the authors suggest that external forces may not always be necessary for this effect to occur but that motivation to discover the truth based on emotional empathy (epistemic functionalism) can also be a factor. Empathy can be considered a motivating factor leading to increased deliberation about initial moral judgements and Hoffman (2001) highlights the fact that empathy and moral reasoning are linked in most theories of moral development.

Another limitation of intuitionist theory can be found in studies examining the construction of contingencies so as to limit or obtain control over emotional reactions and automatic judgements. Empirical research has found positive support for this control such as the one conducted by Rudman, Ashmore & Gary (2001) in which they explored implicit and explicit racist bias and found that test scores positively covaried with factors suggestive of affective and cognitive processes. They suggest that these findings show the malleability of implicit prejudice and stereotypes which may effectively be changed through affective processes. It could be argued that these two empirically researched areas (shaping the intuitions and controlling them) pose a problem for SIM as the role of deliberation is shown to play a prominent role in moral reasoning and justification. Further to this, it has been argued that intuitionist theories are incomplete and need to incorporate the role of rationalism in order to make sense of mature moral functioning which involves self-regulation and self-reflection (Narvaez, 2010). Narvaez favours social cognitive theory which encompasses both intuitionist and rationalist arguments by emphasising the pre-

reflective reasoning stages from which rapid moral judgements are made and which allows for instinctive judgements to be reappraised (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004). Therefore, it could be argued that strong empirical and theoretical support for the role of deliberative reasoning in the formation of moral judgements cast doubt on Haidt's claim that in the 'culture war' between political liberals and conservatives intuitionism has primacy in the manner he specifies.

In a direct criticism of Haidt, Kasachkoff and Saltzstein (2004) published a philosophical and psychological critique of moral intuitionist theory in which they highlighted three key objections - the reduction of social influence to compliance which ignores the role of persuasion, the failure to separate the development of psychological characteristics from their function, and failing to consider the motivating power of reason when establishing cause and effect. In criticising the assumed compliance upon which they claim Haidt places so much emphasis, Saltzstein and Kasachkoff report their own empirical findings of what can lead to changes in moral judgements. They found that there were heteronomous and autonomous processes that could lead to such changes based on imitation and compliance (heteronomous) and reasoned deliberation (autonomous) which suggests that there are many social factors that can influence moral reasoning, not just the social functionalist factors postulated by Haidt. In addition, they take issue with what they consider to be Haidt's rejection of conscious reasoning as retroactive justification in moral considerations as they accuse him of failing to realise that access to the processes behind evaluations is not essential to providing accurate justifications for those evaluations. In response to Kasachkoff and Saltzstein criticisms, Haidt (2004) stresses that his SIM does contain provision for reasoning processes to change intuitions as social persuasion can have a causal effect on the moral intuitions of individuals. However, it could be argued that Haidt's objection simply reinforces the criticism of compliance raised in the article because the social persuasion he postulates is not one of reasoned truth but social expedience and despite his claim that we are an ultra-social species that look to others for facts and evaluations, there is still too much emphasis on non-rational acceptance to adequately contest Kasachkoff and Saltzstein's critique. This suggests that Haidt's moral foundation theory regards compliance and non-rational deliberation as key factors which, when applied to issues of morality and political orientation, raises the question of whether political liberals are restricting their intuitive moral foundations to two individualising principles or whether political conservatives are expanding their intuitive moral foundations to include the binding principles as a result of social persuasion (Wright and Baril, 2011).

Wright and Baril (2011) assigned participants to three conditions in an experiment that involved completing the MFQ online. The control group were asked to write about an imaginary visit to the zoo prior to completing the MFQ. Using white bear paradigm (Wegner, Schneider, Carter & White 1987), another group were assigned to a self-regulated depletion group and instructed to suppress any thoughts of white bears while they completed the MFQ. The third group were asked to count a series of high pitched tones while completing the MFQ thereby increasing their cognitive load. Using independent sample t-tests, results showed that participants who had rated themselves as politically conservative produced significantly different scores on the MFQ depending on whether they were in the control or experimental group whereas the participants who were political liberals showed no change. The results suggest that, rather than liberals restricting their moral foundations, conservatives

expand theirs which contradicts Haidt's theory about all five foundations being a universal phenomenon that the great narrowing in Western thought has reduced to two. Rather, the traditional rational foundations of justice and care appear to be universal and the binding foundations a product of motivated social cognition. Support for this comes from Jost's study (2007) into conservatism which argued that resistance to equality (often cited as a trait of right wing thought) was a form of social cognition motivated by the need to reduce culturally shared uncertainty and threat. Glaser, Jost, Kruglanski and Sulloway (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of 88 samples featuring 22, 818 cases and found that high dogmatism, low uncertainty tolerance and fear of threat or loss were all psychological variables that predicted conservatism, leading the authors to conclude that the resistance to change and endorsement of inequality which lie at the core of conservative thought are motivated by needs that vary situationally and dispositionally to manage uncertainty and threat. Convergent experimental support for this argument was provided by Nail, McGregor, Drinkwater, Steel and Thompson (2009) who found politically liberal college students' in-group favouritism increased after a system-injustice threat, becoming as pronounced as that of conservatives.

If the social intuitionist theory is correct, and liberals cannot understand politically conservative reasoning about matters of social justice because they are compliant with a cultural heritage that has persuaded them only the individualising foundations are relevant in matters of moral reasoning, then it can be argued they would fail to predict conservative scores on the 'relevance' binding foundations aspect of the MFQ. Conversely, if the cognitive rationalists are correct then liberals would recognise that conservatism is a form of socially motivated cognition which they reject and they will therefore accurately predict conservative scores on the 'relevance' binding foundation scales even though they may disagree with them. Therefore, the hypothesis for this study is that self-identified liberals will increase the relevance of their binding foundation scores when answering as a conservative.

Method

Design

Self-identified liberals completed the MFQ and their results were compared to the results of self-identified liberals in Haidt's current online study to ascertain that the self-identification of their political orientation was reliable. They were then asked to complete the MFQ again but from a far-right perspective. Their results on the section of the MFQ that examines the moral 'relevance' of the foundations were compared across the two conditions. Differences between the two conditions were analysed for statistical significance using a repeated-measures MANOVA. The participants' estimated conservative scores on the section of the MFQ that examines the moral 'relevance' of the foundations were then compared to the scores that actual conservatives gave on the 'relevance' sections in Haidt's 2009 study.

Participants

One hundred and fifty eight participants were recruited, many of whom were third year psychology undergraduates at Liverpool Hope University who participated in exchange for course credits. There was also participation from students on Politics and History modules and a number of participants who are currently serving as local county councillors on wards in the north west of England. These were emailed with

an invitation to participate but no incentive was offered. Ethical clearance was granted by the university's ethics committee. Four councillors declined to participate, citing Haidt's MFQ as biased and flawed with the questions being too narrow and presumptuous. Some comments received suggested that a qualitative element was necessary for answers to be considered meaningful.

Materials

The moral foundations questionnaire (Appendix 1) consists of thirty questions, divided into two equal sections. The first section consists of 'relevance' questions designed to measure how relevant participants rate the individualising and binding foundations when they decided whether something is right or wrong. The second section consists of 'judgement' questions designed to measure a participant's agreement with issues of moral judgement. There are two 'catch' questions included to ensure participants are taking the questionnaire seriously.

A ten point scale of left-right political orientation was used, with 1 being extreme left and 10 being extreme right. It has been found (Purkayastha, Schwartz & Davidov, 2011) such scales are reliable due to the consistency of the pattern of covariances between values and political orientation across liberal countries like the UK resulting in a coherent left-right dimension. Five questions that represented typical liberal attitudes (Appendix 2) were presented to participants with instructions to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed on a five point scale.

A hypothetical 'manifesto' from a British right-wing party was used which was actually composed of policy statements taken from the UK Conservative Party website and the website of the far-right British National Party. The statements chosen reflected issues of social justice from a far right-wing perspective (Appendix 3) as Haidt argued (2009) that the strongest evidence for his hypothesis comes from partisans at the extreme ends of the spectrum. This is due to the fact that those with extreme views on social justice, which liberals usually consider to be immoral, still rate themselves highly on all five moral foundations (Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009).

Procedure

All questions and surveys were conducted online via the Survey Monkey website. Of the one hundred and fifty eight participants that responded, ninety six completed both tests but six failed to answer every question or rated the 'catch' questions as highly relevant so were excluded. Participants were first asked to rate themselves on a scale of one to ten with one being extremely left-wing and ten being extremely right-wing. Purkayastha et al (2011) found that scores below five on such scales are considered to indicate a significant left-wing outlook (universalism and benevolence values). Therefore, participants who rated themselves below five were regarded as left-wing or liberal and were included in the study. Fourteen participants rated themselves as five or above on the political orientation scale so they were excluded leaving seventy six participants whose results were analysed. These participants consisted of fifty four females (71%) and twenty two males (29%). The mean age was 30.96 (SD = 15.30). Next, participants were required to rate their level of agreement or disagreement, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, on five prototypical left-wing statements dealing with issues such as universal health care and state benefits. No participant that rated themselves as left-wing either disagreed or expressed neutrality about the

statements (the only disagreements came from participants who rated themselves five or above) so this was taken to indicate the validity of their political self-identification on the ten point scale.

A repeated measures design was used with participants first asked to complete an online version of the MFQ and their answers to each question were collated into the respective foundation that each question corresponded to. Upon completing the MFQ, participants were then presented with the hypothetical 'manifesto' and they were asked to read each statement carefully. They were not informed from which parties the statements were taken. After reading this manifesto, participants were asked to complete the MFQ again but this time from the perspective of the manifesto's author. The results were again collated into the respective foundations for statistical analysis to be performed.

The independent variable in this study was the perspective from which the participant completed each set of foundation questions (their own and a right-wing perspective) and the dependent variables were the answers that the participant gave in each foundation category. The first test to be performed on the data was a simple comparison between the MFQ scores that participants gave from their own perspective and the MFQ scores that liberals have given in Haidt's ongoing internet study.

The second test involved comparing the scores that the participants gave from their own perspective with the scores they gave when estimating a conservative perspective. When analysing the variance between the scores that participants gave from their own perspective and from a right-wing perspective, only the questions that measured relevance of the foundations were used (1-16, excluding 6) and the questions about the importance of moral judgements were excluded as Study 1 in Haidt's paper which suggests that liberals misunderstand conservative reasoning (Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009) focuses on the relevance section of the MFQ, not the judgements section.

Finally, the estimated conservative scores from the participants in this study were compared to the actual 'strong' conservative scores found in Haidt's 2009 study to see if the participants correctly predicted the conservative results.

Results

Similarity between the MFQ scores of liberals sampled for this study and those in Haidt's online study

The scores recorded by participants answering the questions from their own perspective were virtually identical to the mean scores reported by Haidt on the Moral Foundations website. The means for Harm/Care and Fairness (using Haidt's syntax) were 3.8 (SD=0.75) and 3.75 (SD=0.60) respectively while Haidt's results show a mean of 3.7 for Harm/Care and 3.8 for Fairness. There was also a similar division between the means of the scores in the binding foundations and the individualising foundations as that reported on Haidt's website (www.yourmorals.org): The mean for Authority was 2.98 (SD=0.63), Ingroup 2.67 (SD=0.72) and Purity 2.73 (SD=0.73), while Haidt's means show 2.1 for Authority, 2.1 for Ingroup and 1.4 for Purity (standard deviations not available). This reveals a slight difference in that the liberal results in Haidt's study rated the binding

foundations less relevant than the individuals in this study but the importance of the binding foundations as a whole were considered less relevant than the individualising foundations in both sets of results, further confirming the self-identified political orientation as valid. Because Haidt's data is not available, no statistical analysis can be performed but the similarities and slight mean discrepancies are highlighted in Fig 1.

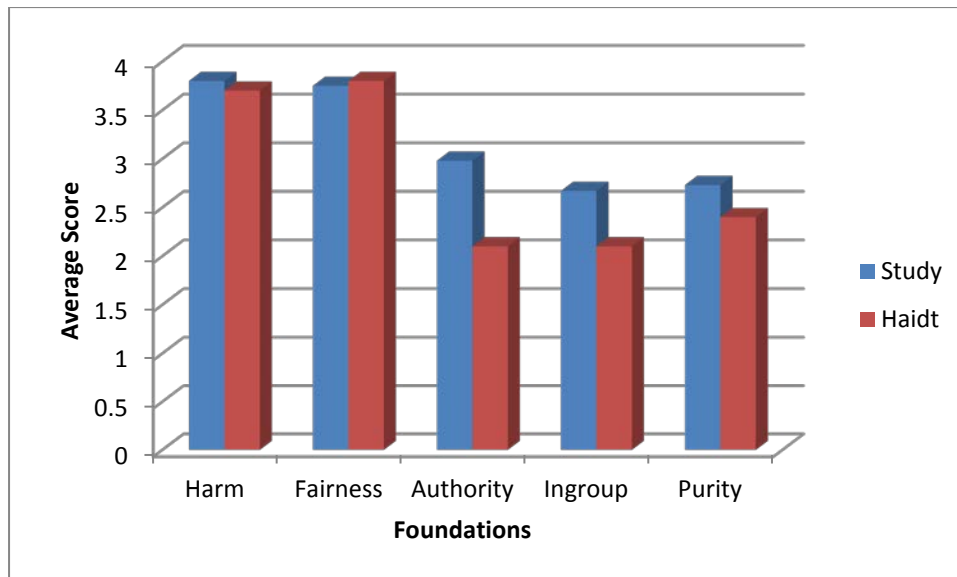


Fig 1 – A comparison between the mean scores obtained by liberals on the MFQ in Haidt's online study and the mean scores obtained by liberals in this study

Difference between participants' own scores and their conservative perspective estimation scores

To assess the differences between 'relevance' scores in the binding foundations when liberals answered from their own and a conservative perspective, the results for questions 1-16, excluding 6, were compared across the two conditions. There was a very slight difference in the means for the relevance foundations compared to the scores obtained when the full MFQ was used: Harm (Mean = 3.8, SD = 0.6), Fairness (Mean = 3.77, SD = 0.63), Authority (Mean = 2.7, SD = 0.65), Ingroup (Mean = 2.2, SD = 0.52) and Purity (Mean = 2.49, SD = 0.62). When answering from a conservative perspective the following means were found: Harm (Mean = 2.23, SD = 0.82), Fairness (Mean = 2.54, SD = 0.73), Authority (Mean = 3.87, SD = 0.90), Ingroup (Mean = 3.62, SD = 0.84) and Purity (Mean = 3.30, SD = 0.98). There was a clear difference in the scores given when answering from their own perspective and when answering from a right-wing perspective, with participants reducing the individualising scores and increasing the binding scores (Fig 2).

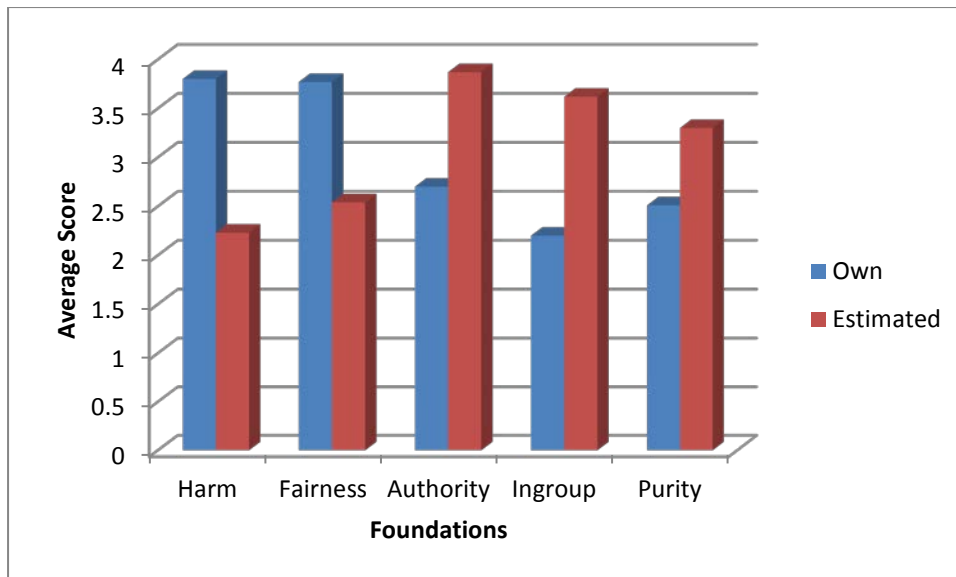


Fig 2 – Showing the difference between conditions when participants answered the ‘relevance’ section of the MFQ from their own perspective and their estimation of a right-wing perspective

Because there are several dependent variables that measure various aspects of one cohesive theme (the moral foundations), and the dependent variables were highly correlated and normally distributed within the two groups (binding and individualising foundations) it was decided to use a repeated measures MANOVA to assess the statistical significance of these results.

Multivariate normality was assumed because non-significant box plots showed that the data for the dependent variables was normally distributed in each condition of the independent variable and the sample sizes were equal indicating a lack of evidence that the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrix assumption was violated. The repeated-measures MANOVA was conducted with moral foundation scores as the dependent variables and the perspective of the participant as the independent variable. This revealed that there was a significant multivariate difference between the two conditions ($F(5, 71) = 89.1, P = <0.05$). These results suggest that completing the questionnaire from a right-wing perspective significantly changes the results but to explore the effect on each dependent variable further analysis was required.

Post-hoc univariate tests revealed significant differences across both conditions in all five foundations: Authority ($F(1, 75) = 34.85, P = <0.05$), Fairness ($F(1,75) = 156.39, P = <0.05$), Harm ($F(1,75) = 171.77, P = <0.05$), Ingroup ($F(1,75) = 57.98, P = <0.05$) and Purity ($F(1,75) = 156.39, P = <0.05$).

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation scores for answers given from the participant's own perspective and the assumed perspective along with the univariate F ratios to show the difference for each foundation.

Foundation	Own perspective Mean (SD)	Assumed perspective Mean (SD)	Effect of perspective change
Authority	3.80 (0.60)	2.23 (0.82)	(F(1,75) = 34.850, P = <0.05)
Fairness	3.77 (0.63)	2.54 (0.73)	(F(1,75) = 156.39, P = <0.05)
Harm	2.70 (0.65)	3.87 (0.90)	(F(1,75) = 171.77, P = <0.05)
Ingroup	2.20 (0.52)	3.62 (0.84)	(F(1,75) = 57.980, P = <0.05)
Purity	2.49 (0.62)	3.30 (0.98)	(F(1,75) = 156.39, P = <0.05)

These results show a clear significant difference across all five moral foundations when liberals completed the MFQ from another perspective but they do not show whether liberals correctly predicted conservative reasoning so further analysis was required.

Differences between actual conservative scores and participants' estimated conservative scores

The scores from each participant in each of the five foundations were compared across the two conditions and it was found that participants correctly estimated an increase in the 'relevance' binding foundations but incorrectly anticipated the scores of the individualising foundations as they regarded the conservative perspective as being less concerned with the individualising foundations than conservatives themselves reported in Haidt's results (Fig 3)

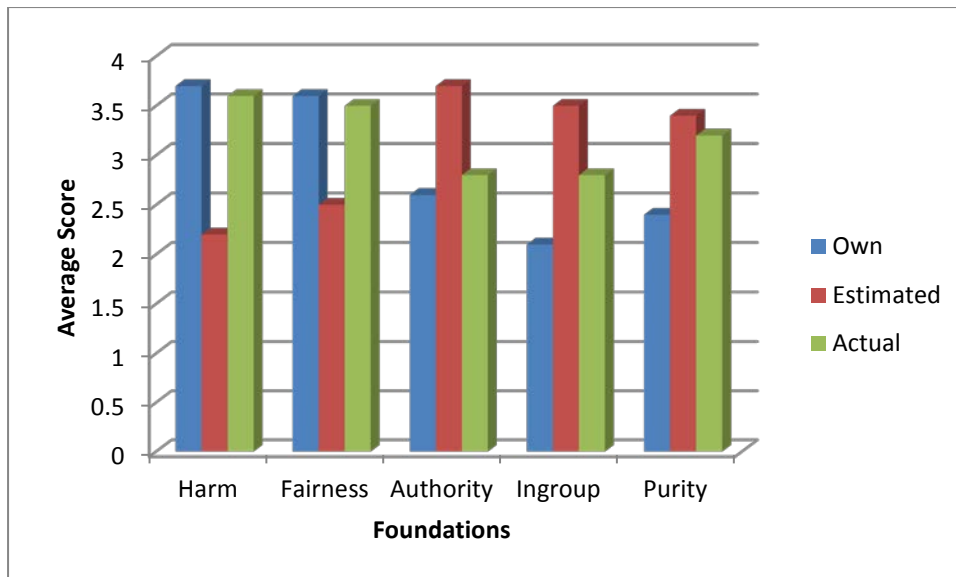


Fig 3 – The mean scores of liberals completing the ‘relevance’ section of the MFQ from a conservative perspective and their own perspective compared to the actual scores that conservatives gave in Haidt’s 2009 study

These results suggest that, rather than the participants misunderstanding the relevance of the binding conditions to conservative reasoning on matters of social justice, they correctly identified the importance of these foundations. However, they did regard the binding foundations as far more important in conservative reasoning than the individualising foundations while conservatives themselves actually regard the binding foundations as only slightly less important.

Discussion

The participants who completed the MFQ and rated themselves as below five on a ten-point political orientation scale were all found to agree with five representative left-wing political statements. Their scores on the MFQ approximately matched the liberal scores that Haidt has found on his Moral Foundations website. Therefore, it can reasonably be concluded that the participants self-identification as having a left wing political outlook was reliable.

The results from the estimation task, in which participants were asked to complete the MFQ again but from the perspective of a right-wing political candidate, supported the hypothesis as participants correctly estimated that people with a strong conservative political outlook favoured the ‘relevance’ binding foundations of loyalty to authority, loyalty to their ingroup and purity much more than the liberals did. This was shown by comparing their results on this task with actual conservative results that Haidt found in his 2009 study. It was also found that participants rated the individualising scores for conservatives less than they rated them for themselves.

The significant difference found between the two conditions could be argued to provide evidence that those with a liberal political orientation understand the reasoning of those who hold politically conservative views on matters of social justice. This would undermine Haidt’s claims that intuitive primacy strongly dictates

political orientation, as the reasoning processes required to estimate conservative views would not be possible unless liberals comprehended the full spectrum of foundations that Haidt identifies. The collectivist ideals that far right political parties adhere to would therefore require an explanation that goes beyond intuitive group selection theories and incorporates cultural, social ideologies and personal characteristics that help to shape individual orientation and opinion. The fact that liberals overestimated the relevance that conservatives place on the binding foundations could be due to the fact a far right manifesto was used in the study but the fact that the binding foundations were recognised as highly relevant suggests that liberals understand and reject the expansive interpretation of morality that Haidt proposes. The participants rated the estimated conservative scores down on the individualising foundations whereas actual conservative scores in Haidt's study were more equal across all five foundations, but these are self-reported relevance scores that were not applicable to specific situations. Therefore, the participants could have been reacting to the far right factor in this study which would be a situational variable that could affect the relevance of the binding foundations. Haidt is arguing that moral foundations are dispositional and not situational but it has been shown in various studies that threat causes liberals to think like conservatives (Nail et, 2009) and cognitive load causes conservatives to think like liberals (Wright & Baril, 2011) so situational factors arguably play a very prominent role in moral reasoning and this would apply to matters of political reasoning also.

As the participants estimated the conservative scores on harm and fairness lower than the actual conservative scores given in previous studies, it could be argued that Haidt is correct in stating that liberals simply dismiss much conservative moral reasoning as selfish or even irrational because they do not understand that, as Durkheim claimed, morality exists for social cohesion. This would support Mullen and Skitka's theory about the moral mandate effect as the participants would be negatively judging conservative motivations due to their personal feelings about the political manifesto they were presented with. However, it could conversely be argued that liberals actually correctly identify that conservatives override or suppress their core moral values of harm and care because they (conservatives) reason that those who they feel should be excluded from society or denied assistance actually deserve to be excluded or do not deserve assistance. This is a common feature of right wing thought which frequently, as Haidt correctly identifies, strengthens group cohesion by negatively stereotyping members of any outgroup that are seen as a threat to the existence of their own group or a threat to any potential advantage that their own group might enjoy in terms of power. However, as Navarez claimed in her social cognitive theory, pre-reflective reasoning stages could be important here and the results of this study suggest there is evidence that rating moral relevance has discursive elements. Furthermore, the role of ideology and the control of meaning in this process is acknowledged and while this may help shape the reasoning processes of individuals it does not override them and persuasion is needed if doctrines are to be adopted (Kasachkoff and Saltzstein, 2004)

The binding foundations could simply be facets of a more general concern for the individualising foundations as liberals did not regard the binding foundations as irrelevant, just less relevant than conservatives did. This suggests Haidt's interpretive scheme is potentially flawed as he regards someone who values all five foundations equally as a fully virtuous person, arguing that a fully enculturated person is a virtuous person (Haidt & Bjorkland, 2006) but it could be argued that

those who place less relevance on the binding foundations recognise the potential negative or dangerous consequences of being loyal to authority and loyal to the group so they may see the binding foundations as essentially immoral if valued too highly. The question is therefore how one defines morality and Haidt's conception is open to much criticism. As Harris observed (2007), Haidt offers a choice between contractual and beehive morality that is applicable throughout the animal kingdom and undoubtedly does influence how societies function but this does not necessarily mean that all morality in this sense is equally valid as the core contractual values, which Haidt terms the individualising foundations, are universally acknowledged as crucial. It could therefore be argued, especially in the light of the estimation task results obtained in this study, that equalising the five foundations is an interpretive error as the binding foundations may be a conscious refinement of the individualising foundations which are not really foundations at all but specific ideological commitments or values (Jost, 2009). Consequently, it could be argued that reasoning and not intuition is required to override these core values if immoral policies and opinions are to be justified as was shown by Van Leeuwen and Park (2009) who demonstrated that perception of social danger influenced the moral reasoning of participants. Haidt's argument is that this view is culturally biased and a result of the 'great narrowing' in Western thought so only an objective and detached appraisal can uncover the true essence of morality. However, it could be argued that rather than objectively reporting on the true nature of moral intuitions Haidt is proposing an equally culturally biased view in which objective and neutral relativism is favoured over potentially 'controversial' claims concerning moral behaviour. This is demonstrated in his rejection of Kohlberg's theory of moral development being a consequence of rational knowledge about the world in favour of Durkheim's theory concerning morality as a function of social cohesion.

The claim that liberals reason at a post-conventional level is an example of the kind of cultural bias that Haidt seeks to dispel but the results of this study support the claim by Emler (1983) and others that liberals do reason at a post-conventional level. The preference for the individualising foundations suggests that recognising the importance of individual rights as more important than formal rules implemented to ensure social functioning is indicative of post-conventional thinking whereas the reverse perspective (favouring the acceptance of loyalty to authority and the ingroup) is indicative of conventional thinking. Haidt's argument about this being a culturally biased view would only hold if liberals really did not understand conservative thinking and were therefore another side of the same coin. The results of this study suggest this is not the case so to dismiss prior theories on the grounds of cultural bias would be a mistake, especially if they are dismissed primarily to ensure the acceptance of moral relativity as an objective theory.

The fact that liberals could correctly reason as conservatives could be further evidence for the developmental understanding of moral reasoning as there may be an intellectual difference accounting for the differences. Research suggests that liberals have larger anterior cingulate cortexes than conservatives whereas conservatives have a larger amygdala (Kanai, Feilden, Firth & Rees, 2011) which the authors claim could account for the differences in political motivation between the two groups with liberals relying more on intellect and conservatives relying more on emotion. This is a very contentious claim and one that requires further study but it does present possible evidence for the reasoning differences between the two groups. The reasoning processes that underlie the ideological split between left and

right wing could also be due to social and cultural factors that help shape an individual's decision making processes and this line of argument incorporates both the intuitive and cognitive reasoning arguments, relying on a social constructionist approach to human cognition.

Social constructionists tend to regard the social world as a predominantly material realm structured by power which is transmitted through the operation of interest (Smail, 2005). Consequently, cognitions and beliefs are socially constructed and therefore determined by powerful ideological influences. Thoughts and beliefs are secondary to deeply embedded feeling states that develop in response to the power struggles that an individual experiences throughout their life (Cromby, 2006). Therefore, from this perspective, the individualising foundations that liberals value over the binding foundations are almost a conditioned response to the cultural ideology to which they are exposed. However, as cognitive processes are regarded as attempts to interpret or commentate on deeper intuitive processes (similar to Haidt's SIM) they are susceptible to reason and persuasion if interests and resources are considered to be at risk. It would follow from this line of reasoning that the relevance liberals place on the individualising foundations are a response to their socially derived feeling states concerning how society would be best structured to protect their own interests. This would suggest that both liberal and conservative views of morality are social constructs, mediated by cultural ideology, that serve a socially functional purpose, but because the liberal perspective focuses much more on the harm and fairness foundations to the exclusion of the binding foundations then it is more culturally desirable in individualistic societies. The difference between this view and the SIM is that logic and epistemic knowledge of reality concerning the use of power and the protection of interests can play a much greater role in the determination of political orientation as shown by Rudman, Ashmore and Gary (2001) who argued that individuals can shape and control their intuitions in response to environmental influences. The participants in this study who underestimated conservative scores on the individualising foundations may have recognised that the far right manifesto demonstrated an example of someone shaping and controlling their individualising intuitions in response to environmental influences.

In conclusion, the results of the estimation task challenge Haidt's assertion about liberals not understanding conservative reasoning because they do not intuitively regard the binding foundations as relevant. Liberals do appear to understand conservative reasoning as they correctly predicted conservative responses to the relevance of the binding foundations on the MFQ. Although they incorrectly reduced the relevance of the individualising foundations in conservative reasoning, this could be due to the recognition that the importance of the individualising foundations are suppressed in conservative thought when they conflict with the binding foundations, especially at the extreme end of the political spectrum. It could therefore be argued that the individualising foundations are situational rather than dispositional which the participants may have correctly identified. Additionally, Haidt's interpretive scheme and definition of morality as 'social doing' is also open to question as all participants consider the binding foundations as relevant which could mean that rather than the binding foundations being orthogonal facets of intuitive disposition, they could be extensions of the individualising foundations depending on situational factors. The cultural bias argument about the unequal focus on the individualising foundations could equally be applied to the insistence on accepting every consensual, socially functional behaviour and belief as moral because this is also arguably a culturally

influenced stance. The significant results in the estimation study support previous studies in which it was claimed that liberals reason at a post-conventional level and therefore fully understand conservative reasoning but reject it. This may also suggest that the ability to reason, or another form of general intelligence, could be a factor in the orientation divide and social intelligence, or the ability to empathise, could be a major factor in determining whether someone regards the individualising foundations as more relevant than the binding foundations. Finally, it is argued by some social constructionist researchers that both intuition and reason play an equal part in determining political orientation as protection of interests and the impress of social power greatly influence cognition but individual reasoning ability is also a factor to be considered when interests are threatened.

Further study

Future studies could incorporate a level of political involvement or interest variable as participants were not asked whether they were politically active or how interested they were in political issues and this could reveal whether awareness of political issues influences the results, especially as some of the emails received from councillors whose participation was requested indicated that a level of political involvement caused participants to view the MFQ in a very critical light. Studies could also be conducted in which conservatives predict liberal scores based on a democratic or libertarian socialist manifesto to explore further the possibility of participants underestimating the individualising scores due to what the participants would regard as dangerous social policies.

To examine whether post-conventional reasoning is more of a factor in political orientation than foundational intuition, future studies could incorporate a measure of social intelligence or ability to empathise. This may help clarify whether the individualising foundations are actually examples of stage five reasoning, as defined by Kohlberg, in which social contracts are recognised as more important than laws and rules because individual rights take precedence.

As some of the emails from potential participants indicated frustration and expressed criticism of the MFQ due to its limited scope and narrow range (one participant commented that the questions were of the 'have you stopped beating your wife' type) a qualitative study could be very useful in assessing the motivations of both left and right wing participants. Assessing the roles of intuition and reasoning could be explored through in-depth interviews with politically active participants concerning the rationale behind the political stance they hold, especially on issues of social justice as these issues are especially relevant to questions of binding and individualising foundations.

As the rationale behind this study focused on the ability of liberals to predict conservative reasoning, other tests could also be employed to explore this further. Van Leeuwen and Park (2009) used scales to test whether conservatives have a higher perception of social dangers than liberals and their results suggested that this was the case. Liberal participants could therefore be given the same questionnaires and asked to complete them from a conservative perspective to see if a pattern of results could be found that were similar to the results found in this study.

Limitations of study

Using an extreme right wing manifesto may have potentially primed participants to regard the author as authoritative and loyal to the ingroup. However, if Haidt is correct about liberals not understanding the intuitive moral foundations of conservative reasoning on matters of social justice then the priming effect should have been minimal, especially as the manifesto did not state why or offer any rationale as regards why such beliefs were held.

The lack of a conservative control group meant that no primary data was available with which to compare the participants' results which in turn meant that statistical analysis across the two groups could not be performed. Future studies with larger sample sizes could rectify this.

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