PARTISAN BIAS

GEORGE HYMAN | KIERAN HUTCHISON | MICHAEL SORENSON | JULIANNE WOO
PARTISANSHIP
IDENTIFICATION WITH A POLITICAL PARTY
THE PARTISAN BRAIN: 
IDENTITY BASED MODEL of 
POLITICAL BELIEF 

Jay J. Van Bavel1,* and Andrea Pereira1,2
ATTRACTION TO "FAKE NEWS" = HARM TO DEMOCRACY
Partisanship can alter:

- Memories
- Implicit Evaluation
- Judgment
ROLE OF IDENTITY IN POLITICAL BELIEF

PERSONAL IDEOLOGY $\approx$ POLITICAL PARTY

WELFARE:
CHOSE THE ONE THAT FAVOURED THEIR OWN IDEOLOGIES
ROLE OF IDENTITY IN POLITICAL BELIEF (cont.)

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

We define ourselves as who we are as individuals & membership in social groups

Dr. Boyle!

PARENT
PROFESSOR
NEUROSCIENTIST
ROLE OF IDENTITY IN POLITICAL BELIEF (cont.)

POLITICAL PARTIES = ALLIANCES
MORE SALIENT EMOTION = SIMILAR BEHAVIOR
Role of Identity in Political Belief (cont.)

- Belonging
- Providing a set of moral values
- Being distinct individuals
- Instinct to prefer order rather than ambiguity
COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

WHEN DIFFERENT BELIEFS ARE IN CONFLICT WITH EACH OTHER, PEOPLE GET UNCOMFORTABLE & WANT TO REDUCE THIS EXPERIENCE
DIFFERENT BELIEFS HAVE AN ASSIGNED VALUE BASED ON THE RESULTING BENEFITS & BRAIN MEASURES HOW DESIRABLE EACH OUTCOME IS
HOW POLITICAL IDENTITIES SHAPE COMPONENTS of COGNITION

ORBITAL FRONTAL CORTEX:
COMPUTING VALUE OF GOODS

DORSOLATERAL PREFRONTAL CORTEX
(REASONING)

HIPPOCAMPUS
(MEMORY)

VISUAL CORTEX
(PERCEPTION)

AMYGDALA
(IMPLICIT EVALUATION)
HOW POLITICAL IDENTITIES SHAPE COMPONENTS of COGNITION

1. PARTY AS HEURISTICs

“If my party believes it, it must be right”

2. PARTY FOR PROTECTING IDENTITY

“My political party is who I am”
HOW POLITICAL IDENTITIES SHAPE COMPONENTS of COGNITION

PARTISANSHIP AFFECTS MEMORY

HIPPOCAMPUS
(MEMORY)
HOW CAN WE REDUCE BIAS RELATED TO PARTISANSHIP?
HOW TO REDUCE PARTISANSHIP BIAS

● PROFESSIONAL TRAINING & GUIDELINES

● MAKE LITERATURE MORE GENERAL

● CORRECTING MISINFORMATION IS INEFFECTIVE
POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS are CORRELATED with BRAIN STRUCTURES in YOUNG ADULTS

RYOTA KINAI, TOM FIELDEN, COLIN FIRTH, GERAINT REES

1University College London Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, 17 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AR, UK
2BBC Radio 4, Television Centre, Wood Lane, London W12 7RJ, UK
3Wellcome Trust Centre for Neuroimaging, University College London, 12 Queen Square, London WC1N 3BG, UK
TEST:

A. AMYGDALA – fear and aggression
B. HIPPOCAMPUS – long term memories
C. HYPOTHALAMUS – hormones (emotions)
PROCEDURE

[1] VERY LIBERAL
[2] LIBERAL
[4] CONSERVATIVE
[5] VERY CONSERVATIVE

+ -MRI
- MATLAB
-[10+] COMPLICATED MATH STUFF
LIBERALS:

1. GREATER GRAY MATTER IN ANTERIOR CINGULATE CORTEX
2. CHANGE HABITS MORE

CONSERVATIVES:

1. GREATER GRAY MATTER IN RIGHT AMYGDALA
2. HIGHER SENSITIVITY TO THREATENING FACIAL EXPRESSIONS
FURTHER DISCUSSION

CONSERVATIVES: DISGUST

LIBERALS: TOLERATE UNCERTAINTY

BUT, CRITICALLY THINKING...

1. BRAIN FUNCTIONS ARE FLUID
2. 90 PEOPLE STUDIED
3. NO CAUSAL LINK FOUND
MY OPINION

CONSERVATIVE—HOLDING TO TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES AND VALUES AND CAUTIOUS ABOUT CHANGE OR INNOVATION, TYPICALLY IN RELATION TO POLITICS OR RELIGION

SO...

CONFIRMS WHAT WE KNOW
LIBERALS & CONSERVATIVES RELY on DIFFERENT SETS of MORAL FOUNDATIONS

Jesse Graham, Jonathan Haidt, and Brian A. Nosek

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
Voting and Morals

Direct personal benefit?

Ideological framework relates to moral outlook

Participants in political debates are motivated in part by moral convictions.

Moral foundations theory measures such convictions.
Moral Foundations Theory and Hypothesis

Created to describe moral differences across cultures

- Applied to moral differences across the US

Five metrics of morality

1. harm/care
2. fairness/reciprocity
3. ingroup/loyalty
4. authority/respect
5. purity/sanctity

- Liberals make decisions based primarily on the first two metrics
- Conservatives make decisions based more evenly across all five
Liberals and Conservatives; personality types?

Liberalism
People are good; should therefore be left relatively free and naturally cooperate
- newness and change

Conservatism
People are bad; need authority, institutions and traditions to live civilly together
- resistance to change
- acceptance of inequality
- familiarity and stability
- a “positional ideology”
Four Studies

1. Moral relevance assessments
2. Moral judgements
3. Unwillingness to violate the foundations for money
4. Word use in religious sermons

‘In all four studies, we found that liberals showed evidence of a morality based primarily on the individualizing foundations’… ‘whereas conservatives showed a more even distribution of values’
Study 1: Moral Relevance

Participants were asked to rate relevance of various concerns in making moral judgements

Due to “limits of introspection”, these were more “self-theories about moral judgement”

➢ ‘no item could have an obvious relationship to partisan politics’

Results

‘The moral thinking of liberals and conservatives may not be a matter of more versus less but of different opinions about what considerations are relevant to moral judgment.’ …

… ‘these effects could be a general description of moral concerns between the political left and right.’

➢ N.B. ‘they were not actual moral judgments’
Study 2: Moral Judgements

Must make moral judgements that reflect or violate their abstract principle responses made earlier

Four “targets of judgement” for each foundation

➢ One normative ideal
➢ One statement about government policy
➢ One hypothetical scenario
➢ One positive virtue

PARTICIPANTS: 2212, 62:38 FM, median age 32, USA only (due to specific political issues), Study 1 participants excluded, Lib: 1174, Mod: 538, Con: 500

![Diagram of latent variable model testing multiple predictors of moral foundation relevance assessments, Study 1. Numbers to the left of foundations indicate standardized regression estimates of the effects of political identity; positive numbers indicate higher for conservatives, negative numbers indicate higher for liberals. Parameters estimated = 90. Dv*(140) = .2018.85, p = .09. The abbreviations at the right stand for the items in the scale given in Appendix A. VO = violence; SUF = suffering; HARM = harm; DIF = differently; UNF = unfair; RIT = rights; FRN = tried; LOY = loyalty; BET = betray; DUT = duties; RES = respect; RAN = rank; DFS = disgust; UNN = unnatural; PUR = purity.](image-url)
Questions Posed

➢ **normative ideal**; “It can never be right to kill a human being” for Harm

➢ **statement about government policy**; “The government should prioritize the people of this country, even at the expense of people in other countries”

➢ **hypothetical scenario**; “As a soldier, I would always obey authority, even if I disagreed”

➢ **positive virtue**; “Chastity is an important virtue for children today”

Results

Confirmed and reinforced the results seen in the first study.
Study 3: Moral Trade-Offs

Sacred/taboo issues traded for their secular/normal equivalents

Five potential taboo violations, one for each moral foundation

➢ E.g. kick a dog in the head (Harm)
➢ Renounce your citizenship (Ingroup)
➢ Receive blood transfusion from a child molester (purity)

“prostitute” their values; violate them in exchange for money

PARTICIPANTS: 8193, 40:60 FM, median age 34; www.yourmorals.org; USA 6728, 513 Euro, 281 Canada, 183 Latin America, 488 Other; Lib 4679, Mod/Neutral 847, Con 1093, Libertarian 1034, “other” 304, “don’t know/not political” 233
Method

“Try to imagine actually doing the following things, and indicate how much money someone would have to pay you (anonymously and secretly) to be willing to do each thing. For each action, assume that nothing bad would happen to you afterwards. Also assume that you cannot use the money to make up for your action.”

➢ Amounts; “$0 (I’d do it for free), $10, $100, $1,000, $10,000, $100,000, a million dollars, and ‘never for any amount of money’.”
Results

Fairness violations were considered the most taboo overall.
Liberals required slightly more money on average to violate the Harm foundation.
Conservatives required substantially higher amounts to violate the three binding foundations.

➢ ‘It is no coincidence that John Stuart Mill is a founder of both liberalism and utilitarianism.’
STUDY 4: Moral Texts

Sermons in liberal and conservative churches:

➢ ‘typically contain parables or direct instruction on the morally right way to live’
➢ ‘delivered to and within the moral community of the congregation’
➢ ‘written by the speaker, not by speech writers’
➢ ‘more likely to address the moral concerns of a specific and cohesive moral community, rather than the concerns of a broad and heterogeneous polity’

Table 2
Contextual Validity Ratings of Foundation-Related Words in Liberal and Conservative Sermons, Study 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation</th>
<th>Validity rating</th>
<th>Effect size (d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harm</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>-.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purity</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Usages are averaged ratings of uses of 23 words in context, where 1 indicates support of foundation values, −1 indicates rejection of foundation values, and 0 indicates unclear or irrelevant to foundation values. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

Sermons: 69 Liberal (Unitarian), 34 Conservative (Southern Baptist)
Method

Denominations: Unitarian Universalist (most liberal) vs. Southern Baptist (most conservative)

Vocabulary associations;

‘counted word frequencies for all words in our LIWC dictionary and computed the liberal– conservative difference in percent usage of each word’

Raters scored each passage

• 1=Supports, -1=Opposes, 0=Neutral
Results

Liberal sermons were more overtly political

18/23 words showed significant liberal–conservative differences in the predicted direction

Suggests that these moral differences exist in the real world → not only in questionnaire-based methods of Studies 1–3.
Summary

‘Liberals and conservatives base their moral values, judgments, and arguments on different configurations of the five foundations.’
What Next?

Origins of political and moral values

• ‘Do people first identify with the political left or right and then take on the necessary moral concerns, or do the moral concerns come first, or is there reciprocal influence or even an unidentified third variable at the root of both?’

Complexity

• ‘There may well be kinds of fairness that conservatives care more about than do liberals, or kinds of purity that liberals care more about than do conservatives’
ME, MYSELF, & (I), (D), or (R)?

Partisanship and Political Cognition through the Lens of Implicit Identity

Alexander G. Theodoridis

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OVERVIEW:

➢ How do we measure party identification and bias?
➢ Is it better to use explicit surveys or IAT?
### Measuring Party Identification:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'72</th>
<th>'74</th>
<th>'76</th>
<th>'78</th>
<th>'80</th>
<th>'82</th>
<th>'84</th>
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<th>'02</th>
<th>'04</th>
<th>'08</th>
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<tr>
<td>Extremely Liberal</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Moderate, Middle of Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extremely Conservative</td>
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<td>DK, Haven't Thought</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

N: 2155  2478  2839  2284  1565  1400  2229  2170  2035  1967  2493  1783  1712  1280  849  1490  1211  2319  5870
## Measuring Party Identification:

### TABLE 1

*Items and Factor Loadings for Identification with a Psychological Group Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>IDPG-SE</th>
<th>IDPG-SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When someone criticizes (this organization), it feels like a personal insult.</td>
<td>.785</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I’m very interested in what others think about (this organization).</td>
<td>.676</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When I talk about this organization, I usually say “we” rather than “they.”</td>
<td>.545</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. This organization’s successes are my successes.</td>
<td>.643</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. When someone praises this organization, it feels like a personal compliment.</td>
<td>.663</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I act like (name of organization) person to a great extent.</td>
<td>.571</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. If a story in the media criticized the organization, I would feel embarrassed.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I don’t act like a typical (name of organization) person. (R)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I have a number of qualities typical of (name of organization) people.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The limitation associated with (name of organization) people apply to me also.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. All factor loadings had t-values greater than 2.00.*
Measuring Party Identification:

➤ Issues with 7-point scale:
  ○ Many people identify as independent who really aren’t
  ○ It is difficult to measure strength of affiliation
  ○ EXPLICIT!

➤ Issues with 10-item scale:
  ○ Measures emotional attachment to party, not alignment of beliefs
  ○ Does not measure distance from outgroup
  ○ EXPLICIT!
IAT and Party Identification:

➢ Uses “self” and “others” rather than “good” or “bad”
➢ Aiming to get people’s implicit identification with a party rather than explicit
➢ As a result, hoping to find a generalization for how “strong” each party is
RESULTS

[Graph showing data for 2008, 2011, 2013, and 2016 with mean implicit party identity D Score on the y-axis and respondent explicit party identification on the x-axis.]
RESULTS
RESULTS

**A**

Implicit Party Identity, D Score

Explicit 3-Point PID

**B**

Implicit Party Identity, D Score

Explicit 7-Point PID
RESULTS
CONCLUSION

➢ Explicit tests for party identification are not great indications of strength of party affiliation

➢ 3-point scale tests ARE accurate, and are generally the most reliable, but produce the most independents

➢ It seems that Republicans more strongly identify with their party than Democrats...