Partisan Bias

Best Group
REPUBLICAN PARTY
“Conservative” (economically liberal)
Often associated with rural, Southern US

DEMOCRAT PARTY
“Liberal” (economically progressive)
Often associated with urban, coastal US
VALUES

Democrats:
- Workers’ Rights
- Raise Minimum Wage
- Higher Taxes on Wealthy
- Clean Energy / Climate Change
- “Green New Deal”
- Anti-Discrimination
- Pro-Choice
- Invest lots in Education
- Universal Healthcare

Republicans:
- Low taxes
- “Restore American Dream”
- Second Amendment Rights
- Privatize Healthcare
- Anti Environmental Laws
- Defense Spending
- Nationalist
- Prioritize the “Family”
- Education
Share of women who identify with or lean toward Democratic Party has risen since 2015

% of registered voters who identify as...

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Continuing racial and ethnic divisions in leaned partisan identification

% of registered voters who identify as...

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Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Data for Hispanics shown only for years in which interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
DISCUSS WITH A PARTNER

Why is it relevant to discuss partisan bias within the context of the American political system?
BRAINSTORM WITH THE CLASS
What aspects of cognition and decision making might have an effect on our partisan bias?
IDENTITY
Opinion

The Partisan Brain: An Identity-Based Model of Political Belief

Jay J. Van Bavel\textsuperscript{1,*} and Andrea Pereira\textsuperscript{1,2}

Democracies assume accurate knowledge by the populace, but the human attraction to fake and untrustworthy news poses a serious problem for healthy democratic functioning. We articulate why and how identification with political parties—known as partisanship—can bias information processing in the human brain. There is extensive evidence that people engage in motivated political reasoning, but recent research suggests that partisanship can alter memory, implicit evaluation, and even perceptual judgments. We propose an identity-based model of belief for understanding the influence of partisanship on these cognitive processes. This framework helps to explain why people place party loyalty over policy, and even over truth. Finally, we discuss strategies for debiasing information processing to help to create a shared reality across partisan divides.

Highlights

Over 2 billion people use social media every day, and many use it to read and discuss politics. Social media also facilitate the spread of fake news and hyper-partisan content.

Online discussions of politicized topics, including political events and issues (e.g., same-sex marriage, climate change, gun control), resemble an echo chamber. That is, posts on these topics are shared primarily by people with similar ideological preferences.
“Supporters of Donald Trump were more likely than supporters of his political opponent (Hillary Clinton) or non-voters to mistakenly identify a photo of the inauguration of President Barack Obama in 2009 as being that of the Donald Trump inauguration in 2017.”
The Role of Identity

IDEOLOGY

“a system of beliefs and values that represents one’s worldview”

“ideological orientations have a strong genetic basis, emerge early in life, and manifest in brain structure”

BUT....

“Attitudes towards specific policies often depend on one’s political party affiliation, rather than on the actual alignment of the policy with one’s ideological beliefs”
Social Identity Theory

“people can define themselves according to who they are as individuals as well as their membership in various social groups”
What’s the Big Deal about social groups?

**BELONGING**
the pervasive drive to form and maintain lasting, positive interactions with other people.

**DISTINCTIVENESS**
the need for uniqueness and individuation

**EPISTEMIC CLOSURE**
the desire for predictability, decisiveness, preference for order and structure, and discomfort with ambiguity.

**ACCESS TO POWER AND RESOURCES**
But HEY! This isn’t like a social group.

I value accuracy way more than I value my partisan identity.

THINKING BEYOND YOUR PARTISAN BIAS

IT'S NOT THAT COMPLICATED
Cognitive Dissonance

“When different beliefs are in conflict with one another... people are motivated to reduce that experience”
And if the belief system is challenged?

CULT
World does NOT end
Reducing Cognitive Dissonance
= MORE COMMITMENT!
What does neurobiology tell us about your rational brain?
Partisan identities influence Political Cognition

This includes

- Beliefs about political figures
- Beliefs about political facts
- Support for policies
- Support for scientific issues
- Support for social issues
- Beliefs in the expertise of scientists
Identity based model of belief

Partisan identities

Belonging goals
Epistemic goals
Existential goals
Status goals
System goals
Moral goals

Value of beliefs

Values compared

Belief Selected

Belief Expressed

Outcome Observed

Accuracy goals
Two Perspectives on the Effect of Party Affiliation on Political Reasoning

1. Heuristics
2. Identity Protective Reasoning
Heuristics

“Parties are an informational shortcut that helps citizens form opinions that are consistent with their values, interests, or real world developments.”

"Citizens are motivated by a directional goal to reach a certain desired conclusion, namely forming an opinion that is consistent with their party identification, regardless of how the opinion fits with other considerations."

Identity Protective Reasoning
Personal positions on policies or issues have strong consequences for people’s social identity.
Information processing and political problem solving

Ideology, motivated reasoning, and cognitive reflection

Dan M. Kahan*

Abstract

Decision scientists have identified various plausible sources of ideological polarization over climate change, gun violence, national security, and like issues that turn on empirical evidence. This paper describes a study of three of them: the predominance of heuristic-driven information processing by members of the public; ideologically motivated reasoning; and the cognitive-style correlates of political conservatism. The study generated both observational and experimental data inconsistent with the hypothesis that political conservatism is distinctively associated with either unreflective thinking or motivated reasoning. Conservatives did no better or worse than liberals on the Cognitive Reflection Test (Frederick, 2005), an objective measure of information-processing dispositions associated with cognitive biases. In addition, the study found that ideologically motivated reasoning is not a consequence of over-reliance on heuristic or intuitive forms of reasoning generally. On the contrary, subjects who scored highest in cognitive reflection were the most likely to display ideologically motivated cognition. These findings corroborated an alternative hypothesis, which identities ideologically motivated cognition as a form of information processing that promotes individuals’ interests in forming and maintaining beliefs that signify their loyalty to important affinity groups. The paper discusses the practical significance of these findings, including the need to develop science communication strategies that shield policy-relevant facts from the influences that turn them into divisive symbols of political identity.

People with better math skills were more likely to make mistakes in math problems with political content that contradict their beliefs.

“People with the highest reasoning abilities are better able to use efficient strategies to maintain beliefs and judgments that are aligned with one’s political identity, as compared to people with lowest reasoning abilities.”

- Political Sophistication
- Scientific Literacy
- Numeracy Ability
- Cognitive Reflection
Memory

“People are more likely to incorrectly remember falsehoods that support their partisan identity”

Jorge
@JorgePo40586036
Replying to @CNNPolitics
We have a better leader this time to tackle events of this magnitude. Obama was playing golf during Katrina
11:43 AM · Aug 29, 2017 · Twitter for iPhone

WWG1WGA #MAGA
@USAPatriotSC
Replying to @Yellatk @Jwoods0 and 3 others
When Katrina hit Obama played golf, Killery was not interested. Trump went and physically helped hand out food & water. You're a fool. #MAGA
8:25 AM · Aug 29, 2017 · Twitter Web Client

Aaron Craig
@ACraig2031
Everyone can agree that @realDonaldTrump is responding to Hurricane #Harvey far better than Obama handled Hurricane Katrina. #HoustonFlood
5:55 PM · Aug 28, 2017 from Ayase-shi, Kanagawa · Twitter for iPhone
Implicit Attitude

RAPID ASSIMILATION:
AUTOMATICALLY INTEGRATING
NEW INFORMATION WITH EXISTING BELIEFS

Colin Tucker Smith
Chest University

Kate A. Ratliff
Tilburg University

Brian A. Nosek
University of Virginia

The present research demonstrates rapid assimilation—the immediate integration of new information with existing beliefs. A vignette described generous and stringent welfare plans, one proposed by Democrats and one proposed by Republicans, manipulated between-subjects. Democrat and Republican participants were influenced by policy content, but also strongly influenced by the political party of the person proposing the plan. Participants underestimated the influence of party on their evaluations. Finally, the newly formed implicit evaluations mediated the effect of party information on self-reported evaluations, both immediately (Studies 1 and 2) and after a several-day delay (Study 2). The results suggest that (a) identity automatically influences evaluation separate from message content, (b) participants did not report awareness of this influence, and (c) when new information can assimilate to pre-existing social cognitions—such as one's political identity—then implicit evaluations form rapidly and show strength, durability, and predictive validity characteristic of well-elaborated evaluations.
Perception

Lightened  Unaltered  Darkened
How Can We Reduce Biases Related to Partisanship?

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

Once upon a time, there was a faraway place where people only got the news they wanted.

This divided everyone. Even families.

I CAN’T EAT WITH HIM. HE THINKS THE SKY IS...

And we Americans met each other again.

Hey...you’re pretty normal.

And we could once again get things done.

You don’t have horns and a pitchfork.

But alas, there’s no Great Bunny and we’re all screwed.

Then one day the Great Bunny O’Wisdom descended from the sky with a shocking revelation.

Media outlets make huge profits from only catering to their viewers. This helps only them.

By Stephan Pastis

So the enlightened people gathered all the partisan TV hacks and locked them in the Great Cube O’Silence.

I LIKE TO END ON A REALISTIC NOTE. I WISHED HIM INTO EXISTENCE!
Fulfil Social Needs

“When people are hungry for belonging, they are more likely to adopt party beliefs unless they can find alternative means to satiate that goal.”
Motivate Truth Seeking

Incentives

Activating Alternate Identities
Reduce Potential Threat to Identity

Corrective information that fills gaps in knowledge may reduce threat to identity.

Displacing Misinformation about Events: An Experimental Test of Causal Corrections

Brendan Nyhan* and Jason Reifler†

Our results provide further evidence that corrections of misinformation are frequently ineffective (e.g., Nyhan and Reifler 2010, 2012; Nyhan et al. 2013). In particular, a denial failed to fully undo the damage to the fictional politician’s reputation caused by exposure to innuendo despite being backed by evidence (the letter from prosecutors). However, there is reason for optimism. By providing another explanation for the event in question (the resignation), the causal correction was able to reverse the damage from the innuendo, suggesting that it was necessary to displace the original attribution of the event to the investigation with an alternate account.
“Altogether, the evidence suggests that politically motivated cognition is indeed malleable and can be reduced with incentives and by education that fosters curiosity, accuracy, and accountability.”
Increasing Scope of Receptivity

“People resist influence from out groups to protect in groups”

Superordinate Identity

Criticisms from In Group
IMPLICIT BIAS
Article 3 - IMPLICIT BIAS

Me, Myself, and (I), (D), or (R)? Partisanship and Political Cognition through the Lens of Implicit Identity

Alexander G. Theodoridis, University of California, Merced

Novel national survey data (spanning eight years), a parsimonious definition of identity, and a new Implicit Association Test are brought together to examine “implicit party identity” for the first time. This offers the most direct evidence available that voters associate themselves with their party at a visceral level, sometimes in a more or less pronounced way than they realize or report. This pre-introspection, automatic association relates strongly to voter evaluation and interpretation of the political world. Comparisons with standard explicit measures and three key outcomes (affect, differential evaluation, and motivated processing) offer insight regarding the nature, distribution, and measurement of party identification. Explicit and implicit measures largely corroborate each other in distinguishing between Democrats, Republicans, and Independents but deviate in registering partisan intensity. “Leaners” appear closer to partisans than to pure independents, and implicit identity yields a more graduated relationship than explicit party identification with outcomes of political cognition.

Party identification (PID), perhaps the most consequential voter characteristic in American politics, has been
Implicit vs Explicit

System 1
- Effortless
- Automatic
- Fast
- Involuntary

System 2
- Effortful
- Deliberate
- Slow
- Control

IMPLICIT

EXPLICIT
Party Identification (PID) vs Intensity of Partisanship

Identification

Intensity

Hooray, he's kicked the ball, now the ball's over there. That man has it now. That's an interesting development. Maybe he'll kick the ball. He has indeed and apparently that deserves a round of applause.
“This finding offers the clearest evidence to date that an implicit identity component is a dominant feature of Party Identification”
What we know as the Implicit Association Test (IAT)
...but this time, it's a brief IAT

Self, Me, I
or
Democrat/Republican

Picture of Republican or Democrat

African American or Good
European American or Bad

Other
Can we have a volunteer (preferably, knows politics?)

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/Study

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/user/featuredtasks/polid2012/featuredtask.html
The Formula

\[ D = \frac{\text{Latency}_{\text{Self Democrat}} - \text{Latency}_{\text{Self Republican}}}{\text{SD}} \]

- **D** = D score
- **Latency** = Response latency (measured in milliseconds) for association of self with each respective party
- **SD** = Overall standard deviation of response latency
The Results on 3-point scale

Negative values = implicitly democratic

Positive values = implicitly republican

Republicans are more partisan

Independents
What do we think of these results?

- Noisy
- Purpose of IAT is to tells us about person’s attitude
Measuring Intensity as 7-point scale
Measuring Intensity as 7-point scale
Partisan intensity and Political Cognition

- Affect?
- Differential Evaluation?
- Motivated processing?
Partisan intensity on Affect
Partisan intensity on Affect

Cluttered
Partisan intensity on Differential Evaluation

- Compassionate
- Really cares
- Inspiring
- Honest
- Knowledgeable
- Hard working
- Moral
- Strong leader
Partisan intensity on Overall Trait

Cluttered
Partisan intensity on Motivated Processing

1) This report seems fair
2) The person who wrote this is probably biased
3) This is important to me when deciding which candidate to support
4) The senator deserves credit for admitting this
5) The behaviour that got the senator in trouble is typical
Partisan intensity on Motivated Processing

\[
\text{Motivated}_{\text{Pro-Republican}} = \bar{x}_D - \bar{x}_R
\]
Balanced Identity Theory

- Clear relationship between identity and party via Balanced Identity theory
  - That is, people change their attitudes to match that of what the party believes
NEUROBIOLOGY
BRAIN STRUCTURES
Political Orientations Are Correlated with Brain Structure in Young Adults

Ryota Kanai,1,* Tom Feilden,2 Colin Firth,2 and Geraint Rees1,3
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

Summary

Substantial differences exist in the cognitive styles of liberals and conservatives on psychological measures [1]. Variability in political attitudes reflects genetic influences between genotype, environment, and political phenotype may be reflected in the structure of the brain.

Several pioneering studies have begun examining the relationship between brain activity and political attitudes [4, 6], but none have characterized brain structure. Political attitudes are typically captured on a single-item measure in which participants self-report using a five-point scale ranging from “very liberal” to “very conservative.” Despite the simplicity of such a scale, it accurately predicts voting behaviors of individuals [7] and has been used successfully to determine genetic contributions to political orientation [3]. Psychological differences between conservatives and liberals determined in this way map onto self-regulatory processes associated with conflict monitoring. Moreover, the amplitude of event-related potentials reflecting neural activity associated with conflict monitoring in the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) is greater for
What kind of psychological/environmental factors influence the political orientation of an individual?
The anterior region, which is involved in executive function
- The dorsal region, which is involved in cognitive processes
- The ventral region, which is involved in emotional regulation
- The posterior region, which is involved in evaluative processes

Functions:
1. Detection of errors
2. Monitor uncertainty & conflicts
Test #1

- Recorded MRI’s
- 90 healthy young adults, 61% of which were female
- Self reported their political attitudes on a 5 point scale
- Voxel-Based Morphometry Analyses
FOUND: Increased gray matter volume in the anterior cingulate cortex was significantly associated with LIBERALISM
Test #2

- Used the same MRI data that was collected before
- Relationship between gray matter volume of the amygdala & political attitudes??
FOUND: Increased gray matter volume in RIGHT amygdala was significantly associated with CONSERVATISM! & NO significant correlation with LEFT amygdala
Test #3

- Whole-Brain Analysis
- No regions showed significant correlations that survived correction for multiple comparisons :)
But they DID find clusters in which grey matter volume was significantly associated with conservatism in the left insula.
Replication Study!

- 28 healthy volunteers
- Procedure was identical to previous study
- ONLY Regions of Interest were performed based on the results of the first study

Replication means making exactly the same thing, again and again and again...
Findings were replicated!
Can we tell someone’s political orientation by looking at an MRI of their brain?????

What do you guys think???
The answer is ...
BUT...

“Although these results do suggest a link between political attitude & brain structure it’s important to note that the neural processes implicated are likely to reflect complex processes of the formation of political attitudes rather than a direct representation of political opinions per se. The conceptualizing and reasoning associated with the expression of political opinions is not necessarily limited to structures or functions of the regions we identified but will require the involvement of more widespread brain regions implicated in abstract thoughts and reasoning.”
In Conclusion...

- Findings are consistent with the proposal that political orientation is associated with psychological processes for managing fear & uncertainty
  - Large amygdala → More sensitive to fear → Larger Amygdala → Inclined to Conservative Views
- Conservatives are more sensitive to disgust
  - Insula
- Because one of the ACC’s function is to tolerate uncertainty & conflicts, people with a larger ACC are more accepting of uncertainty therefore → more LIBERAL views.
Continued,

- “Although these conceptual links facilitate interpretations of the relationship between the brain structures and political orientation, our findings reflect a cross-sectional study of political attitudes and brain structure in a demographically relatively homogenous population of young adults. Therefore, the causal nature of such a relationship cannot be determined. Specifically, it requires a longitudinal study to determine whether the changes in brain structure that we observed lead to changes in political behavior or whether political attitudes and behavior instead result in changes of brain structure. Our findings open the way for such research”

- “Our findings show that high-level concepts of political attitudes are reflected in the structure of focal regions of the human brain. Brain structure can exhibit systematic relationships with an individual’s experiences and skills [19, 20], can change after extensive training [21, 22], and is related to different aspects of conscious perception [23, 24] (see [25] for a review). We now show that such relationships with brain structure extend to complex aspects of human behavior such as political attitudes. This opens a new avenue of research to map high-level psychological features onto brain structure and to interpret sociologically motivated constructs in terms of brain functions”
MORALITY
Liberals and Conservatives
Rely on Different Sets of Moral Foundations

Jesse Graham, Jonathan Haidt, and Brian A. Nosek
Liberals

- Optimistic
- Hold “unconstrained vision” in which people should be left as free as possible to pursue their own courses of personal development
- Prefer change and novelty
Conservatives

- Pessimistic
- Hold “constrained vision” in which people need the constraints of authority, institutions, and traditions to live civilly with each other
- Prefer familiar, stable, and predictable things
The Five Moral Foundations

Harm - care
Fairness - reciprocity
Ingroup - loyalty
Authority - respect
Purity - sanctity
The Five Moral Foundations

Individualizing Foundation

Binding Foundation
Individualizing Foundation

Focuses on individuals as the locus of moral value

Harm - care

Fairness - reciprocity
Binding Foundation

Focuses on the group as the locus of moral value

**Ingroup** - *loyalty*

**Authority** - *respect*

**Purity** - *sanctity*
Experiment 1: Moral Relevance

Violence or loyalty

Based on moral intuitions, “we asked participants to rate how relevant various concerns were to them when making moral judgements”
The Hypothesis:

Binding foundations

Individualizing foundations

Less Relevant

More Relevant

Individualizing foundations

Binding foundations
Large international sample
1,613 adults (47% female, 53% male; median age 29)
Randomly assigned Online self-report PLUS IAT (measuring implicit political identity)
- Political stands
- Gender
- Age
- Household income
- Education level
“When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent are the following considerations relevant to your thinking?”

**Harm:**
- Whether or not someone was harmed
- Whether or not someone suffered emotionally
- Whether or not someone used violence
- Whether or not someone cared for someone weak or vulnerable*

**Fairness:**
- Whether or not some people were treated differently than others
- Whether or not someone was denied his or her rights
- Whether or not someone acted unfairly
- Whether or not someone ended up profiting more than others*

**Ingroup:**
- Whether or not someone did something to betray his or her group
- Whether or not the action was done by a friend or relative of yours
- Whether or not someone showed a lack of loyalty
- Whether or not the action affected your group*
- Whether or not someone put the interests of the group above his/her own*

**Authority:**
- Whether or not the people involved were of the same rank or status
- Whether or not someone failed to fulfill the duties of his or her role
- Whether or not someone showed a lack of respect for legitimate authority
- Whether or not an authority failed to protect his/her subordinates*
- Whether or not someone respected the traditions of society*

**Purity:**
- Whether or not someone did something disgusting
- Whether or not someone violated standards of purity and decency
- Whether or not someone did something unnatural or degrading
- Whether or not someone acted in a virtuous or uplifting way*
- Whether or not someone was able to control his or her desires*

*An asterisk indicates an item was included in Study 2 only
Results
Experiment 2: Moral Judgements

Study 2 adds more concrete factors to the abstract assessments from Study 1.

The approach in this study “requires participants to make moral judgements about cases that instantiate or violate the abstract principles they rated in response to our ‘relevance’ question.”
Citizens or residents of the U.S. from the research Project Implicit those who participated in Study 1 are excluded

2,212 volunteers (62% female, 38% male; median age 32)
● Self-report political identity PLUS IAT
Scenarios triggers moral intuitions
Four targets of judgment for each foundation

Normative ideal

“It can never be right to kill a human being”

Statement about government policy

“The government should strive to improve the well-being of people in our nation, even if it sometimes happens at the expense of people in other nations”

Hypothetical scenario

“If I were a soldier and disagreed with my commanding officer’s orders, I would obey anyway because that is my duty”

Positive virtue

“Chastity is still an important virtue for teenagers today, even if many don’t think it is”
Methods

Moral Relevance
- Three versions: answered as oneself/as a typical liberal/as a typical conservative

Moral Judgment
- On 6-point scale, from 1 being strongly disagree to 6 being strongly agree
- Answered as oneself

Political Identity
- Explicit (self-report) and Implicit (measured through IAT)
Results

**Moral Relevance** replicated results in Study 1

**Moral Judgment**
- “Conservatives on average agreed with individualizing foundation judgments less than liberals and with binding foundation judgments more”

**Implicit Political Identity**
- Correlated strongly with self-reported political identity
“any value that a moral community explicitly or implicitly treats as possessing infinite or transcendental significance that precludes comparisons, trade-offs, or indeed any other mingling with bounded or secular values.”
Would you:

Kick a dog in the head? (Harm)

Burn your country’s flag? (Ingroup)

Receive a blood transfusion from a child molester? (Purity)

And for how much?
The Hypothesis:

“We hypothesized that because everyone’s morality relies heavily on the individualizing foundations, neither liberals nor conservatives would be happy to “prostitute” their values by accepting money in exchange for violating them. We predicted that liberals would be less likely to see trade-offs related to the binding foundations as violations of sacred values and, therefore, would be more willing to perform these actions for some amount of money.”
Experimentation Method and Procedure

1. Political self assessment
2. Select survey from list
3. Instructions on the survey
4. Complete the survey
Appendix C

Taboo Trade-Off Items, Study 3

Harm:
Kick a dog in the head, hard
Shoot and kill an animal that is a member of an endangered species
Make cruel remarks to an overweight person about his or her appearance
Step on an ant hill, killing thousands of ants
Stick a pin into the palm of a child you don’t know

Authority:
Curse your parents, to their face (you can apologize and explain 1 year later)
Curse the founders or early heroes of your country (in private, nobody hears you)
Make a disrespectful hand gesture to your boss, teacher, or professor
Throw a rotten tomato at a political leader you dislike (remember, you will not get caught)
Slap your father in the face (with his permission) as part of a comedy skit

Purity:
Sign a piece of paper that says “I hereby sell my soul, after my death, to whoever has this piece of paper”
Cook and eat your dog, after it dies of natural causes
Get plastic surgery that adds a 2-inch tail on to the end of your spine
Get a blood transfusion of 1 pint of disease-free, compatible blood from a convicted child molester
Attend a performance art piece in which all participants (including you) have to act like animals for 30 minutes, including crawling around naked and urinating on stage

Fairness:
Cheat in a game of cards played for money with some people you don’t know well
Steal from a poor person and use the money to buy a gift for a rich person
Say no to a friend’s request to help him move into a new apartment, after he helped you move the month before
Throw out a box of ballots, during an election, to help your favored candidate win
Sign a secret-but-binding pledge to only hire people of your race in your company

Ingroup:
Publicly bet against your favorite sports team (so that lots of people know)
Burn your country’s flag, in private (nobody else sees you)
Say something bad about your nation (which you don’t believe to be true) while calling in, anonymously, to a talk-radio show in a foreign nation
What did they find?

- **Fairness** → **Most taboo overall** → **Need more money**
- **Harm** → **More taboo among liberals**
- **Conservatives cared less** → **“Binding Foundations”**
- A direct relationship between political stance and amount required
Figure 4. Average amount required to violate foundation-related taboo trade-offs across political identity, Study 3. Response scale was as follows: 1 = $0 (I’d do it for free), 2 = $10, 3 = $100, 4 = $1,000, 5 = $10,000, 6 = $100,000, 7 = a million dollars, 8 = never for any amount of money.
Are these findings in line with the hypothesis?

Yes they are!

“Liberals refused to make trade-offs on most of the individualizing items but were more willing to perform actions that violated the three binding foundations. Conservatives, in contrast, showed a more even distribution of concerns and reported more unwillingness than did liberals to accept money to act in ways that violate Ingroup, Authority, and Purity concerns.”
Experiment 4: Moral Texts

“Sermons typically contain parables or direct instruction on the morally right way to live.”
“Words do the work of politics...the Republican Party’s success in the 1990s was due in large part to its ability to find ‘words that work.’”
A Change of Plan

“We sought out speeches delivered to live audiences that we could analyze to test the moral foundations hypothesis. We first examined Republican and Democratic candidates’ convention speeches, but we discovered that those speeches were so full of policy proposals, and of moral appeals to the political center of the country, that extracting distinctive moral content was unfeasible using the simple word-count procedures we describe below.”
The New Deal

“We turned instead to sermons delivered in liberal and conservative churches. Sermons typically contain parables or direct instruction on the morally right way to live. They are delivered to and within the moral community of the congregation, and they are generally written by the speaker, not by speech writers. Sermons thus have an advantage over overtly political texts in that they are more likely to address the moral concerns of a specific and cohesive moral community, rather than the concerns of a broad and heterogeneous polity.”
The Method

1. Create a Dictionary
2. Generate Synonyms and Antonyms
3. Scan Sermons for Dictionary Terms
4. Check the Context

Taboo Trade-Off Items:
- Harm
- Purity
- Fairness
- Authority
- Ingroup
A Chain Link Fence Between Church and State

It is known that political stance differs from church to church:

“Unitarian Universalist was consistently regarded as the most liberal church, and Southern Baptist was regarded as the most conservative of the major Christian denominations”

Also:

“These two denominations were also found to be the most politically active at the pulpit”
“Don’t let some self-interested ecclesiastical or government authority tell you what to believe, but read the Bible with your own eyes and open your heart directly to Jesus.”
The Importance of Context

Based on raw word count, this quote would be counted towards the “authority” category in the dictionary.

However, put into context, this quote is actually challenging authority and does not fit in that category.
The Results Are In!

Based on raw percentages:

**Liberals** used Harm, Fairness, and Ingroup words the most.

**Conservatives** used Authority and Purity more frequently.

This means Ingroup words violated the hypothesis.
However...

“The contextually validated ratings support the moral foundations hypothesis for all five foundations. Reading the difference-driving words in context, we found that liberal speakers expressed concerns more in line with Harm and Fairness than did conservative speakers, and conservative speakers expressed concerns more in line with Ingroup, Authority, and Purity than did liberal speakers.”
General Overview

All four experiments support the foundational hypothesis posed by the researchers. In all four experiments, conservatives’ moral concerns were spread across all five categories, whereas liberals tended to focus more on harm and fairness.
Limitations

“These samples are not representative of the national and international populations from which they are drawn.”

“Three of our four studies relied upon self-reported ratings, and the fourth study relied upon sermons that draw upon the conscious reflections of the speaker.”

“The consistency across four measures...provides some confidence for the robustness of these conclusions. Nonetheless, more validation work is needed to ensure that all the items are discriminating and gauging the foundations as intended.”
Conclusion

“Western societies are growing more diverse, and with diversity comes differing ideas about how best to regulate selfishness and about how we ought to live together. Participants in political debates are motivated in part by moral convictions. Moral foundations theory offers a useful way to conceptualize and measure such convictions. As research on political psychology thrives, we hope that it will clarify the role that morality plays in political thought and behavior.”
DISCUSS WITH THE CLASS

What are some applications of cognitive partisan bias in current events?
OTHER QUESTIONS?