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Articulating ideology: How liberals and conservatives justify political affiliations using morality-based explanations

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Abstract Two studies examined the degree to which participants' were aware of their morality-based motivations when determining their political affiliations. Participants from the U.S. indicated what political party (if any) they affiliated with and explained their reasons for that affiliation. For participants who identified as "Liberal/Democrat" or "Conservative/Republican," coders read the responses and identified themes associated with Moral Foundations Theory. In Study 1, thematic differences between liberals and conservatives paralleled previous research, although the extent of the disparities was more pronounced than expected, with the two groups showing little overlap. In Study 2, the actual influence of Moral Foundations (as measured by the Moral Foundations Questionnaire) was dramatically greater than was indicated by the coding of participants' open-ended responses. In addition, actual disparities in use of Moral Foundations between liberals and conservatives were greater than participants' stereotyped perceptions. We discuss how this research furthers our understanding of conscious motivations for political affiliation and can help to facilitate political discourse.

Keywords Political affiliation · Moral foundations theory · Resistance to change

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Introduction

In a meta-analysis, Jost et al. (2003) established two of the major underlying factors that differentiate liberals and conservatives from one another: conservatives tend to resist change and justify inequality more than liberals, and they do this in order to manage the anxiety created by perceived threat and uncertainty. Most research cited in that meta-analysis, and indeed, most research examining motivations for political attitudes, examines the strength of the relationship between personality or perceptual characteristics and one's political beliefs. While serving as the cornerstone of our understanding of the motivations underlying our political beliefs, this research has seldom focused on whether individuals are aware of these motivations when adopting their political beliefs. The current pair of studies examines the extent to which individuals invoke specific motivations, in this case, Haidt's (2012) Moral Foundations, when justifying their political ideologies.

Study 1 establishes the basic presence of Moral Foundations in the justification of participants' political beliefs. Study 2 replicates and expands upon those results, seeking to establish predictors of the use of Moral Foundations and the degree of disparity between the actual influence of Moral Foundations and participants' awareness of the influence of Moral Foundations.

Foundations of political ideology

Political psychology research has determined several significant cognitive and behavioral differences between liberals and conservatives. For example, recent research indicates that conservatives show greater disgust sensitivity than liberals (Smith et al. 2011), and liberals follow the

direction of eye movements better than conservatives (Dodd et al. 2011). One of the most reliable differences between liberals and conservatives is that individuals especially sensitive to threat and resistant to change typically find greater comfort in conservative, rather than liberal, ideologies (Jost et al. 2003). Jost et al. (2003) found these motivational tendencies in several countries, citing studies conducted in the United States, England, New Zealand, Sweden, Israel, Australia, Germany, Scotland, Canada, Italy, Poland, and South Africa.

More recently, neuroimaging research indicates that, compared to liberals, conservatives show larger and more active amygdala (associated with affective aspects of decision-making; Kanai et al. 2011; Schreiber et al. 2013), less insular cortex activation (associated with greater self-awareness of one's physiological reactions to affective experience; Schreiber et al. 2013), and smaller anterior cingulate cortexes (associated with monitoring uncertainty; Kanai et al. 2011). These findings help to explain conservatives' characteristic resistance to change, in that exposure to alternative perspectives can generate uncertainty, ambiguity, and perceptions of instability, which can lead to anxiety (Rokeach 1960). Thus, individuals especially sensitive to threat typically show greater motivation to maintain certainty and perceived stability in their environment and world-view. Conservative ideology provides an antidote to this uncertainty by providing a belief system that, at its core, resists social change (Conover and Feldman 1981).

Resistance to change can take many forms, including the ways in which one defines morality (e.g., emphasizing traditional behaviors; Haidt 2012). Moral Foundations Theory organizes what people define as moral issues into six themes: Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, Sanctity/Degradation, and Liberty/Oppression (Haidt 2012). Research indicates that liberals (e.g., individuals in the United States more likely to affiliate with the Democratic Party) emphasize Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating when determining whether a behavior is moral, whereas conservatives (e.g., individuals in the United States more likely to affiliate with the Republican Party) place approximately equal emphasis on all moral foundations when making similar determinations (Haidt 2012). This differential emphasis leads to liberals valuing Care and Fairness more than conservatives, and conservatives valuing Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity more than liberals (Graham et al. 2009). In addition, self-identified Libertarians appear to value Liberty to a greater extent than either of the other two groups (Haidt 2012).

The Care/Harm foundation involves the perception that knowingly causing harm to others is immoral, while Fairness/Cheating involves the perception that violating rules or obligations to others (e.g., failing to reciprocate for a favor) is immoral (Haidt 2012). Taken together, these are consistent with the liberal motivational preference for equality over hierarchy (Giddons 1999). Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating are referred to as "individualizing" foundations because they involve "individual-focused contractual approaches to society" (p. 369; Graham et al. 2011).

Conversely, Loyalty/Betrayal involves the perception that behavior conflicting with the needs of the in-group is immoral, whereas Authority/Subversion involves the perception that behavior that causes conflict with entities acting as authorities is immoral (Haidt 2012). Taken together, these indicate a motivational preference for maintaining the status quo rather than working toward change (Conover and Feldman 1981). Loyalty/Betrayal and Authority/Subversion, along with Sanctity/Degradation (which associates morality with maintaining one's sense of "purity"), are referred to as "binding foundations" because they serve in "binding people together into larger groups and institutions" (p. 369; Graham et al. 2011).

The Liberty/Oppression foundation involves the belief that it is immoral for powerful entities to dominate less powerful individuals (Haidt 2012). Although the prevailing moral foundation for self-identified Libertarians, Liberty/Oppression does not fit cleanly into the liberal-conservative dichotomy because the two groups value it to approximately the same degree (Haidt 2012).

The fact that, disproportionately, liberals are motivated by individuating foundations and conservatives are motivated by binding foundations can be understood because political orientation is largely a matter of motivated social cognition. Threat- and uncertainty-prone individuals are anxious individuals (Wilson 1973), who are motivated to seek safety and stability through affiliation and protection goals (Schachter 1959; Baumard and Boyer 2013). This leads them to maintain a smaller "circle of moral consideration" (p. 72; Lahti 2009), consisting of themselves, their kin group, their immediate community, etc. That is, when one perceives threat, a logical response is to "circle the wagons" and focus one's efforts on the welfare of those inside the circle. In contrast, a lack of threat and anxiety leads one to expand one's circle of moral consideration to include the broader citizenry, humanity, etc.

Individuals must be aware of these motivations on some level, or else self-report measures would not produce these characteristic differences (e.g., Graham et al. 2009). However, research has yet to examine the extent to which individuals are overtly aware of these motivations when selecting a political ideology.

Accessing motivations

Psychologists have known for decades that people are not terribly accurate at identifying their behavioral motivations

and explaining their cognitive processes (Nisbett and Wilson 1977). Despite this shortcoming, situational factors (e.g., perceived severity of an event; Burger 1981) and individual factors (e.g., maintaining predictive control of the environment; Edwards 1998) can increase our motivation to construct causal attributions. With a strong affective component present, individuals often can clearly indicate that they dislike something while remaining unable to articulate why that is the case (Haidt 2001). Even when one offers to explain one's motivations, these explanations often result from using salient stimuli to generate a plausible, post hoc rationalization for the thoughts or behaviors (Nisbett and Wilson 1977). For example, a recent study by Kim et al. (2012) showed that, while participants' responses to physiological disgust was one of the strongest factors in predicting participants' political orientation, when asked to explain the reason for their political beliefs, not a single participant mentioned disgust. So, while the degree of one's aversion to stepping on earthworms may be predictive of one's political beliefs, one will not report that as a motivating factor.

Awareness matters

Politics is inherently adversarial and contentious, but United States' politics during the last decade have taken divisiveness to heights not seen since the mid-1800s (Mann and Ornstein 2012). This division extends from the politicians currently holding public office down to the voters themselves (Mann and Ornstein 2012). Although 40 % of the American electorate self-identifies as "independent," when pressed, their voting behavior tends to correspond with one of the established political parties, such that some political scientists estimate that the real rate of U.S. voters lacking strong partisan leanings hovers between 10 and 15 % (Neuman 2012).

Self-awareness involves recognizing what one feels and why one feels that way (Goleman 1998). This predicts superior conflict resolution by contributing to perspective-taking and sensitivity (Jones and Bodtker 2001), empathy (Goleman 1994), social skills, and self-regulation (Rahim et al. 2002). Under certain conditions, however, lacking self-awareness can reduce conflict. For example, individuals high in need for cognitive closure tend to engage in heuristic processing and lack perspective-taking ability (de Dreu et al. 1999, 2000). When these individuals were aware of their reasons for an assigned stance, they resisted the influence of additional information, but if they were unaware of the reasons for their stance, they were less resistant to additional information, compared to individuals low in need for closure(Kruglanski et al. 1993; Webster and Kruglanski 1994).

In addition to motivational self-awareness, the awareness of an opposing party's motivations also might affect an ideological conflict. Although information exchange between opposing groups typically results in better outcomes for both sides (Pruitt et al. 1983), it is important to determine the extent to which the professed motivations of two potentially conflicting groups overlap with one another. In general, attitude similarity predicts interpersonal liking (e.g., McWhirter and Jecker 1967), and during dyadic interactions, exchanging information helps to facilitate perceptual accuracy for cooperative, but not individualistic, dyads (i.e., information available about another group only facilitates mutual understanding when points of common interest exist; O'Connor 1997). Thus, finding expressed areas of motivational overlap can aid in conflict resolution by facilitating a sense of togetherness and shared understanding.

Study 1

Two major differences between liberals and conservatives involve threat sensitivity (an affective component) and resistance to change (a motivational component). These provide the basis for the different emphasis that liberals and conservatives place on binding foundations versus individualizing foundations. The current study seeks to expand on this research by examining the extent to which liberals and conservatives indicate awareness that their political affiliations are motivated by Haidt's (2012) six Moral Foundations.

Hypotheses

1. Participants who invoke Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating themes should more strongly affiliate with the Democratic Party and a more liberal political orientation.
2. Participants who invoke Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation themes should more strongly affiliate with the Republican Party and a more conservative political orientation.
3. Based on previous research (e.g., Kim et al. 2012; Koleva et al. 2012), we expected Fairness/Cheating to show the strongest positive relationship with liberal ideology and Sanctity/Degradation and Authority/Subversion to show the strongest positive relationship with conservative ideology.

Methods

Participants

A total of 406 undergraduate psychology students from a state university in Ohio completed the study. Using responses to a question about their political affiliation,

participants were categorized based on whether they had a liberal preference, a conservative preference, or no preference. 148 participants were categorized as having a liberal preference; 144 identified as "Democrats" and four identified as "Liberals." 128 participants were categorized as having a conservative preference; 123 identified as identified as "Republican," four identified as "Conservatives," and one identified as "Tea Party" (a category that has shown an almost complete ideological overlap with Republicanism; Newport 2010). 117 participants showed no preference, identifying as either "Unaffiliated," "Independent," or not selecting a category. Because this study involves justifications for one's political affiliation, the last group failed to provide much data to analyze, and we excluded it from the analyses (i.e., when asked to explain the reasons for their political affiliation, common responses for independent and unaffiliated participants included "none" or "n/a"). We also excluded thirteen participants who self-identified as Libertarians because, even though Libertarians are conservative on many issues, they differ from self-identified Republicans in that the two groups value binding foundations and Liberty/Oppression to different degrees (Haidt 2012). So, while we are interested in the ideological explanations of Libertarians, many of our analyses involve categorical comparisons, and the current sample fails to provide enough of a critical mass to do so.

Of the remaining 276 participants (137 males, 137 females, and two who failed to answer the question), the average age was 18.61 years ($SD = 1.54$). Although the age of the sample is less than ideal, political attitudes show considerable stability across adolescence and early adulthood (Hooghe and Wilkenfeld 2008). 273 participants indicated they grew up in the United States (98.9 %) and, of those, 256 indicated that they grew up in Ohio (92.8 %).

Measures

Participants completed the required measures on a computer while sitting in a cubicle. Presentation of the measures was counterbalanced. The central questions to which they responded were "What political party, if any, do you most closely associate with?" and "Why do you identify with your chosen political party?" After completing all the measures, participants were debriefed.

Political affiliation

Participants indicated their political affiliation (i.e., what political party, if any, they most closely associated with), and we categorized responses as either Democrats/Liberals (coded "0") or Republicans/Conservatives (coded "1"). For the sake of brevity and to differentiate from the Political Orientation variable, we henceforth will refer to this variable as "Political Affiliation" and the two groups of interest as "Democrats" and "Republicans," respectively. Participants also answered the open-ended question, "Why do you identify with your chosen political party?" The average response length was 15.46 words ($SD = 14.78$).

Political orientation

Participants also indicated their Political Orientation (i.e., the degree to which they were liberal or conservative) on a scale ranging from 0 (*"Very Conservative"*) to 6 (*"Very Liberal"*). This ordinal variable provided a more sensitive measure of one's political attitudes than the categorical, Political Affiliation measure. Political Affiliation and Political Orientation correlated significantly with one another, $r\ (276) = -.57$, $p < .001$.

Response coding

Two undergraduate research assistants read the responses to the open-ended question ("Why do you identify with your chosen political party?") and coded them for thematic content. For all categories, a third research assistant coded the responses, and in the few instances where disagreements existed between the two primary coders, we determined the categorization using the third coder's responses. All coders were blind to the research hypotheses. Those statements containing a specific theme were coded "1," while those not including that theme were coded "0." The primary themes for which we coded correspond with Haidt's (2012) six Moral Foundations: Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, Sanctity/Degradation, and Liberty/Oppression. "Appendix 1" contains examples of statements that coders identified as containing each Moral Foundation.

Many of the statements contained multiple themes. For example, a specific statement may contain a score of "1" in each category for Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, and Liberty/Oppression, and a score of "0" in each category for Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation. In fact, the presence of one theme often showed a significant relationship with other themes (see Table 1). Some of the significant relationships were predictable (i.e., the relationship between Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating or the relationship between Loyalty/Betrayal and Authority/Subversion), while others were somewhat surprising (e.g., the significant negative relationship between Fairness/Cheating and Loyalty/Betrayal and the significant positive relationship between Fairness/Cheating and Liberty/Oppression).

For the first five themes, coders received brief descriptions of the constructs published in a recent article by

Table 1 Relationship between the primary variables in Study 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Care/harm	1.00							
2. Fairness/cheating	.49**	1.00						
3. Loyalty/betrayal	−.15*	−.24**	1.00					
4. Authority/subversion	−.10	−.24**	.80**	1.00				
5. Sanctity/degradation	−.02	−.11	.08	.22**	1.00			
6. Liberty/oppression	.03	.37**	−.20**	−.07	.12*	1.00		
7. Political affiliation	−.26**	−.35**	.14*	.26**	.25**	−.02	1.00	
8. Political orientation	.16**	.28**	−.12*	−.20**	−.24**	.02	−.57**	1.00

The values in the first seven rows are reported as φ. The values in the last row are reported as r

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Koleva et al. (2012; see Sect. "Appendix 2"). For the Liberty/Oppression construct, we used a separate source (Haidt 2012), because Liberty/Oppression was not mentioned in the article by Koleva et al. (2012). The Cohen's Kappa for Care/Harm was slightly low (.67), but close enough to include in the analyses. Otherwise, the reliability scores for the other Moral Foundations were all sufficient (ranging from .70 for Fairness/Cheating to .85 for Loyalty/Betrayal).

A similar method for coding Moral Foundations in narratives was used in a study by McAdams et al. (2008). However, their study involved extended interviews about religious and moral issues, while the current study involves brief responses to an explicit question about participants' reasons for affiliating with a particular political party.

While coding for the Moral Foundations, coders reported the frequent occurrence of other, related themes in the open-ended responses, and we conducted exploratory analyses on them as well. First, we examined whether participants affiliated with their chosen political party because of their families (e.g., "This is a belief my parents have taught me."). Previous research (e.g., Achen 2002) indicates that parental political affiliation is highly predictive of a child's political affiliation. However, we are not interested in whether parental political affiliation actually predicts the child's affiliation, but whether participants use it as an overt explanation. We anticipated that, because of conservatives' preference for the status quo (Jost et al. 2003), and because family can serve as both an in-group and an authority, this theme would prevail among Republicans more than Democrats. The Cohen's Kappa for this theme was high, .99.

The final theme for which we coded involved whether participants identified a specific policy issue when justifying their political affiliations (e.g., "Issues like gun control" or "I'm pro-choice"). Because conservative ideology is typically more affect-driven and less cognition-driven than liberal ideology (Block and Block 2005; Kanai et al. 2011), we expected the inclusion of specific policy issues to prevail among Democrats more than Republicans, $\kappa = .91$.

Results

Political affiliation

To analyze the thematic coding of the open-ended responses, we conducted Chi square analyses using the presence or absence of a specific theme as one variable and Political Affiliation as the other (see Table 2). As expected, Care/Harm themes prevailed among Democrats (16.9 %) more than Republicans (1.6 %), χ^2 (1, $N = 276$) = 18.28, $p < .001$, $\varphi = -.26$. Fairness/Cheating themes also prevailed among Democrats (29.7 %) more than Republicans (3.1 %), χ^2 (1, $N = 276$) = 33.82, $p < .001$, $\varphi = -.35$. Conversely, Loyalty/Betrayal themes prevailed among Republicans (34.4 %) more than Democrats (21.6 %), χ^2 (1, $N = 276$) = 5.60, $p = .018$, $\varphi = .14$. Authority/Subversion themes prevailed among Republicans (35.9 %) more than Democrats (13.5 %), χ^2 (1, $N = 276$) = 18.97, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .26$. Finally, Sanctity/Degradation themes prevailed among Republicans (10.9 %) more than Democrats (0.0 %), χ^2 (1, $N = 276$) = 17.05, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .25$. Liberty/Oppression showed no significant difference between Democrats (12.2 %) and Republicans (10.9 %), $p = .751$. Overall, 131 of the 276 (47.4 %) respondents who identified as liberal/Democrat or conservative/Republican provided responses that could not be categorized based on the six Moral Foundations used in this study.

To determine which thematic category most strongly predicted Political Affiliation, we conducted a logistic regression using the five significant Moral Foundations as predictors and Political Affiliation as the outcome measure. Care/Harm significantly predicted Political Affiliation, *Wald* ($df = 1$, $N = 276$) = 4.75, $B = -2.53$, $p = .029$, such that including Care/Harm themes indicated

Table 2 Thematic analyses of responses in study 1

Themes invoked	Democrat ($n = 148$) (%)	Republican ($n = 128$) (%)	Total ($n = 276$) (%)
Moral foundations			
Care/harm**	16.9	1.6	9.8
Fairness/cheating**	29.7	3.1	17.4
Loyalty/betrayal*	21.6	34.4	27.5
Authority/subversion**	13.5	35.9	23.9
Sanctity/degradation**	0.0	10.9	5.7
Liberty/oppression	12.2	10.9	11.6
Other themes			
Family**	14.2	31.3	22.1
Specific issue**	40.5	19.8	32.8

Asterisks indicate significant differences between Democrats and Republicans. Rows and columns are not expected to add up to 100 %

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Democratic affiliation. Fairness/Cheating significantly predicted Political Affiliation, *Wald* ($df = 1$, $N = 276$) = 10.72, $B = -1.85$, $p = .001$, such that including Fairness/Cheating themes indicated Democratic affiliation. Loyalty/Betrayal significantly predicted Political Affiliation, *Wald* ($df = 1$, $N = 276$) = 5.07, $B = -1.56$, $p = .024$, such that including Loyalty/Betrayal themes indicated Democratic affiliation. Authority/Subversion significantly predicted Political Affiliation, *Wald* ($df = 1, N = 276$) = 9.42, $B = 2.21, p = .002$, such that the including Authority/Subversion themes indicated Republican affiliation. Sanctity/Degradation ($p = .998$) failed to significantly predict Political Affiliation.

Controlling for word count

In terms of the statements that participants provided, the longer the statement, the more likely it was to include one of the themes, r (276) = .31, $p < .001$. Also, Republicans ($M = 17.27$, $SD = 17.55$) provided longer responses than Democrats ($M = 13.90$, $SD = 11.73$). To account for this, we included Word Count as a covariate when conducting the regression analyses using significant predictors to see whether it altered the results.

Care/Harm, *Wald* ($df = 1$, $N = 276$) = 4.79, $B = -2.67$, $p = .029$, Fairness/Cheating, *Wald* ($df = 1$, $N = 276$) = 16.43, $B = -3.18, p < .001$, Loyalty/Betrayal, *Wald* ($df = 1, N = 276$) = 5.05, $B = -1.59, p = .025$, and Authority/Subversion, *Wald* ($df = 1$, $N = 276$) = 9.39, $B = 2.26, p = .002$, all remained significant predictors. The effect of the former two showed a slight inflation and the latter two showed a slight deflation. Word Count also significantly predicted Political Affiliation, such that Republicans provided longer descriptions than Democrats, *Wald* ($df = 1$, $N = 276$) = 11.99, $B = .05$, $p = .001$. Sanctity/Degradation ($p = .998$) remained non-significant.

Analysis of exploratory themes

A Chi square analysis on Family themes across Political Affiliation categories (see Table 2) revealed that Republicans (31.3 %) were significantly more likely than Democrats (14.2 %) to cite family preferences as a reason for their political affiliation, χ^2 (1, $N = 276$) = 10.69, $p = .001$, $\varphi = .20$. Finally, a Chi square analysis on Policy Issues across Political Affiliation categories (see Table 2) revealed that Democrats (40.5 %) were significantly more likely than Republicans (19.8 %) to cite specific policy issues as reasons for their political affiliation, χ^2 (1, $N = 276$) = 15.39, $p < .001$, $\varphi = -.24$.

Further analysis of loyalty/betrayal

Analyzed by itself, Loyalty/Betrayal prevailed among Republicans more than Democrats. However, in the logistic regression, that relationship reversed. We hypothesized that this occurred due to overlap between the Authority/Subversion and Loyalty/Betrayal themes, particularly in the form of the Family theme; of the 60 statements categorized as containing Family themes, 100 % also contained Loyalty/Betrayal themes and 93.3 % contained Authority/Subversion themes. In order to analyze this, we conducted a logistic regression using Loyalty/Betrayal as the lone predictor of Political Affiliation. As expected, Loyalty/Betrayal significantly predicted Political Affiliation, *Wald* ($df = 1$, $N = 276$) = 5.52, $B = .64$, $p = .019$. This positive B-value indicates greater Republican affiliation. With Family included in the regression, however, Loyalty/Betrayal became non-significant and negative *Wald* ($df = 1$, $N = 276$) = .70, $B = -.47$, $p = .404$, while Family was a significant positive predictor, *Wald* ($df = 1, N = 276$) = 5.44, $B = 1.41$, $p = .020$.

Political orientation

We attempted to replicate the findings of the Chi square analyses by conducting *t*-tests on the interval measure, Political Orientation. The dramatic differences in cell sizes for some of these comparisons required close attention to Levene's Test for Equality of Variance; this accounts for the variety in reported degrees of freedom. As expected, Care/Harm themes, t (274) = 2.68, $p < .008$, $d = .32$ (see Table 3), and Fairness/Cheating themes predicted greater liberalism, t (274) = 4.75, $p < .001$, $d = .57$. Conversely, Loyalty/Betrayal themes, t (175.92) = −2.24, $p = .026$, $d = .34$, Authority/Subversion themes, t (274) = −3.44, $p = .001$, $d = .42$, and Sanctity/Degradation themes, t (18.49) = −7.27, $p < .001$, $d = 3.38$, predicted less liberalism. Liberty/Oppression themes failed to predict Political Orientation ($p = .793$).

Once again, we conducted a regression using significant predictors in order to determine which factors were the most powerful predictors of Political Orientation. Fairness/Cheating still predicted greater liberalism, t (270) = 3.19, $\beta = .21$, $p = .002$. Authority/Subversion still predicted less liberalism, t (270) = −2.00, $\beta = -.19$, $p = .046$, as did Sanctity/Degradation, t (270) = −3.14, $\beta = -.19$, $p = .002$. Care/Harm and Loyalty/Betrayal became non-significant.

Controlling for word count

We included Word Count with the significant predictors to determine whether it altered the results. Fairness/Cheating, t (269) = 3.38, $\beta = .24$, $p = .001$, and Sanctity/Degradation, t (269) = −2.66, $\beta = -.16$, $p = .008$, remained significant. Authority/Subversion became marginally significant, t (269) = −1.95, $\beta = -.19$, $p = .052$. Care/Harm and Loyalty/Betrayal remained non-significant. Word Count did not significantly predict Political Orientation.

Table 3 Mean Political Orientation scores of participants who invoked each theme in Study 1

Themes	Mean political orientation scores	
Moral foundations	Present	Absent
Care/harm**	3.63 (*SD* = 1.50)	2.68 (*SD* = 1.77)
Fairness/cheating**	3.83 (*SD* = 1.81)	2.55 (*SD* = 1.67)
Loyalty/betrayal*	2.43 (*SD* = 1.43)	2.91 (*SD* = 1.86)
Authority/subversion**	2.14 (*SD* = 1.51)	2.98 (*SD* = 1.79)
Sanctity/degradation**	0.93 (*SD* = .92)	2.87 (*SD* = 1.75)
Liberty/oppression	2.88 (*SD* = 2.34)	2.76 (*SD* = 1.68)
Other themes		
Family*	2.28 (*SD* = 1.49)	2.91 (*SD* = 1.81)
Specific issue*	3.15 (*SD* = 1.99)	2.61 (*SD* = 1.64)

High political orientation scores indicate greater liberalism

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Analysis of exploratory variables

Family significantly predicted Political Orientation, such that use of the Family themes predicted less liberalism, t (274) = −2.46, $p = .014$. Inclusion of Policy Issues predicted significantly greater liberalism, t (134.56) = 2.21, $p = .029$.

Discussion

This study was conducted to identify the extent to which individuals are aware of some of the motivations behind their political attitudes, specifically, those grounded in our conceptions of morality. In terms of the Haidt's (2012) Moral Foundations, disparities between liberals and conservatives largely matched the results from previous research: liberals reported more Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating themes than conservatives, while conservatives reported more Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation themes than liberals. The two groups showed no differences in terms of Liberty/Oppression themes.

There also were some unexpected results. First, Haidt (2012) reported that, while liberals place greater emphasis on Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating, conservatives value all the moral foundations approximately equally. However, in terms of their reported motivations, conservatives rarely mentioned Care or Fairness/Cheating themes (see Table 2). Second, multiple studies (Kim et al. 2012; Koleva et al. 2012) determined that Fairness/Cheating was the most powerful predictor of liberalism, while Sanctity/Degradation and Authority/Subversion were the most powerful predictors of conservatism. While Fairness/Cheating was the most common theme mentioned by liberals and Authority/Subversion as the most common theme mentioned by conservatives, Sanctity/Degradation was barely mentioned at all, even by conservatives (see Table 2). Third, Loyalty/Betrayal was the most commonly mentioned Moral Foundation, often as a function of the political affiliation of one's family (which was significantly more common among conservative participants). Conversely, liberals more often cited specific policy issues championed by a particular political party when justifying their affiliations.

Specific themes

Fairness/Cheating was one of the strongest predictors in both of the main analyses. The only other thematic

Table 4 Relationship between Moral Foundations coded in participants' self-referential statements and personality scales

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Care/harm	1.00								
2. Fairness/cheating	.45**	1.00							
3. Loyalty/betrayal	−.11*	−.18**	1.00						
4. Authority/subversion	−.10*	−.18**	.87**	1.00					
5. Sanctity/degradation	−.03	−.08	.19**	.04	1.00				
6. Political affiliation	−.17**	−.26**	.13*	.12*	.21**	1.00			
7. Political orientation	.12*	.16**	−.09	−.06	−.17**	−.64**	1.00		
8. IRI-Empathy	.13*	.11*	.01	−.03	.06	−.13*	.10	1.00	
9. NFC Scale	−.06	−.03	.18**	.16**	.09	.09	−.11*	−.06	1.00

The values in the first five rows are reported as φ. The values in the last four rows are reported as r

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

category that was a significant predictor of both regression analyses was Authority/Subversion.

Participants showed one of the biggest disparities for Sanctity/Degradation in terms of both Political Orientation and Political Affiliation, despite the fact that this was the least common theme mentioned. This is because, even though Republicans only mentioned it as a justification in 11 % of the cases, no self-identified Democrat used Sanctity/Degradation themes to explain his or her political beliefs.

Loyalty/Betrayal was the most frequently mentioned theme. Although it significantly predicted both Political Orientation and Political Affiliation by itself, when included in a multiple regression with other significant predictors, it only significantly predicted Political Affiliation. Even in that instance, the effect reversed itself (i.e., it predicted Democratic affiliation) compared to when it was analyzed alone. This appears to be due to its heavy overlap with the Authority/Subversion theme, in that families are seen as a source of authority and loyalty, and Republicans more often invoked the Family theme.

Care/Harm predicted Political Orientation and Political Affiliation by itself, but only Political Affiliation when included in the multiple regressions. The Care/Harm theme showed slightly low inter-rater reliability, which may have contributed to its comparatively poor predictive ability.

Liberty/Oppression failed to predict either outcome measure of political ideology. This could be expected because we excluded Libertarians from the analysis, a group particularly likely to invoke that theme (Haidt 2012). However, while marginalizing the importance of this variable for the current study, this lack of between-group difference does not negate the importance Liberty/Oppression in the bigger picture: 12 % of Democrats and 11 % of Republicans mentioned these themes when justifying their political ideology. This theme (and, to a lesser extent, Loyalty/Betrayal) may provide a source of expressed ideological overlap in an otherwise clear divide of Moral Foundations.

Classic moral psychologists such as Kohlberg (1969) stressed the rational side of morality, while Moral Foundations Theory (Haidt 2012) asserts that morality is largely intuitive and outside rational explanations. When we experience strong intuitive responses to moral issues but are unable to articulate our inclination in a way that is consistent with our actual motivation, Haidt (2001) referred to this as "moral dumbfounding." Previous research indicates that binding foundations produce greater moral dumbfounding (e.g., Haidt 2001) and conservatives utilize binding foundations to a greater extent than liberals (e.g., Koleva et al. 2012). In this current study, this may be why participants seldom mentioned Sanctity/Degradation themes (i.e., sanctity motivation *was* a powerful motivating factor for adopting one's political beliefs, but participants were unaware that it was a factor).

The exploratory variables in the current study appear to bridge (1) the relationship between binding foundations and dumbfounding and (2) the relationship between conservatism and binding foundations by showing that conservatives are less likely to give relevant reasons in justification of their political beliefs. That is, conservatives were less likely to indicate specific, policy-related issues that dictated their political affiliation and more likely to explain their political affiliation simply by citing the political affiliation of their families. While citing the political affiliation of one's family is an explanation, and the explanation may represent an accurate piece of the motivational puzzle (at least superficially), it is rather simplistic. That is, for many conservatives, their explanations for political affiliation were almost akin to explaining that the reason one drives a Ford is because one's father drove a Ford (Anderson et al. 2013). In many cases, these responses likely reflect post hoc rationalization (e.g., Nisbett and Wilson 1977): the "gut-level" preference for

conservative ideas was not accessible, so they sought and found an easily available, plausible explanation in the form of family behavior. The alternative explanation, of course, is that liberals are unaware of the extent to which their family's political affiliations are affecting them.

Overall, the liberal-conservative pattern of the Moral Foundations appeared to hold up when determining what motivations lie within participants' awareness. Granted, people are not always able to accurately assess their own motivations (Wilson 2002), and the "acknowledgement" of some factors (e.g., family influence) on political affiliation may be a post hoc guess based on observable evidence. However, we should assume that significant differences between liberals and conservatives regarding their expressed motivations have some basis in reality. Determining the underlying motivations of someone's ideological stance is important, but so is knowing the overt justifications if a rational dialogue is to take place.

Word count

Including World Count in the analyses had a slight effect on the factors of interest, leading to an increase in the magnitude of the effect for Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating (associated with a more liberal orientation) and a decrease in the effect of Loyalty/Betrayal, Sanctity/Degradation, and Authority/Subversion (associated with a more conservative orientation). This is not surprising, given that conservative participants provided longer responses then liberal participants. World Count significantly predicted Political Affiliation, but not Political Orientation. Overall, its small, inconsistent effect did not warrant further inclusion.

Limitations

Study 1 helped to establish the degree to which individuals are aware of their political motivations. Only 47.4 % of participants identified a moral foundation as the source of their political affiliation. However, this is not a defect; it is unlikely that the authors of Moral Foundations Theory would contend that this model explains all aspects of political affiliation. In addition, even if specific participants were motivated by a moral preference, that participant may be unable to articulate that motivation. The unprompted nature of the open-ended question in this study led to many responses along the lines of, "I affiliate with this party because they believe in the same principles as I believe." While this may be true and sufficient to answer the question, the individual has still failed to articulate the characteristics of those principles, rendering them categorically ambiguous. Surely follow-up questions would have provided greater insight, but the design of the study prevented that opportunity. Once again, though, the purpose of this line of research is not only to determine the extent to which Moral Foundations are motivating individuals, but to determine the extent to which they are aware that Moral Foundations are motivating them.

Another issue is that, in the attempt to determine areas of motivational overlap, one must also determine how conservatives perceive liberals' motivations and how liberals perceive conservatives' motivations. In addition, if Study 1 determined what participants consider to be the driving factors behind their political attitudes, it did not determine the actual driving factors behind their political attitudes. Finally, the sample from Study 1 was particularly young and homogenous, and participants may have been especially prone to rely on their parents to determine their own political affiliations, whereas a slightly older sample may display greater political autonomy. We attempted to address some of these limitations in Study 2.

Study 2

Moral Foundations Theory speaks to the idea that people define morality differently, and that these differences can predict their political beliefs (Haidt 2012). Study 1 showed that the relationship can work in the opposite direction as well, such that one can ask people what drives their political beliefs and categorize those open-ended responses based on the different Moral Foundations. This indicates that the different conceptions of morality often are not only factors, but *conscious* factors, in the political ideology that one adopts.

Study 2 expands upon the relationship between one's moral beliefs and one's articulated political beliefs in a few ways. First, it attempts to replicate the results of Study 1 using a larger, more diverse sample. Second, it examines the attitudes and perceptions of a broader section of the electorate (i.e., rather than only self-identified liberal/Democrats and conservative/Republicans); except when replicating the results of Study 1, we analyze the results of Study 2 using the entire sample. Third, it examines psychological constructs related to "binding foundations" and "individualizing foundations" to see if those constructs also predict participants' articulated moral beliefs. Fourth, it examines whether general assessments of the moral motivations of Democrats and Republicans (i.e., assessments of the "typical" Democrat or Republican) match how Democrats and Republicans assess their own motivations. Finally, we used the categorizations of articulated moral beliefs and the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham et al. 2011) to determine whether participants' asserted motivations correspond with their actual motivations (determined by the MFQ).

Hypotheses

1. Based on the results of Study 1, liberal/Democrat participants should invoke Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, and Policy Issues themes more, and Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, Sanctity/Degradation, and Family themes less, than conservative/Republican participants.
2. Interpersonal Reactivity Index scores will positively predict use of Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating (i.e., individuating) themes, while Need for Closure scores will positively predict use of Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation (i.e., binding) themes.
3. The total sample will describe Democrats and Republicans in a manner consistent with Democrats' and Republicans' self-identifications (i.e., more Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating themes for Democrats and more Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation themes for Republicans).
4. Based on previous research (Kim et al. 2012), all five subscales of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire will significantly predict participant political orientation. Specifically, Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating will be associated with greater liberalism, while Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation will be associated with less liberalism.
5. Based on the results of Study 1, when all factors are included in the analysis, use of Fairness/Cheating will significantly predict greater liberalism, while use of Authority/Subversion and Sanctity/Degradation themes will significantly predict less liberalism.
6. MFQ scores provide a more powerful predictor of participant political orientation than thematic codings.

Method

Participants

517 individuals participated in the study online. However, data from 15 participants was discarded for incompleteness, leaving data from a total of 502 participants (311 females and 191 males) in the analyses. The mean age was 28.50 years ($SD = 12.87$). We recruited 242 participants from a national sample using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), 110 from psychology courses at a state university in Hawaii, and 150 from psychology courses at a state university in Louisiana. Mturk workers were paid $0.50 for their participation, while the psychology students received extra credit. Participants were from the United States, representing 44 states and the District of Columbia. States most frequently represented were Louisiana (131 participants), Hawaii (77 participants), and California (44 participants). Thus, Study 2 provided an older, more geographically diverse sample than Study 1.

Participants once again were categorized based on whether they had a liberal preference, a conservative preference, or no preference. 221 participants were categorized as having a liberal preference; 208 identified as "Democrats" and 13 identified as "Liberals." 159 participants were categorized as having a conservative preference; 153 identified as identified as "Republican," five identified as "Conservatives," and one identified as "Tea Party." 109 participants indicated no preference; 45 identified as "Independent," 60 identified as either "None," "Neither," or "Unaffiliated," three identified as "Both," and one identified as "moderate." In addition, ten participants identified as "Libertarian" and three identified with the Green Party.

Thematic coding

The same, three-coder procedure used in Study 1 was used in Study 2. Undergraduate research assistants read the responses to three open-ended questions ("Why do you identify with your chosen political party?", "Why do you think that the typical Republican affiliates with the Republican Party?", and "Why do you think that they typical Democrat affiliates with the Democratic Party?") and coded them for thematic content. With a mean length of 10.80 words ($SD = 11.\ 80$), partisan responses to the question "Why do you identify with your chosen political party?" were considerably shorter than the responses in Study 1 ($M = 15.46$). The cause of this discrepancy is unknown; although the MTurk sample ($M = 9.98$, $SD = 10.17$) produced slightly shorter responses than the college student sample ($M = 11.42$, $SD = 13.00$), this difference did not reach significance ($p = .237$), and both groups provided responses that were numerically lower than the Study 1 responses.

We only coded for categories of Moral Foundations (Haidt 2012) that showed a significant difference between liberals and conservatives in Study 1 (i.e., Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation). Thus, in regard to coding for Moral Foundations, there were fifteen categories: five for the participants' Political Affiliations, five for Republican Affiliation generally, and five for Democratic Affiliation generally. We also coded for participants invoking Family and Policy Issues as justification for their political affiliation.

Sixteen of the seventeen categories coded for showed sufficient reliability, with Cohen's kappa ranging from .70 (for the coding of Authority/Subversion for Republican

Affiliation responses) to .97 (for the coding of Family for the Political Affiliation responses). The lone exception was the coding of Sanctity/Degradation for Democratic Affiliation responses because none of the coders identified an instance where participants indicated that Democrats were motivated by Sanctity/Degradation.

Interval variables

Participants again indicated their Political Orientation (i.e., the degree to which they were liberal or conservative) on a scale ranging from 0 (*"Very Conservative"*) to 6 (*"Very Liberal"*). Participants also completed three scales: the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis 1980), the Need for Closure Scale (NFC; Roets and Van Hiel 2007), and the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham et al. 2011).

The interpersonal reactivity index

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis 1980) is comprised of 28 statements (e.g. "In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at ease," or "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.") that participants are asked to respond to using a five-point, Likert-like scale (1 = "*Does not describe me well*," 5 = "*Describes me very well*"). The scale has shown satisfactory internal reliability (.71–.77) and test–retest reliability (.62–.71; Davis 1980). It can be divided into subscales measuring Perspective-Taking, Fantasy, Empathic Concern, and Personal Distress.

There remains some dispute as to what constitutes a proper grouping of subscales. Davis (1980) intended the scale to be used as four separate subscales. Pulos, Elison, and Lennon (2004) determined that the first three subscales were distinct from Personal Distress and could be combined into a higher order measure of empathy. Cliffordson (2002) determined that the full scale could be used as a unidimensional construct because it possessed a hierarchical structure, with a general dimension of empathic concern at the apex. We combined the full scale into a single measure for the sake of simplicity in the analysis, and because we expected the subscales to perform in the same direction. Based on previous research (e.g., Graham et al. 2011), we expected IRI scores to be positively associated with individuating foundations (Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating). The inter-item reliability was high for the full scale was high, $\alpha = .84$.

Need for closure scale

The version of the Need for Closure scale used in this study contains 41 items. The items are presented in statement form (e.g. "I don't like to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it," or "When thinking about a problem, I consider as many different opinions on the issue as possible."), and possible answers appear on a six-point, Likert-like scale (1 = "*Strongly Disagree*," 6 = "*Strongly Agree*"). Originally created by Webster and Kruglanski (1994), the scale can be further divided into five subscales: Preference for Predictability, Preference for Order, Decisiveness, Discomfort with Ambiguity, and Close-Mindedness. However, for the current study, the NFC scale was treated as a unidimensional measure.

Study 2 utilizes the version of the NFC scale constructed by Roets and Van Hiel (2007) because the Decisiveness subscale measures that construct as a motivation, rather than a behavior, and fits in with the other subscales when using NFC as a unidimensional construct. Webster and Kruglanski (1994) advocated use of the NFC scale as a unidimensional construct because each of the motivations represented by the five subscales shared an underlying mechanism, and this version of the NFC scale produced a more internally consistent and homogenous construct (Roets and Van Hiel 2007). Reported internal reliability for this version of the scale is high (ranging from .82–.87; Roets and Van Hiel 2007), as is the internal reliability for the current sample (.83). Based on previous research (e.g., Federico et al. 2014), we expected NFC scores to be positively associated with binding foundations (Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation; see Table 4).

Moral foundations questionnaire

Participants also completed the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham et al. 2011) so that we could directly compare results between an explicit measure of moral preferences and the thematic coding of the open-ended responses. We expected MFQ scores to provide a stronger predictor of participants' political orientation than thematic codings. This is because, unlike thematic codings, for which some participants produce a dichotomous score for some of the Moral Foundations, MFQ scores will allow all participants to produce more sensitive values for all the Moral Foundations.

The MFQ measures the original five Moral Foundations: Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation (sometimes referred to as "Purity;" Koleva et al. 2012). The scale consists of two sections: the Moral Relevance and the Moral Judgments sections. For the Moral Relevance section, participants are asked, "When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent are the following considerations relevant to you?" Participants then respond to a list of moral considerations (e.g., "whether or

not someone used violence") using a six-point scale (0 = "*not at all relevant*," 5 = "*extremely relevant*"). For the Moral Judgments section, participants read a series of statements describing different moral issues (e.g., "People should not do things that are revolting to others, even if no one is harmed") and indicate the extent to which they agree with the statement using a six-point scale (0 = "*strongly disagree*," 5 = "*strongly agree*"). Scores from these sections are combined when determining scores for each of the Moral Foundations.

In the past, internal validity for the scales ranged from slightly low ($\alpha = .65$ for Fairness/Cheating) to high ($\alpha = .84$ for Sanctity/Degradation) and test–retest Pearson correlations were found to be adequate, ranging from .68 (Fairness/Cheating) to .82 (Sanctity/Degradation; Graham et al. 2011). The subscales' internal validity for the current sample ranged from .69 (Authority/Subversion) to .82 (Sanctity/Degradation). The alpha for Authority/Subversion was slightly low, but close enough to be included in the current analysis.

Results

To replicate the central findings of Study 1, we conducted Chi square analyses using the presence or absence of a specific Moral Foundation and Political Affiliation (see Table 5). As expected, Care/Harm themes prevailed among Democrats (8.1 %) more than Republicans (.6 %), χ^2 (1, $N = 380$) = 11.00, $p = .001$, $\varphi = -.17$. Fairness/Cheating themes also prevailed among Democrats (22.6 %) more than Republicans (3.8 %), χ^2 (1, $N = 380$) = 26.15, $p < .001$, $\varphi = -.26$. Conversely, Loyalty/Betrayal themes prevailed among Republicans (24.5 %) more than Democrats (12.7 %), χ^2 (1, $N = 380$) = 6.26, $p = .013$, $\varphi = .13$. Authority/Subversion themes prevailed among Republicans (22.0 %) more than Democrats (12.9 %), χ^2 (1, $N = 380$) = 5.84, $p = .016$, $\varphi = .12$. Finally, Sanctity/Degradation themes prevailed among Republicans (7.5 %) more than Democrats (0.0 %), χ^2 (1, $N = 380$) = 17.22, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .21$.

Although the overall rate of themes identified was lower across categories, the pattern of results and relative magnitude of the differences were nearly identical to the results of Study 1. In total, 244 of the 380 (64.2 %) respondents who identified as liberal/Democrat or conservative/Republican provided responses that could not be categorized based on the five Moral Foundations used in this study (possibly due to the lower word count of the response and the exclusion of Liberty/Oppression themes).

Analysis of Family and Policy Issue themes

We coded for use of Family and Specific Topic themes in attempt to replicate and explain the exploratory results of Study 1. Once again, there was a numeric difference between Democrats (13.1 %) and Republicans (19.5 %) in terms of invoking family to justify Political Affiliation. However, a Chi square analysis determined that this difference was only marginally significant, χ^2 (1, $N = 380$) = 2.83, $p = .093$, $\varphi = .09$. The average age of participants in Study 2 was dramatically older than the participants in Study 1, so that may have led to the different result for the two studies. Participants who invoked family themes ($M = 20.82$, $SD = 6.22$) were significantly younger than those who did not ($M = 29.93$, $SD = 13.45$), t (181.89) = 8.28, $p < .001$, $d = 1.22$.

The Chi square also failed to yield a significant difference between the two groups in terms of Policy Issues, $p = .19$. In this case, Republicans had a numerically higher percentage (20.1 %) than Democrats (14.9 %). There was no significant difference between the ages of those who invoked Policy Issues ($M = 27.94$, $SD = 12.74$) and those who did not ($M = 28.60$, $SD = 13.09$), $p = .708$.

Factors predicting the moral foundations

We next analyzed the factors predicting use of the individual moral foundations in the open-ended responses. We did this using a series of binary logistic regression analyses that featured Davis IRI scores (expected to significantly predict use of Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating themes) and NFC scores (expected to significantly predict use of Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation themes) as predictor variables. This analysis involved the entire sample of usable data (i.e., not just self-identified Democrats and Republicans).

For the regression on the presence or absence of Care/Harm themes in the political affiliation statements, IRI scores showed significant predictive ability, *Wald* ($df = 1$, $N = 502$) = 6.99, $B = 1.36$, $p = .008$, such that higher IRI scores were associated with greater use of Care/Harm themes. NFC scores failed to significantly predict Care/Harm themes, $p = .286$.

For the regression conducted on Fairness/Cheating themes, IRI scores showed significant predictive ability, *Wald* ($df = 1$, $N = 502$) = 8.05, $B = .88$, $p = .005$, such that higher IRI scores were associated with greater use of Fairness/Cheating themes. NFC scores failed to significantly predict Fairness/Cheating themes, $p = .618$.

For the regression conducted on Loyalty/Betrayal themes, NFC scores showed significant predictive ability, *Wald* ($df = 1$, $N = 502$) = 13.60, $B = .99$, $p < .001$, such that higher NFC scores were associated with greater use of Loyalty/Betrayal themes. IRI scores failed to significantly predict Loyalty/Betrayal themes, $p = .695$.

For the regression conducted on Authority/Subversion themes, NFC scores showed significant predictive ability,

Table 5 Thematic analyses of self-responses for Study 2

Themes invoked	Democrat ($n = 221$) (%)	Republican ($n = 159$) (%)	Total ($n = 380$)(%)
Moral foundations			
Care/harm**	8.1	.6	5.0
Fairness/cheating**	22.6	3.8	14.7
Loyalty/betrayal*	14.7	24.5	18.7
Authority/subversion*	12.9	22.0	16.6
Sanctity/degradation**	0.0	7.5	3.2

Asterisks indicate significant differences between Democrats and Republicans. Rows and columns are not expected to add up to 100 %

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Wald ($df = 1, N = 502$) $= 10.69, B = .91, p = .001$, such that higher NFC scores were associated with greater use of Authority/Subversion themes. IRI scores failed to significantly predict Authority/Subversion themes, $p = .566$.

For the regression conducted on Sanctity/Degradation themes, NFC scores showed significant predictive ability, *Wald* ($df = 1, N = 502$) $= 4.21, B = 1.27, p = .040$, such that higher NFC scores were associated with greater use of Sanctity/Degradation themes. IRI scores failed to significantly predict Sanctity/Degradation themes, $p = .538$.

Participant perceptions of democrats and republicans

In response to the questions "Why do you think that the typical Republican affiliates with the Republican Party?", and "Why do you think that they typical Democrat affiliates with the Democratic Party?" participants used Care/Harm themes significantly more often to describe Democratic motivations (7.6 %) than Republican motivations (1.0 %; see Table 6), χ^2 (1, $N = 502$) $= 28.66$, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .24$. There was a significant difference between expectation of Fairness/Cheating themes, χ^2 (1, $N = 502$) $= 61.97$, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .35$, such that participants used Fairness/Cheating themes more often to describe Democratic motivations (17.1 %) than Republican motivations (2.6 %).

The trend reversed for Loyalty/Betrayal and Authority/Subversion themes. There was a significant difference between expectation of Loyalty/Betrayal themes, χ^2 (1, $N = 502$) $= 6.05$, $p = .020$, $\varphi = .11$, such that participants used Loyalty/Betrayal themes more often to describe Republican motivations (15.9 %) than Democratic motivations (11.6 %). There also was a significant difference between expectation of Authority/Subversion themes, χ^2 (1, $N = 502$) $= 16.25$, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .18$, such that participants used Authority/Subversion themes more often to describe Republican motivations (13.3 %) than Democratic motivations (6.8 %). Finally, there was a significant difference between the expectation of Sanctity/Degradation themes, χ^2 (1, $N = 502$) $= 30.00$, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .24$, such that participants used Sanctity/Degradation themes more often to describe Republican motivations (6.0 %) than Democratic motivations (0.0 %).

Moral foundations predicting political orientation

Multiple regressions were conducted to determine what factors most strongly predicted Political Orientation scores (an ordinal variable). First, we examined the five Moral Foundations using codings of participants' statements. Then, we used MFQ scores as the predictor variables.

Using the thematic codings, the overall regression model was significant, F (5, 496) $= 4.88$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .05$. Sanctity/Degradation predicted Political Orientation, t (496) $= -3.26$, $\beta = -.15$, $p < .001$, such that use of Sanctity/Degradation themes were associated with increased conservatism. Fairness/Cheating was a marginally significant predictor of Political Orientation, t (496) $= 1.81$, $\beta = .09$, $p = .070$, such that use of Fairness/Cheating themes were associated with decreased conservatism.

Using the MFQ, the overall regression model was significant, F (5, 496) $= 27.73$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .22$. Care/Harm predicted Political Orientation, t (496) $= 2.02$, $\beta = .13$, $p = .044$, such that increasing Care/Harm scores were associated with decreasing conservatism. Fairness/Cheating predicted Political Orientation, t (496) $= 3.99$, $\beta = .24$, $p < .001$, such that increasing Fairness/Cheating scores were associated with decreasing conservatism. Loyalty/Betrayal predicted Political Orientation, t (496) $= -2.50$, $\beta = -.15$, $p = .013$, such that increasing Loyalty/Betrayal scores were associated with increasing conservatism. Authority/Subversion predicted Political Orientation, t (496) $= -2.59$, $\beta = -.16$, $p = .010$, such that increasing Authority/Subversion scores were associated with increasing conservatism. Sanctity/Degradation predicted Political Orientation, t (496) $= -3.54$, $\beta = -.19$, $p < .001$, such that increasing Sanctity/Degradation scores were associated with increasing conservatism.

Table 6 Thematic analyses of other-responses for study 2

Themes invoked	Democrat ($N = 502$) (%)	Republican ($N = 502$) (%)
Moral foundations		
Care/harm*	7.6	1.0
Fairness/cheating*	17.1	2.6
Loyalty/betrayal*	11.6	15.9
Authority/subversion*	6.8	13.3
Sanctity/degradation*	0.0	6.0

Asterisks indicate significant perceived differences between Democrats and Republicans. Rows and columns are not expected to add up to 100 %

* $p < .01$

Discussion

Using a larger, more diverse sample, the general results of Study 2 tracked closely with the results of Study 1. Once again, there was virtually no overlap between Democrats and Republicans in the use of Care/Harm and Sanctity/Degradation themes. Unlike Study 1, the theme with the greatest overlap between the two groups was Authority/Subversion. Thus, it appears that, in terms of using Moral Foundations to justify one's political beliefs, there is a clear and predictable divide between liberals and conservatives. Also, when trying to appeal to someone on the opposite side of the political divide, using Care/Harm-based arguments to appeal to conservatives and using Sanctity/Degradation-based arguments to appeal to liberals would seem equally useless.

In terms of the Family and Policy Issues themes, the difference disappeared when using an older, more diverse sample. Age seems to account for some of the decrease in use of Family themes. There essentially was no difference between the younger sample of Democrats in Study 1 (14.2 %) and the older sample in Study 2 (13.4 %), while the use of Family themes for Republicans dropped precipitously between Study 1 (31.3 %) and Study 2 (19.4 %). Given that there was a lack of significance between Democrats and Republicans regarding use of Policy Issues in Study 2, this could indicate that the justification of conservatives become more sophisticated (i.e., they experience less "moral dumbfounding") in their early-to-mid 20's. However, the lack of age difference between participants who invoked Policy Issues and those that did not undercuts this prospect. It is possible that conservative political justifications evolve in a way that is not measured by the Specific Topic coding, but testing such an evolution would require a broader assortment of dependent measures and a longitudinal design.

The cognitive characteristics underlying participants' moral justifications were consistent with previous research. IRI scores significantly predicted use of Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating themes, while NFC scores significantly predicted use of Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation themes. It is not surprising that the IRI was more closely related to individuating foundations, given that Graham et al. (2011) used the empathy subscale of the IRI when constructing the Care/Harm subscale for the MFQ. However, the predictive ability for IRI scores was even stronger for Fairness/Cheating themes then Care/Harm themes. Broadly speaking, the underlying traits of participants invoking binding versus individuating foundations follows closely with existing research (e.g., Federico et al. 2014).

In terms of participants' perceptions of the motivations of Democrats and Republicans, stereotypic perceptions actually produced less of a division (37.9 % total difference between use of themes describing Moral Foundations; Table 6) than the actual division (52.7 %; Table 5). In fact, on all five Moral Foundations, there was less perceived division than actual division. This was somewhat unexpected and counterintuitive: broad generalizations about the "typical" Democrat or Republican were actually *less* extreme than the self-perceptions of Democrats and Republicans.

The actual ability of the Moral Foundations to predict participants' political orientation was much greater than the acknowledged ability of the Moral Foundations to do so. That is, the effect size for the MFQ ($R^2 = .22$) was much greater than when using codings from the open-ended justifications ($R^2 = .05$). Also, as measured by the MFQ, all five Moral Foundations examined were significant predictors, while only Sanctity/Degradation (a construct that seemingly applies only to conservatives) remained significant when the five thematic codings were used as predictors. These results could indicate another example of so-called "moral dumbfounding" (Haidt 2001), in that participants appear to have been influenced by their moral preferences to a much greater extent than they acknowledge.

Undoubtedly, the effect for the thematic codings was reduced by the inclusion of independent and unaffiliated voters (because participants have difficulty justifying their political affiliations if they have no political affiliations).

However, part of the point of this analysis is that the subscales of the MFQ failed to become non-significant with a similarly broad sample; when explicitly asked about their moral attitudes and required to provide a rating, these attitudes were highly predictive of participants' political orientation. When asked to explain the source of their political affiliations, participants often either had no answer or provided answers that minimized their reliance on Moral Foundations. So, while Moral Foundations were clearly influential on participants' political orientation, and when used they provide a clear division in the motivations of political partisans, the effect of most of the Moral Foundations is clearly underestimated by participants in their conscious assessment of the motivations behind their political beliefs.

General discussion

Study 1 examined the ability of participants who favored a particular political party to overtly access their moral motivations in comparison to published studies that have indicated their underlying motivations. Study 2 expanded upon this examining the extent that Moral Foundations actually motivate individuals' political affiliations, as compared to what those same individuals profess to be their motivations. It also examined whether predictors of one's moral motivations were also predictors of one's professed moral motivations. Finally, we compared the one's professed moral motivations with the stereotype of the moral motivations of members of one's favored political party.

Taken together, these results indicate that our conceptions of morality (as defined by Moral Foundations Theory) influence participants' articulated motivations for affiliating with a particular political party or adopting a particular political philosophy. However, participants appear to underestimate the role of that their moral beliefs play in their political beliefs. A majority of participants did not invoke a moral foundation at all when articulating their political beliefs, and some of the most powerful predictors of participants' political beliefs (e.g., sanctity) were seldom mentioned.

In addition, when asked to articulate one's political beliefs, there is a deeper division between the moral motivations of liberals and conservatives than measures like the MFQ would suggest, deeper even than the stereotypes of liberal and conservative motivation would predict. This indicates that, even though there may be actual categorical overlap in terms of participants' motivations for adopting a political philosophy, from the subjective perspective of some participants, the motivational separation between political "tribes" may appear absolute.

Limitations and future directions

Responses to the open-ended question varied greatly in length, and some were quite short. A minimum length requirement may have generated a higher volume of usable statements. In addition, the disparity in cell sizes may have limited the significance in some analyses using thematic coding. Finally, we regret not finding enough self-identified Libertarians in the sample to specifically analyze their political motivations, as their inclusion would allow us to examine the Liberty/Oppression themes more thoroughly.

Future directions for this line of research include examining how individual difference variables (e.g., need for cognition, emotional intelligence) associated with self-awareness influence one's ability to access motivations for political affiliation. Another possibility involves comparing accessing a non-U.S. sample, preferably from a society with a more pluralistic political system. The current sample produced a pair of predictable, highly correlated clusters: Care/Harm with Fairness/Cheating and Loyalty/Betrayal with Authority/Subversion. Examining a sample from a pluralistic political system might reveal less clustering (e.g., Loyalty/Betrayal might be the preference for participants affiliating with a nativist political party, while Authority/Subversion might stand out among individuals affiliating with a political party emphasizing national security).

Appendix 1

Examples of statements that coders identified as containing each Moral Foundation:

1. Care/Harm
   "They offer to help the middle class."
   "I feel they care about others…"
2. Fairness/Cheating
   "Equality for all man, woman, race ethnicity."
   "Very supportive of equal rights and everyone getting a fair chance to make something of themselves."
3. Loyalty/Betrayal
   "More for middle class and low income, which I fall under."
   "My family chooses that party."
4. Authority/Subversion
   "Took an online quiz a year ago to see what side I am on. It said I was more republican than democrat."
   "I identify with conservative because I believe in the moral and fundamental rights this country was first founded on."

5. Sanctity/Degradation

   "I have strong Christian morals."
   "I identify with Republicans because I am very conservative in my way of thinking and tend to appreciate 'older' morals and values as compared to more Liberal styles of thinking and living."

6. Liberty/Oppression

   "I think everyone should do their own thing."
   "I think government should have very little part of our lives and much less power than they do."

Appendix 2

Descriptions of Moral Foundations provided to coders:
From Koleva et al. (2012)

1. The *care/harm foundation* "leads us to disprove of individuals that cause pain and suffering and to approve of those who prevent or alleviate harm."
2. The *fairness/cheating foundation* "makes us sensitive to issues of equality and justice and leads us to frown upon people that violate these principles."
3. The *loyalty/betrayal foundation* "is based on our attachment to groups (e.g., our family, church, or country), leading us to approve of those who contribute to the group's well-being and cohesion."
4. The *authority/subversion foundation* "is based on our tendency to create hierarchically structured societies of dominance and subordination. This foundation includes approval of individuals who fulfill the duties associated with their position on the social ladder, for example by showing good leadership, or obedience."
5. The *sanctity/degradation foundation* "is based on the emotion of disgust in response to biological contaminants (e.g., feces or rotten food), and to various social contaminants like spiritual corruption, or the inability to control one's base impulses."

From Haidt (2012)

6. The *liberty/oppression foundation* "is based on the emotion of righteous anger, caused by reactance to aggressive, controlling behavior by a dominant entity."

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