Priming Moral Reasoning Using Text

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Research Question

Is our moral view of the world affected by exposure to the moral reasoning of others?

Moral Foundations Theory

Haidt & Joseph (2004)

5 categories of moral concerns:

- Authority (*comply; respect; protest*)
- Fairness (reasonable; *rights; prejudice*)
- Harm (*protection; safety; suffered*)
- Loyalty (*enemy; member; together*)
- Purity (*integrity; pervert; preserve*)

Moral Foundations Questionnaire
(Graham et al., 2011)

- Designed to measure individual differences in the importance of moral concerns
- 2 parts with 15 questions each

Moral Foundations Dictionary
(Graham et al., 2009)

- A set of terms associated with each concern

Materials

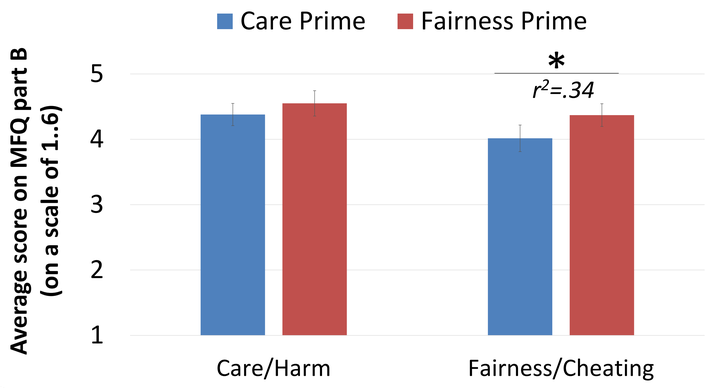
(from Sagi & Dehghani, 2014)

Selected from a corpus of tweets about the U.S. Federal Shutdown (Sep.-Oct. 2013; 421k tweets)

- Automatically scored on the 5 moral concerns
- Priming materials:
  - 14 tweets that were high in *fairness/cheating*
  - 14 tweets that were high in *care/harm*
- Rating materials:
  - 25 tweets (5 tweets relevant to each of the 5 moral concerns)

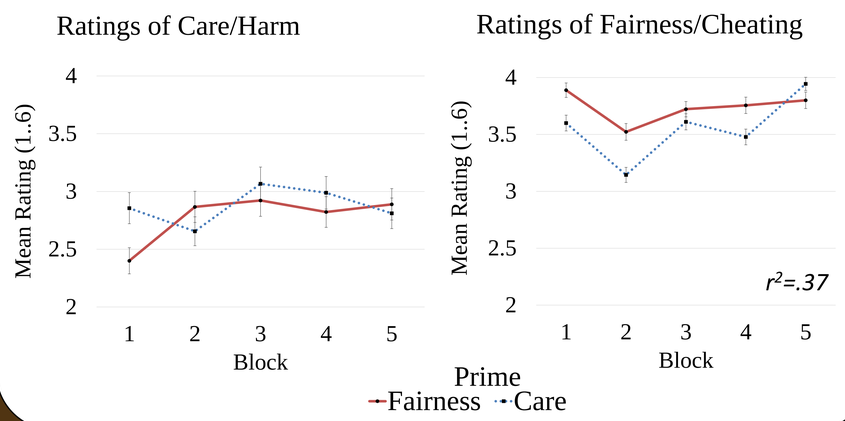
Measure I: Moral Foundations Questionnaire

- 36 *P*s rated agreement with 14 priming tweets (*fairness* or *care)*
- Completed Part B of the MFQ
- Analysis used their score on part A (pre-priming) as a covariate



Measure II: Ratings of Tweets

- 36 *P*s rated 25 different tweets on the relevancy of all 5 concerns
- Analysis included the order in which tweets were rated (in blocks of 5)



Samples of primes

Fairness/Cheating

- "Liberal #Congress members claim that the law must apply equally to all...well, except them. #Obamacare #Dems #GOP"
- "Hey #GOP look up the 14th amendment! If u love the Constitution Founding Fathers so much, then ADHERE to the law of the land. #JustVote"
- "Liberals progressives say that #obamacare is the law of the land, but they ignore illegals breaking the law of the land!"

Care/Harm

- "Refugees Waiting Overseas Are in Limbo as U.S. Shutdown Continues #refugees #shutdown #resettlement #newcomers #USA"
- "Outrageous not paying death benefits to families of our fallen servicemen! This SOB #Obama looking for a civil war to become dictator!"
- "Dr. Seuss's #Congress Who Stole #SNAP: Kids seniors face health risks due to #GovernmentShutdown. #PublicPolicy"

Results

- Observed a priming effect for *fairness* but not for *care*
  - Possibly due to a ceiling effect?
- Priming affected both *perceived importance* and *ratings of relevance*
- Effect might be short-lived

Future Studies

- Replicate with other concerns
- Does agreement with the content matter?
- Can this type of priming affect long-term change?

References

1. Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96(5)*, 1029–1046.
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3. Haidt, J., & Joseph, C. (2004). Intuitive ethics: How innately prepared intuitions generate culturally variable virtues. Daedalus, 133(4), 55–66.
4. Sagi, E., & Dehghani, M. (2014) Moral Rhetoric in Twitter: A Case Study of the U.S. Federal Shutdown of 2013. In P. Bello, Guarini, M., McShane, M., & Scassellati, B., *Proceedings of the 36th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* (pp. 1347-1352).