



FIGURE 8.1. *The first evidence for Moral Foundations Theory.* (Adapted with permission from Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009, p. 1033; published by the American Psychological Association.)

morality.⁴ As we move to the right, however, the lines slope upward. By the time we reach people who are “very conservative,” all five lines have converged. We can say, as shorthand, that conservatives have a five-foundation morality. But can it really be true that conservatives care about a broader range of moral values and issues than do liberals? Or did this pattern only arise because of the particular questions that we happened to ask?

Over the next year, Jesse, Brian, and I refined the MFQ. We added questions that asked people to rate their agreement with statements we wrote to trigger intuitions related to each foundation. For example, do you agree with this Care item: “One of the worst things a person can do is to hurt a defenseless animal”? How about this Loyalty item: “It is more

important to be a team player than to express oneself”? Jesse’s original findings replicated beautifully. We found the same pattern as in figure 8.1, and we found it in subjects from many countries besides the United States.⁵

I began to show our graphs whenever I gave lectures about moral psychology. Ravi Iyer, a graduate student at the University of Southern California, heard me speak in the fall of 2006 and emailed me to ask if he could use the MFQ in his research on attitudes about immigration. Ravi was a skilled Web programmer, and he offered to help Jesse and me create a website for our own research. At around the same time, Sena Koleva, a graduate student at the University of California at Irvine, asked me if she could use the MFQ. Sena was studying political psychology with her advisor, Pete Ditto (whose work on “motivated reasoning” I described in chapter 4). I said yes to both requests.

Every January, social psychologists from all over the world flock to a single conference to learn about each other’s work—and to gossip, network, and drink. In 2007, that conference was held in Memphis, Tennessee. Ravi, Sena, Pete, Jesse, and I met late one evening at the hotel bar, to share our findings and get to know one another.

All five of us were politically liberal, yet we shared the same concern about the way our liberal field approached political psychology. The goal of so much research was to explain what was wrong with conservatives. (Why don’t conservatives embrace equality, diversity, and change, like normal people?) Just that day, in a session on political psychology, several of the speakers had made jokes about conservatives, or about the cognitive limitations of President Bush. All five of us felt this was wrong, not just morally (because it creates a hostile climate for the few conservatives who might have been in the audience) but also scientifically (because it reveals a motiva-