

tion to reach certain conclusions, and we all knew how easy it is for people to reach their desired conclusions).⁶ The five of us also shared a deep concern about the polarization and incivility of American political life, and we wanted to use moral psychology to help political partisans understand and respect each other.

We talked about several ideas for future studies, and for each one Ravi said, “You know, we could do that online.” He proposed that we create a website where people could register when they first visit, and then take part in dozens of studies on moral and political psychology. We could then link all of their responses together and develop a comprehensive moral profile for each (anonymous) visitor. In return, we’d give visitors detailed feedback, showing them how they compared to others. If we made the feedback interesting enough, people would tell their friends about the site.

Over the next few months, Ravi designed the website—www.YourMorals.org—and the five of us worked together to improve it. On May 9 we got approval from the UVA human subjects committee to conduct the research, and the site went live the next day. Within a few weeks we were getting ten or more visitors a day. Then, in August, the science writer Nicholas Wade interviewed me for an article in the *New York Times* on the roots of morality.⁷ He included the name of our website. The article ran on September 18, and by the end of that week, 26,000 new visitors had completed one or more of our surveys.

Figure 8.2 shows our data on the MFQ as it stood in 2011, with more than 130,000 subjects. We’ve made many improvements since Jesse’s first simple survey, but we always find the same basic pattern that he found in 2006. The lines for Care and Fairness slant downward; the lines for Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity slant upward. Liberals value Care and Fair-

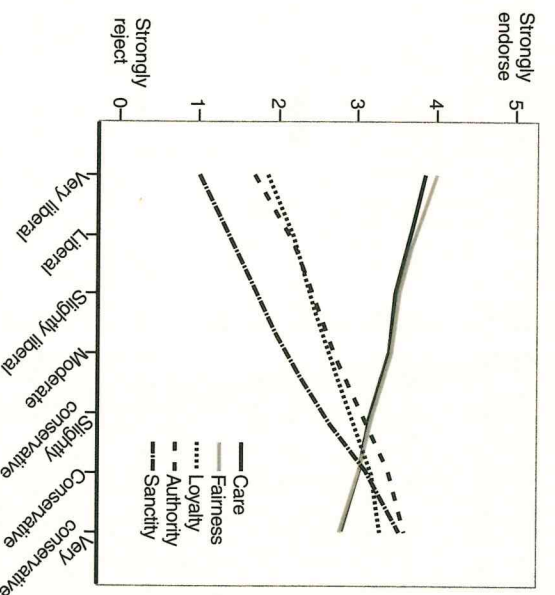


FIGURE 8.2. Scores on the MFQ, from 132,000 subjects, in 2011. Data from YourMorals.org.

ness far more than the other three foundations; conservatives endorse all five foundations more or less equally.⁸

We’ve found this basic difference no matter how we ask the questions. For example, in one study we asked people which traits would make them more or less likely to choose a particular breed of dog as a pet. On which side of the political spectrum do you suppose these traits would be most appealing?

- The breed is extremely gentle.
- The breed is very independent-minded and relates to its owner as a friend and equal.
- The breed is extremely loyal to its home and family and it doesn’t warm up quickly to strangers.
- The breed is very obedient and is easily trained to take orders.