

speech on Father's Day at a black church, he praised marriage and the traditional two-parent family, and he called on black men to take more responsibility for their children.¹² When he gave a speech on patriotism, he criticized the liberal counter-culture of the 1960s for burning American flags and for failing to honor veterans returning from Vietnam.¹³

But as the summer of 2008 went on, I began to worry. His speech to a major civil rights organization was all about social justice and corporate greed.¹⁴ It used only the Care and Fairness foundations, and fairness often meant equality of outcomes. In his famous speech in Berlin, he introduced himself as "a fellow citizen of the world" and he spoke of "global citizenship."¹⁵ He had created a controversy earlier in the summer by refusing to wear an American flag pin on the lapel of his jacket, as American politicians typically do. The controversy seemed absurd to liberals, but the Berlin speech reinforced the emerging conservative narrative that Obama was a liberal universalist, someone who could not be trusted to put the interests of his nation above the interests of the rest of the world. His opponent, John McCain, took advantage of Obama's failure to build on the Loyalty foundation with his own campaign motto: "Country First."

Anxious that Obama would go the way of Gore and Kerry, I wrote an essay applying Moral Foundations Theory to the presidential race. I wanted to show Democrats how they could talk about policy issues in ways that would activate more than two foundations. John Brockman, who runs an online scientific salon at Edge.org, invited me to publish the essay at Edge,¹⁶ as long as I stripped out most of the advice and focused on the moral psychology.

I titled the essay "What Makes People Vote Republican?" I began by summarizing the standard explanations that psychologists had offered for decades: Conservatives are conservative

because they were raised by overly strict parents, or because they are inordinately afraid of change, novelty, and complexity, or because they suffer from existential fears and therefore cling to a simple worldview with no shades of gray.¹⁷ These approaches all had one feature in common: they used psychology to explain away conservatism. They made it unnecessary for liberals to take conservative ideas seriously because these ideas are caused by bad childhoods or ugly personality traits. I suggested a very different approach: start by assuming that conservatives are just as sincere as liberals, and then use Moral Foundations Theory to understand the moral matrices of both sides.

The key idea in the essay was that there are two radically different approaches to the challenge of creating a society in which unrelated people can live together peacefully. One approach was exemplified by John Stuart Mill, the other by the great French sociologist Emile Durkheim. I described Mill's vision like this:

First, imagine society as a social contract invented for our mutual benefit. All individuals are equal, and all should be left as free as possible to move, develop talents, and form relationships as they please. The patron saint of a contractual society is John Stuart Mill, who wrote (in *On Liberty*) that "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others." Mill's vision appeals to many liberals and libertarians; a Millian society at its best would be a peaceful, open, and creative place where diverse individuals respect each other's rights and band together voluntarily (as in Obama's calls for "unity") to help those in need or to change the laws for the common good.