

## Developing Moral Intelligence

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### FINDING COMMON GROUND

#### Moral Foundations Theory

	CARE/harm	FAIRNESS/Cheating	LOYALTY/betrayal	AUTHORITY/subversion	SANCTITY/degradation
Adaptive Challenge	protect and care for children	reap benefits of two-way partnerships	form cohesive coalitions	forge beneficial relationships within hierarchies	avoid contaminants
Original Triggers	suffering, distress, or neediness expressed by one's child	deception, cheating, cooperation	threat or challenge to group	signs of dominance and submission	waste products, diseased people
Current Triggers	baby seals, cute cartoon characters	marital fidelity, broken vending machines	sports teams, nations	bosses, respected professionals	taboo ideas (communism, racism)
Characteristic Emotions	compassion	anger, guilt, gratitude	group pride, rage at traitors	respect, fear	disgust
Relevant Virtues	caring, kindness	fairness, justice, trustworthiness	loyalty, patriotism, self-sacrifice	obedience, deference	temperance, chastity, piety, cleanliness

Jonathan Haidt writes in *The Righteous Mind*: [My research colleague] and I tried to identify the best candidates for being the universal cognitive modules upon which cultures construct moral matrices. ... We created it by identifying the adaptive challenges of social life that evolutionary psychologists frequently wrote about and then connecting those challenges to virtues that are found in some form in many cultures (146).

[Innateness is defined] as “organized in advance of experience,” like the first draft of a book that gets revised as individuals grow up within diverse cultures. [Moral foundations are innate but particular rules and virtues vary across cultures, so you’ll get fooled if you look for universality in the finished books.] You won’t find a single paragraph that exists in identical form in every human culture. But...you can take some educated guesses about what was in the universal first draft of human nature (Haidt, 178-179).

Five adaptive challenges stood out most clearly: caring for vulnerable children, forming partnerships with non-kin to reap the benefits of reciprocity, forming coalitions to compete with other coalitions, negotiating status hierarchies, and keeping oneself and one’s kin free from parasites and pathogens, which spread quickly when people live in close proximity to each other. The first row gives adaptive challenges. If our ancestors faced these challenges for hundreds of thousands of years, then natural selection would favor those whose cognitive modules helped them to get things right—rapidly and intuitively—compared to those who had to rely upon their general intelligence (the rider) to solve recurrent problems. The second row gives the original triggers—that is, the sorts of social patterns that such a module should detect. The third row lists examples of the current triggers—the sorts of thing that do in fact trigger the relevant modules (sometimes by mistake) for people in a modern Western society. The fourth row lists some emotions that are part of the output of each foundation, at least when the foundation is activated very strongly. The fifth row lists some of the virtue words that we use to talk about people who trigger a particular moral “taste” in our minds (147).

To these five foundations, Haidt later added the liberty/oppression foundation, which makes people notice and resent any sign of attempted domination. It triggers an urge to band together to resist or overthrow bullies and tyrants. This foundation supports the egalitarianism and antiauthoritarianism of the left, as well as the don’t-tread-on-me and give-me-liberty antigovernment anger of libertarians and some conservatives (Haidt, 215).

## **Bridging the Political Divide, Rob Willer**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/robb\\_willer\\_how\\_to\\_have\\_better\\_political\\_conversations?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/robb_willer_how_to_have_better_political_conversations?language=en)

- Moral values are the most deeply held.
- The political divide is undergirded by a deeper moral divide.
- Appeals to change political beliefs that require changing underlying moral values won't work.
- Moral reframing: Connecting issues to moral values. *Honor* others' values and incorporate them into your argument.
- Liberals tend to value these foundations most: care, fairness, and liberty.
  - Evocative words: equal rights, equity, protection from harm, safe, peace, compassion, shield, shelter, preserve, suffer, violence, hurt, kill, endanger, cruel, abuse, exploit, fair play, justice, reciprocal, evenness, tolerant, equable, balance, reasonable, constant
- Conservatives tend to value these foundations most: loyalty, authority, and sanctity.
  - Evocative words: patriotism, homeland, family, unity, fellow, insider, foreign, betray, treason, traitor, deserter, imposter, miscreant, obey, duty, law, honor, respect, order, tradition, hierarchy, leader, rank, command, abide, comply, revere, venerate, obstruct, purity, pious, chaste, wholesome, modest, immaculate, innocent, pristine, disgust, depraved, disease, unclean, contagion, profane, filth, taint

## OTHER RESOURCES

### ***The messy truth about the gulf between Trump and Clinton voters***

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/11/12/opinions/van-jones-messy-truth/>

By Van Jones

[I want]...to cultivate a deeper sense of empathy—in myself and in our country. That's what we seem to be missing—and secretly longing for. To be clear: This increase in empathy will not *decrease* our disagreements. After all, constructive disagreement and democratic debate is the basis of all progress. Democracies advance themselves through the creative use of our disagreements. But more empathy and understanding can keep us from needlessly inflaming one another, and this should create the conditions for a better understanding of our differences. Deeper insight can only help all sides.

Therefore, I am inviting everyone who watches this series to have a #MessyTruth conversation. Talk (and listen) to someone with whom you *don't* agree. Ask questions about anything that doesn't sound right to you. But don't just fight back. Try to listen. In fact, before you respond at all, carefully repeat back what you hear -- just to make sure you truly understand the other person. Then share your own views and feelings. Be passionate. But be compassionate, too.

### **Tennessee Students and Educators for Social Justice**

<https://tnsocialjustice.wordpress.com/?blogsub=confirming#subscribe-blog>

Leonard Curry, Vanderbilt PhD Candidate, guest blog post

“For white people—Step one: disintegrate whiteness. Find particularity again. Know your racial histories. Learn multiple narratives. Locate your individuality within community. Step two: abandon the logic of scarcity; invest in something other than your best interest. Invest in other people. Find a cause that you believe in that is bigger than your own purity, safety, guilt, or lonesomeness. Do explicitly racial, anti-racist work. Do it everyday. Step three: give up power, share power, empower others, amplify their voices, only know what can be rightly known through encounter and the gift of exchange; be undone by another; learn limits.”