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Ideology-Specific Patterns of Moral Indifference Predict Intentions Not to Vote

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Results from a nationally representative survey ($N = 1,341$) provide evidence that self-reported nonvoting behavior is associated with lower endorsement of moral concerns and values (Study 1). Across three studies, five large samples (total $N = 27,038$), and two presidential elections, we replicate this pattern and show that the explicit intention not to vote is associated with lower endorsement of moral concerns and values (Studies 2–4). This pattern was not found for endorsement of nonmoral values. Separate analyses for liberals, conservatives, libertarians, and Tea Party supporters reveal that the intention not to vote is specifically associated with low endorsement of the moral concerns most associated with one's ideological group: Care and Fairness concerns predicted voting intentions for liberals, while Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity concerns predicted voting intentions for conservatives and members of the Tea Party group FreedomWorks.

Only 57% of eligible United States citizens voted in the 2012 presidential election, compared to an average of 83% in other Western countries (File &

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Crissey, 2012). The 2008 voter turnout of 64% was not much better, reflecting a larger trend of chronically low U.S. voter turnout (Pintor, Gratschew, & Sullivan, 2002). In the past, most of the explanations for why people do not vote have focused on pragmatic barriers, such as difficulty getting to polling locations, inclement weather, and lack of time (Nickerson & Rogers, 2010). However, the U.S. Census (2012) found that 46% of those who did not register to vote said they were simply not interested in the election. This statistic indicates that focusing on pragmatic obstacles for voting alone may not address the underlying individual-level differences in motivation to, and interest in, voting, which play an integral role long before Election Day concerns may arise.

Research in psychology and political science has provided clues to some factors that may reduce interest in politics and subsequent motivation to vote. Many scholars argue that morality is an important determinant of political behavior generally (Hunter, 1991; Koleva, Graham, Iyer, Ditto, & Haidt, 2012; Lakoff 2002), and existing evidence seems to support this claim. Although most research on morality focuses on judgments, morality can also motivate behavior by helping to define what a person believes is worthy and valuable or unworthy and necessary to avoid (Smith, 2003; Vaisey, 2009). Because of this, it is reasonable to investigate how moral differences can help account for differences in voting behavior.

In this article, we make use of Haidt and Kesebir's (2010) recently broadened definition of morality: "Moral systems are interlocking sets of values, virtues, norms, practices, identities, institutions, technologies, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate selfishness and make social life possible" (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010, p. 800). This definition centers on the functions of moral systems and moral values, but does not constrain the moral domain in terms of content. But which moral concerns are most salient for predicting voting? Concerns over family values led to the rise of the Right during the last few decades of the 20th century (Gross, Medvetz, & Russell, 2011), and moral concerns continue to predict political outcomes today. For example, one study found that moral constructs explain nearly a third of the variation in political attitudes and behaviors, including voting, during the 2008 election (Miles & Vaisey, under review). With regard to voting specifically, some scholars have theorized that the higher rates of voting by female, religious, and older individuals may be because these individuals frame decisions in more moral terms (Blais, 2000). In addition, feeling like the act of voting is tied to one's core moral beliefs about right and wrong has been shown to be correlated with higher intentions to vote in the future (Morgan, Skitka, & Wisneski, 2010).

Another important underlying component of both politics and morality is the extent to which these domains bind individuals together into tightly knit communities (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Haidt & Graham, 2009; Smith, 2003; Vaisey, 2007). Given the social function of moral judgment (Haidt, 2007), one might infer that individuals who are less morally motivated may also be less susceptible to social and value-driven forces, and thus have lower voting intentions.

Research has shown that collective norms (Knack, 1992) and feelings of shared values with one's political candidate (Schemer, Wirth, & Matthes, 2012) influence voter turnout. Participation in social groups (Olsen, 1972), connectedness with others within one's community (Hasen, 1996), and social pressures to be politically active (Bond et al., 2012) have also been found to influence the decision to vote. Voting can be seen as a public goods game, wherein moral concerns motivate us to overcome our selfish considerations for the benefit of our group (Fowler, 2006); as such, reduced moral and prosocial concerns—and increased selfish concerns—could be one factor explaining why people might lack even the intention to vote in the first place. Taken together, the literature on voting intentions has suggested that moral values influence the decision to vote through multiple pathways.

If values, more broadly, are strong motivators for political judgments and behaviors, do individual differences in moral motivation predict the active decision not to vote? To date, research on the relationship between morality and politics has focused primarily on political engagement, not disengagement. We hypothesized that voting behavior results from moral motivation and as such, identifying oneself as someone who intends not to vote should be associated with lower levels of concerns about morality. The present studies test the hypothesis that low moral motivation will predict self-reported voting behavior in 2008 (Study 1), and will predict the explicit intention not to vote in the 2008 election (Study 2), the 2012 election (Study 3), and for a unique political group of Tea Party supporters surveyed during the 2012 election recruited from the FreedomWorks email list (Study 4). In addition, given that feeling unrepresented by one's political candidates can lead to nonvoting behavior (Shaffer, 1982), it is also possible that those whose own moral concerns do not match their political group would feel disinclined to intend to vote for any candidate.

Study 1

As a first test of our hypotheses, we analyzed data from the Measuring Morality survey, a nationally representative survey administered by Knowledge Networks in 2012. We hypothesized that moral indifference (but not indifference toward nonmoral values) would be associated with past nonvoting behavior.

Method

The Measuring Morality survey drew 1,342 participants from a nationally representative panel of adults maintained by Knowledge Networks (<http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp>), and focused on individual differences in morality. All participants were American citizens who were of eligible age to vote. Participants completed the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ; Schwartz et al., 2001) and a short version of the Moral Foundations Sacredness Scale (MFSS; Graham & Haidt, 2012), among several other measures

and questions. (For more information, see <http://kenan.ethics.duke.edu/attitudes/resources/measuring-morality/>.)

For the PVQ, participants read 21 short descriptions of a person that reflect one of the 10 Schwartz Value Survey subscales—Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-direction, Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, and Security—and answered “How much like you is this person?” on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*not like me at all*) to 6 (*very much like me*; Schwartz, 1992). Schwartz (1994) originally combined a subset of these domains into two groups, which he labels self-enhancement (i.e., Power and Achievement), with a “focus on self-centered satisfaction” and self-transcendence (i.e., Universalism and Benevolence), which involves the “enhancement of others and transcendence of selfish interests” (p. 25). Given the above definition of moral systems as selfishness suppression (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010), we refer to the self-transcendent values as “moral” and the self-enhancement values as “nonmoral”—however, we note that even self-interested values can become moralized in some situations. In addition, we also consider Schwartz’s conservation value group (i.e., Conformity, Tradition, and Security) to be within the moral domain. This value group reflects the binding moral foundations identified by Moral Foundations Theory (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009), and play an important role in binding individuals within moral communities.

For the MFSS, participants indicated how much money someone would have to pay them anonymously and secretly in order to do three actions violating each of five different moral concerns: Care/harm, Fairness/cheating, Loyalty/betrayal, Authority/subversion, and Sanctity/degradation. For example, “Kick a dog in the head, hard” was an item representing a violation of Care. These five moral concerns form two aggregate scores: Care–Fairness are referred to as “individualizing foundations,” and Loyalty—Authority—Sanctity are referred to as “binding foundations.” Response options were \$0 (I’d do it for free), \$10, \$100, \$1,000, \$10,000, \$100,000, a million dollars, and “never for any amount of money.” Finally, participants indicated whether they voted in the 2008 presidential election; 228 (17.5%) said they did not vote, and 1074 (82.5%) said they did vote.

Results and Discussion

To test whether low moral concerns would predict past nonvoting behavior, we ran a separate logistic regression analysis for each of the Schwartz and MFSS subscales individually to predict reports of not voting in 2008 (1 = did not vote, 0 = voted). Model fit was assessed using Bayesian information criteria statistics, where lower scores indicate better fit (Allison, 1999). First, results of these analyses indicated that participants who scored low on Moral Foundation Sacredness subscales were significantly less likely to have voted in 2008 (see Table 1). This result was the case for both individualizing and binding foundation aggregates;

Table 1. Low Value and Moral Sacredness Endorsement Predicts Nonvoting in 2008 (Study 1)

	All (<i>N</i> = 1,342)	Nonvoters <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Voters <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
MFSS			
Care	-.12 (.07)	7.45 (1.01)	7.57 (.92)
Fairness	-.20 (.05)***	6.98 (1.51)	7.32 (1.14)
<i>Individualizing average</i>	-.20 (.07)***	7.22 (1.43)	7.45 (.93)
Loyalty	-.09 (.06)	7.09 (1.29)	7.24 (1.22)
Authority	-.13 (.04)***	6.19 (1.73)	6.59 (1.67)
Sanctity	-.06 (.05)	6.58 (1.51)	6.72 (1.45)
<i>Binding average</i>	-.15 (.06)**	6.62 (1.26)	6.85 (1.20)
All		Nonvoters	Voters
	(<i>N</i> = 1,340)	(<i>n</i> = 226)	(<i>n</i> = 1,065)
	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
SPVQ			
Benevolence	-.15 (.07)**	4.47 (1.15)	4.65 (1.02)
Conformity	-.26 (.06)***	3.72 (1.34)	4.10 (1.14)
Tradition	-.26 (.07)***	3.86 (1.18)	4.18 (1.06)
Universalism	-.28 (.07)***	4.26 (1.11)	4.53 (.91)
Security	-.27 (.06)***	4.00 (1.25)	4.36 (1.09)
<i>Moral average</i>	-.43 (.09)***	4.06 (.97)	4.65 (.75)
Achievement	-.01 (.06)	3.55 (1.29)	3.56 (1.25)
Hedonism	.04 (.06)	3.63 (1.30)	3.58 (1.19)
Power	.01 (.07)	3.08 (1.11)	3.07 (1.11)
Self-direction	-.14 (.07)	4.26 (1.24)	4.41 (.97)
Stimulation	-.07 (.06)	3.46 (1.15)	3.55 (1.15)
<i>Nonmoral average</i>	-.i.04 (.08)	3.60 (1.00)	3.63 (.87)

Note. Predicted effects are in bold. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. MFSS = Moral Foundations Sacredness Scale, SPVQ = Schwartz Portrait Values Questionnaire.

for the individual subscales, Fairness and Authority significantly predicted reported voting behavior, and the relationship (more value endorsement relating to decreased reports of nonvoting behavior) was in the same direction for all five subscales. To determine whether effects were driven by nonvoters scoring low on any type of values questionnaire, we also regressed Schwartz moral and nonmoral value scores on voting reports. Again, low scores on moral values significantly predicted reports of not voting. However, nonmoral value scores did not show this effect, suggesting that the relationship between value endorsements and nonvoting intentions is specific to morality.

Study 2

The results in Study 1 provide compelling evidence for the role of moral indifference in predicting self-reported voting behavior. However, because these were retrospective reports of voting behavior, we were not able to distinguish individuals who specifically intended not to vote from those who intended to vote but did not make it to the polls for other reasons. It is possible that moral values simply correlate with general conscientiousness in getting to the voting booth,

rather than affecting explicit intentions to vote or not to vote (while it is possible that some may refrain from voting for conscientiousness-related reasons such as protesting a corrupt election, these data do not allow us to detect this). In order to further specify how moral indifference may lead to explicit intentions to not vote in the future independent of pragmatic Election Day obstacles, Study 2 (and all subsequent studies) turned to prospective voting intentions.

Method

Participants were adult American volunteers of eligible age to vote visiting the YourMorals.org Web site during the 2008 presidential campaign between June 14, 2008 and November 5, 2008 (dates represent the time range from when the voting question was added to the website until the date of the election). Participants completed either the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham et al., 2011) or the Schwartz Values Scale (Schwartz, 1992). All participants were United States citizens ($N = 12,602$, 35.9% female, median age = 31). YourMorals.org is a data collection platform where participants take part in any of 6–8 featured and 30–40 overall studies. Upon completion of each scale, a graph including the participant's own score in comparison to others was provided.

For the MFQ, participants indicated valuation and endorsement of five kinds of moral concerns—Care/harm, Fairness/cheating, Loyalty/betrayal, Authority/subversion, and Sanctity/degradation—on a 6-point scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all relevant*) to 6 (*extremely relevant*) for part 1, and 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*) for part 2. For the Schwartz Values Scale, participants answered how important 10 value subscales—Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-direction, Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, and Security—are as life-guiding principles on a 9-point scale, ranging from 1 (*opposed to my principles*) to 9 (*of supreme importance*).

All participants reported who they planned on voting for in the upcoming 2008 election: Barack Obama, John McCain, a third-party candidate, undecided, or specifically planning not to vote. Analyses compare those who chose “not planning on voting” (MFQ $n = 345$, Schwartz $n = 74$) to all other participants. Participants indicated political ideology on a 7-point scale from 1 (*very liberal*) to 7 (*very conservative*), with three additional options: libertarian, do not know/not political, or other as well as other demographic variables previously at time of registration.

Results and Discussion

Using the same analysis procedures as Study 1 to test whether low moral concerns would predict intentions to not vote, we ran a series of logistic regressions with each MFQ and Schwartz value subscale separately predicting the intention

Table 2. Low Value and Moral Foundation Endorsement Predicts Nonvoting Intention in 2008 (Study 2)

	2008			
	All (<i>N</i> = 10,998) <i>B</i> (SE)	Liberal (<i>n</i> = 7,565) <i>B</i> (SE)	Conservative (<i>n</i> = 1,224) <i>B</i> (SE)	Libertarian (<i>n</i> = 1,323) <i>B</i> (SE)
MFQ				
Care	-.50 (.06)***	-.47 (.12)***	-.34 (.23)	-.39 (.13)**
Fairness	-.50 (.07)***	-.44 (.14)***	-.35 (.25)	-.36 (.14)*
<i>Individualizing average</i>	-.66 (.07)***	-.62 (.14)***	-.51 (.26)	-.52 (.16)***
Loyalty	-.23 (.07)***	-.12 (.12)	-.61 (.22)**	-.51 (.14)***
Authority	-.20 (.06)**	-.15 (.12)	-.71 (.27)**	-.38 (.14)**
Sanctity	-.13 (.06)**	-.13 (.12)	-.41 (.16)*	-.20 (.13)
<i>Binding average</i>	-.25 (.07)***	-.22 (.15)	-.83 (.27)**	-.51 (.16)**
	All (<i>N</i> = 1,614)			
SVS				
Benevolence	-.31 (.11)**			
Conformity	-.24 (.10)*			
Tradition	-.23 (.10)**			
Universalism	-.47 (.09)***			
Security	-.37 (.12)**			
<i>Moral average</i>	-.62 (.14)***			
Achievement	-.11 (.11)			
Hedonism	.13 (.08)			
Power	-.08 (.10)			
Self-direction	.08 (.13)			
Stimulation	-.10 (.08)			
<i>Nonmoral average</i>	-.05 (.15)			

Notes. Means and standard deviations can be found in online supplemental materials. For individual ideologies, predicted effects are in bold. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. MFQ = Moral Foundations Questionnaire; SVS = Schwartz Values Survey.

not to vote in 2008 (1 = intend not to vote, 0 = all other responses). Results of these analyses replicate those in Study 1 and indicate that low moral concerns about both individualizing and binding foundations predict intentions to not vote in the upcoming election (see Table 2). Also replicating Study 1, low scores on Schwartz moral values significantly predicted the intention not to vote, and Schwartz nonmoral value scores did not show this effect.

Prior research has shown that this pattern of moral indifference is common in libertarians, who generally indicate low endorsement of all five MFQ subscales and are also more likely to hold intentions not to vote than other ideological groups (Iyer, Koleva, Graham, Ditto, & Haidt, 2012). In order to test whether our effects were due to libertarian responses, we next examined the relationship between moral foundation scores and intentions to not vote in the upcoming election within ideological groups. As expected, for libertarians who typically

exhibit low endorsement of many moral values, low concern for all five moral domains predicted voting intentions in 2008, suggesting that moral indifference toward both liberal and conservative moral values increased their likelihood of intending to not vote in the coming election.

In addition, supporting a morality-based community perspective, we found unique patterns of moral indifference for both liberals and conservatives. In 2008, liberal participants scoring low on the moral domains most commonly associated with liberal concern—Care and Fairness—were more likely to intend not to vote in the upcoming election. In addition, conservative participants scoring low on the moral domains typically associated with conservatives—concerns of Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity—were more likely to intend not to vote. Given that these patterns corresponded with known ideological patterns both in terms of average ideological differences (Graham et al., 2009) and the moral stereotypes that both groups hold about each other and themselves (Graham, Nosek, & Haidt, 2012), these results suggest that it is not only a lack of moral motivation that leads to future intentions to not vote, but also a low moral match between one's ideological group (and thus political party, at least for liberals and conservatives) and one's personal moral profile. These findings are a natural extension of prior research on the importance of community for overall political motivation (Hasen, 1996; Schemer et al., 2012). Typically, individuals identify with groups that share their moral concerns and values, which then leads to increased communal participation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Prior research has shown that when individuals' self-selected groups no longer reflect or endorse their worldview, they will disengage from those groups and instead find other communities which more closely reflect them (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). However, in this case, our data indicate that some individuals continue to identify with their political group even when their own moral concerns are not aligned with that group's concerns. One consequence of this mismatch, then, is what we call moral indifference, expressed through an unwillingness to endorse (through voting) either side during the election.

This value mismatch also builds upon, and qualifies, much of the literature on the role of morality for political engagement. Prior research which primarily focused on individuals' specific moral concerns has highlighted that personal moral convictions about specific issues—or even the act of voting itself—increase one's likelihood of voting (Miles & Vaisey, under review; Morgan et al., 2010). The group-to-individual moral mismatch in this study indicates that this relationship may be more nuanced. Low concern for ideologically congruent moral foundations alone can also lead to low political participation intentions. Specifically, individuals do not need to show low concern toward all moral issues or foundations in order to form explicit intentions to not vote in the future. In fact, individuals may score highly on moral concerns not traditionally endorsed by their ideological group and yet still intend to not vote.

Study 3

In order to replicate the 2008 results, we collected an additional sample from Yourmorals.org during the 2012 presidential campaign between August 16, 2012 and November 6, 2012 (again representing the time range from when the voting item was first added to the website until Election Day).

Method

All participants were United States citizens of eligible voting age ($N = 26,402$, 43.7% female, median age = 27). All participants reported who they planned to vote for in the upcoming election: Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, a third-party candidate, undecided, or specifically planning not to vote. Again, participants completed either the Moral Foundation Questionnaire (nonvoter $n = 1,602$) or the Schwartz Values Scale (nonvoter $n = 165$). Participants indicated political ideology (same item described in Study 2) and other demographic variables previously at time of registration.

Results and Discussion

As with Studies 1 and 2, we ran a series of logistic regressions with each value subscale separately predicting voting intentions to test whether low moral concerns would predict explicit intentions to not vote in 2012 (1 = intend not to vote, 0 = all other responses). Results of our analyses in 2012 replicated those in 2008, with lower moral concerns about all five foundations predicting intentions not to vote (see Table 3). In addition, also replicating 2008 results, low scores on Schwartz moral values significantly predicted the intention not to vote, and nonmoral value scores did not show this effect, providing further evidence that the relationship between value endorsement and intentions to not vote is specific to the moral domain.

We then examined the relationship between moral foundation scores and intention not to vote in the 2012 election within ideological groups. Replicating our 2008 results, we found that a moral concern mismatch between individuals and their self-identified political groups significantly predicted intentions to not vote in the future. Specifically, liberals scoring low on Care–Fairness and conservatives scoring low on Loyalty–Authority–Sanctity were again less likely to intend to vote. These results further support the hypothesis that a low moral match between one's group's concerns and one's own moral profile may have important implications for communal participation and political behavior. For libertarians, all five moral domains predicted voting intentions in 2008, but in 2012 the relationship was specific to Loyalty–Authority–Sanctity, which may be attributable

Table 3. Low Value and Moral Foundation Endorsement Predicts Nonvoting Intention in 2012 (Study 3)

	2012			
	All (<i>N</i> = 11,966) <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	Liberal (<i>n</i> = 5,728) <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	Conservative (<i>n</i> = 2,182) <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	Libertarian (<i>n</i> = 1,602) <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)
MFQ				
Care	–.08 (.04)**	–.23 (.06)***	–.18 (.10)	–.08 (.07)
Fairness	–.12 (.04)	–.14 (.07)	–.37 (.12)**	–.09 (.09)
<i>Individualizing average</i>	–.09 (.04)**	–.27 (.08)***	–.30 (.12)*	.00 (.09)
Loyalty	–.17 (.03)***	–.06 (.06)	–.25 (.10)*	–.55 (.08)***
Authority	–.24 (.03)***	–.21 (.05)***	–.58 (.12)***	–.49 (.08)***
Sanctity	–.10 (.02)***	–.06 (.05)	–.18 (.08)*	–.32 (.07)***
<i>Binding average</i>	–.22 (.03)***	–.13 (.06)	–.47 (.12)***	–.62 (.09)***
SVS	All (<i>n</i> = 1,332)			
Benevolence	–.22 (.08)**			
Conformity	–.22 (.06)***			
Tradition	–.15 (.06)*			
Universalism	–.07 (.07)			
Security	–.42 (.08)***			
<i>Moral average</i>	–.37 (.09)***			
Achievement	–.28 (.08)***			
Hedonism	.07 (.05)			
Power	–.15 (.07)*			
Self-direction	–.13 (.08)			
Stimulation	–.01 (.05)			
<i>Nonmoral average</i>	–.14 (.10)			

Notes. Means and standard deviations can be found in online supplemental materials; For individual ideologies, predicted effects are in bold. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. MFQ = Moral Foundations Questionnaire; SVS = Schwartz Values Survey.

to the libertarian rejection of compassionate conservatism that characterized Tea Party rhetoric in the 2012 election (Weisberg, 2011).

Study 4

In order to replicate these results within a materially different population, we recruited a large sample of participants from the email list and Facebook page of FreedomWorks, a nonprofit political organization at the forefront of the Tea Party movement. Because the rise of the Tea Party in 2012 aligned the voting intentions of typically disenfranchised libertarians with the Republican Party, we expected that, similar to 2012 libertarian results, a moral mismatch indicated by moral indifference for Loyalty–Authority–Sanctity values would specifically predict nonvoting intention within this sample.

Table 4. Low Moral Foundation Endorsement Predicts Nonvoting Intention for FreedomWorks Participants in 2012 (Study 4)

MFQ	All (<i>N</i> = 13,104)	Nonvoters (<i>n</i> = 69)	Voters (<i>n</i> = 13,035)
	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Care	-.15 (.13)	3.32 (1.07)	3.44 (.87)
Fairness	.12 (.17)	3.36 (.95)	3.30 (.73)
<i>Individualizing average</i>	-.05 (.17)	3.34 (.89)	3.37 (.70)
Loyalty	-.47 (.13)***	3.15 (1.05)	3.48 (.77)
Authority	-.67 (.12)***	3.24 (1.13)	3.78 (.77)
Sanctity	-.52 (.09)***	3.15 (1.51)	3.85 (.98)
<i>Binding average</i>	-.72 (.12)***	3.18 (1.09)	3.70 (.71)

Note. Predicted effects are in bold. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. MFQ = Moral Foundations Questionnaire.

Method

A total of 13,104 participants were referred to participate on Yourmorals.org from the Freedomworks email list or Facebook page between August 18, 2012 and November 6, 2012 (nonvoter $n = 71$). Participants indicated political ideology and other demographic information separately at registration, and then subsequently completed the Moral Foundations Questionnaire. All participants were United States citizens of eligible voting age.

Results and Discussion

As with Studies 1–3, we ran a series of logistic regressions with each moral foundation value subscale separately predicting voting intention for the 2012 election to test whether low moral concerns typically associated with the conservative party would predict intentions to not vote for FreedomWorks participants (1 = intend not to vote, 0 = all other responses). Supporting the individual-to-group moral mismatch hypothesis, Tea Party members who scored lower on Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity were more likely to report that they intended not to vote in the coming election, and no relationship was found between voting intention and moral engagement with Care and Fairness (see Table 4).

Overall Discussion

These results across five population samples—a nationally representative Knowledge Networks panel in 2011, YourMorals.org visitors during the 2008 presidential campaign, YourMorals.org visitors during the 2012 presidential campaign, and members of the Tea Party organization FreedomWorks—provide further

evidence for the importance of moral concerns for voting by showing that those who score lower on measures of moral concern are more likely to have not voted in the past and to specifically intend not to vote in the future. In addition, this effect is not driven by libertarian participants' responses, but is found across the political spectrum. Most importantly, one does not need to have low moral concerns across all domains for moral indifference to affect political participation. In our study populations, individuals were less likely to intend to vote in future elections specifically when they experienced a mismatch between their individual moral foundation endorsements and their self-identified political group's moral beliefs.

The current research suggests that a match between an individual's values and the values of a particular political party may increase intentions to vote. Given this pattern, it may be possible to use the values of individuals who choose not to vote across elections as an indication of the values of the candidates running in each election. For example, in 2008, there was a positive relationship between the individualizing values of Harm and Fairness and intentions to vote among both conservative and libertarian participants, who ostensibly would have voted for the Republican candidate. This is consistent with research suggesting that conservatives do indeed value Harm and Fairness (e.g., Graham et al., 2009) and the fact that the country had a "compassionate conservative" as president for the previous 8 years. In 2012, the Tea Party moved the Republican party in a more libertarian direction, with compassion sometimes framed as an excuse to reward the undeserving (Weisberg, 2011). The Republican nomination process reflected this movement, and the current research shows a similar shift in individuals' voting intentions, with conservative and libertarian voting intentions no longer related to Harm and Fairness concerns. Future researchers may wish to examine the values of those who intend not to vote in order to illuminate the values that candidates and parties endorse in each election.

It is possible that other value constructs (e.g., Honesty, Liberty, Protestant Work Ethic) may also follow the same pattern, with individuals who hold values differing from their ideological group along these value dimensions also showing lower future voting intentions. Libertarians are an especially interesting case given that other research has identified concerns about Liberty as their primary value orientation (Iyer et al., 2012). As such, it would be interesting to track whether a rise in rhetoric surrounding Liberty would lead to a similar voting intention pattern in libertarians, where libertarians who were especially motivated by concerns about Liberty would be most likely to intend to vote for libertarian-leaning candidates. This same value-matching perspective could be used to examine cases where voters who value honesty are confronted with candidates who share policy preferences, but have demonstrated an inability to be honest in their personal lives (e.g., Anthony Wiener). A value-matching perspective can be used to explain a wide variety of morally motivated voting abstinence across numerous value constructs and situations.

One limitation of this research is that all groups examined—with the exception of the sample in Study 1, which did not measure future voting intentions—were surveyed via the Internet and included groups that were (on average) well educated and politically engaged. As such, our conclusions may only generalize to individuals who have the knowledge and ability to vote, but lack the inclination. We feel that this is an important group to study for political psychologists who wish to address the psychological variables that relate to decreased political participation among those with the resources to vote, yet the current research does not address the many practical factors that may hinder individuals who lack such resources. However, the fact that Study 1's results for past voting behavior mirrored those found in the subsequent studies using Internet samples and voting intentions suggests that moral motivations may be important predictors of nonvoting intentions more generally in the United States.

General conscientiousness may also play a role in voting intentions, and the current research cannot distinguish morally motivated from morally unmotivated voting intentions. However, the fact that moral variables consistently relate to intentions to not vote in future elections does suggest that morally motivated voting is relatively common, convergent with many theoretical arguments. If there is indeed a significant amount of nonmorally motivated intentions to not vote in this population, it should logically reduce the relationships discovered between moral variables and voting intentions, suggesting that the effects discovered may actually be stronger among the subset of our participants who engage in morally motivated voting intentions and weaker among those who failed to vote for other reasons.

Because this moral mismatch plays such an important role in individuals' future intentions to participate in the political process, future research should continue to explore this relationship. Why do individuals continue to identify with groups who do not reflect their personal moral values, and how might they be reengaged within these ideological communities? Although the research presented here focused on the moral mismatch between voters and their ideological groups, it seems plausible that similar ideological mismatches between particular political candidates and their ideological groups may also reduce voting intentions among members of those groups. In addition, future research could expand these findings to additional measures of political participation (e.g., volunteerism, charitable contributions, event attendance), and our understanding of this relationship could benefit from testing these findings using additional theoretical models of moral concern. Finally, to better understand how individual- and group-level morality interact to influence participatory behavior, future research should explore this phenomenon across a broader range of social domains (e.g., culture, religion) and behavioral outcomes (e.g., social influence, altruism), beyond politics and voting behavior.

Conclusion

The current research finds a consistent negative relationship between voting intentions and measures of moral concern, suggesting that some proportion of the lack of political participation in the United States is due to moral indifference. Moral concerns relating to one's ideological identification were most predictive of future voting intentions, further suggesting that indifference to the values of one's ingroup's politicians and political party plays an important role in the decision of many Americans to decline to participate in the political process. Individuals or organizations seeking to increase political participation may want to identify ways to address this indifference in order to increase turnout among populations that have the ability and knowledge to vote, yet choose not to.

At a broader theoretical level, these studies underscore the claim made by some scholars that people are fundamentally moral creatures, and that they act to uphold the moral orders that define their worldviews (Hitlin 2003, 2008; Smith, 2003). Politics, like morality, is concerned with defining aspirations and boundaries, and this common focus appears to be driven by a common motivational engine. These studies suggest that political engagement is directly tied to moral engagement within social structures, and that sustaining a vibrant, participatory political culture requires cultivating a principled citizenry within morally reflective communities.

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Supplementary Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

Table S1: Mean Values and Moral Foundations Scores for Those that Intend to Vote (Voters) and Those Who Do Not Intend to Vote (Non-voters) in 2008 (Study 2: with Standard Deviations in Parentheses)

Table S2: Mean Values and Moral Foundations Scores for Those that Intend to Vote (Voters) and Those Who Do Not Intend to Vote (Non-voters) in 2012 (Study 3: with Standard Deviations in Parentheses)

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