If Haidt is Right: Adjusting Counseling Pedagogy to Accommodate Moral Intuitions

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Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to identify and explain the six moral intuitions along with several related themes.
- Participants will recognize how various groups may prioritize moral foundations differently and how to effectively communicate across these barriers using empathy and contemplation.
- Participants will discuss multiple ways to incorporate the moral intuitions model into counselor education pedagogy and practice.

Where this began...

We are trying to accept people without understanding their moral systems... which may result in doing harm.
Haidt’s Three Principles

- Intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second.
- The rider and the elephant
- There’s more to morality than harm and fairness.
  - Beware of anyone who insists that there is one true morality for all times, people, and places, particularly if that morality is founded upon a single moral foundation. (pluralism, not relativism)
- Morality binds and blinds.
- Yes, we spend most of our time advancing our self-interests, but we all can transcend that and become part of a whole.

2016 APA Keynote Address

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAE-gxKs6qM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAE-gxKs6qM)
- 54 minutes
- Can be a great introduction for students

“Our moral thinking is much more like a politician searching for votes than a scientist searching for truth.”

Haidt (2012), p. 89

“Once a group is bound together by shared values (such as tolerance and diversity) or shared demons (such as racism), people in the group find it hard to perceive or accept empirical findings that contradict their shared moral ‘matrix’.”

Haidt, 2013, p. 293
The Righteous Mind

- unites us into teams
- divides us against other teams
- blinds us to the truth

Six tastebuds

- Care/Harm
- Fairness/Cheating
- Liberty/Oppression
- Loyalty/Betrayal
- Authority/Subversion
- Sanctity/Degradation

Care/Harm

- Has its roots in the adaptive challenge of caring for children
- Makes us sensitive to suffering and need
- More central to the moral matrix of liberals than of conservatives

Fairness

- Mutually beneficial cooperation - reap the rewards of cooperation without getting exploited
- Makes us want to shun or punish cheaters - need gossip/moralism to make this one happen.
- Think proportionality, not equality.
- Current triggers - more likely to include people who rely upon the safety net for more than an occasional bounce
**Loyalty**

- Original trigger: who’s on your team vs. who’s a traitor
- Reward team players; hurt/ostracize those who betray your group
- Can expand to fun competition (sports)
- Left tends to be lower on this, tending toward universalism
  - difficulty connecting with voters who are high on loyalty

**Authority**

- Challenge of building relationships that will benefit us in social hierarchies
- Sensitivity to signs of rank/status and to signs that people are/are not behaving properly, given their position.
  - This is pecking order, not power.
- Authorities are responsible to maintain order and justice - fends off chaos.
  - Easier for the right to build on this foundation; left often defines itself in opposition to hierarchy, inequality, and power.

**Sanctity/Degradation**

- Relates to disgust, which developed to help omnivores balance neophilia (liberals) vs. neophobia (conservatives)
- No sense of disgust would mean no sense of sacred.
- Conservatives tend to support sanctity of the body; liberals tend to support sanctity of food or environmental toxins.
  - Disgust can warn us that we’re going too far.
Liberty/Oppression

- Response to the challenge of living in small groups with those who would dominate/bully if given the chance
- Trigger: signs of attempted domination
- Response: unite as equals with other oppressed people to resist, restrain, kill the oppressor
- Operates in tension with Authority foundation
- Present triggers: accumulation/abuse of political power, accumulation of wealth, social justice

Remember:

- Both conservatives and liberals embrace care, fairness, liberty
- Only conservatives embrace loyalty and authority.
- Sanctity can go either way, but different parties will be sanctimonious about different issues (almost like different definitions of the same word).
- This applies to what dog you choose, the church you choose, even in your brain (Haidt, 2012, p. 188-189)

Criticisms of Haidt

- “…Of the six ‘moral foundations’, fairness and relief of suffering are more fundamental values than authority and loyalty, which are virtues only if their subjects are worthy. Moral education programs must also encourage students to recognize some values as more urgent than others…” (Blum, 2013)

Now what?

- “Rather than using psychology to explain away conservatism… 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” (Haidt, 2012, p. 191).
Liberals vs. Conservatives

Most concerned with harm and fairness

Low concern for authority, loyalty, purity

Hold most tightly to care

Define sanctity differently from each other

Moderately concerned with all six “tastebuds”, but will let go of care if needed

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Liberal Moral Matrix

Most sacred value: care for victims of oppression

9/19/2018

Green: me
Blue: liberals
Red: Conservatives
Libertarian Moral Matrix
Most sacred value: individual liberty

Care/harm  Liberty/Oppression  Fairness/cheating  Loyalty/Betrayal  Authority/Subversion  Sanctity/degredation

Social Conservative Moral Matrix
Most sacred value: Preserve the institutions and traditions that sustain a moral community

Care/harm  Liberty/Oppression  Fairness/cheating  Loyalty/Betrayal  Authority/Subversion  Sanctity/degredation

Themes that Carry Moral Weight
- Divinity
- Community
- Hierarchy
- Tradition
- Sin
- Degradation
2008 Democratic Primary
(Iyer, Graham, Koleva, Ditto, & Haidt, 2010)

- Clinton supporters - moral foundations based on being a good group member (of the Democratic party)
- Obama supporters - higher individual based morality, particularly fairness
  - attracted young voters who were loyal to him, not to the Democratic party
- “Voters will continue to vote for candidates they identify with based on demographics...” (p. 304)

As counselors, how do you think the matrix of our profession might look?

How MHCs look

- 52% liberal, 20% conservative
- 70% report that their political beliefs influence their counseling theory
- Although CBT was the most popular theory among both groups, conservatives preferred it more than liberals on average
- Liberal counselors tended to prefer mindfulness-based counseling theories more than conservative counselors
- MHCs are more likely to support political statements of high levels of individual social freedom than those reflective of high levels of economic freedom

Why Does It Matter?

- Social workers with liberal views were less likely to keep ideology and practice distinct (Rosenwald & Hyde, 2006)
- Social justice more important to those who include political ideology in their practice
- Debate of objectivity vs. subjectivity in SW practice

http://aaronlmhc.blogspot.com/2016/05/political-beliefs-of-mental-health-counselors.html
“The literature suggests that conservative populations who are disproportionately working class are... cognizant of the discrepancy in values between themselves and social workers, do not believe that social workers understand or respect their values, and are hesitant to receive services from social workers.”

(Hodge, 2003, p. 116)

“The lack of sociopolitical diversity in psychology may impede our ability to serve conservative clients. The value-laden nature of psychotherapy and social interventions has been well documented, with therapists’ sociopolitical values influencing clinical diagnosis, intervention, and treatment... Studies have shown that a mismatch in therapist-client sociopolitical values may bias clinical judgment, even more so that differences in race, gender, or socioeconomic status... with politically liberal therapists having less empathy for conservative clients and vice versa... the therapeutic bond... is adversely affected when therapists' and clients' worldviews differ too greatly.”

(Redding, 2001, p. 208)

“But what happens when constructivist, post-modern, pluralistic-oriented counselor education programs are offered in countries where discrimination plays a pivotal role? ... How will a Western social justice-oriented counseling profession address such restrictions on gender roles, religious identity, and sexual orientation in restrictive societies? Equally problematic, how will the counseling profession advocate equality without, ironically, appearing culturally insensitive in societies with rigid caste systems? Moreover, is it even realistic to expect unilateral agreement on social and cultural issues in an increasingly international counseling profession spread across diverse cultures?”

(Hodges, 2011, p. 191)
Additional sources regarding bias in related fields


Oops

- The academy is losing its diversity: we cannot serve when partisan.
- From 2 or 3 to 1, now 40 to 1 liberals to conservatives.
- We may well be part of the problem rather than part of the solution. We must become the change we seek.

"If you really want to change someone's mind on a moral or political matter, you'll need to see things from that person's angle as well as your own. And if you do truly see it the other person's way - deeply and intuitively - you might even find your own mind opening in response. Empathy is an antidote to righteousness, although it's very difficult to empathize across a moral divide."

—Haidt (2012), p. 58

Affected Coursework

- Social & Cultural Diversity
- Ethics
- Human Development
Ethics

• The Elephant, The Rider, and The Path (~2 minutes)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9KP8ulGZTs
• Understand the limitations of ethical decision making models - because we are the rider, not the elephant

Versus what we’re told...

• “Personal values must be checked at the door when you enter the counseling session.”

• “Our ethics codes are very clear: we serve a diverse population and we leave our values at the door.”

  (Student Counselors Must Learn To Ignore Personal Beliefs, Targeted News Service; Washington DC, 11 Oct. 2010)

The Dialectic (MacLeod, 2013)

• Work within social justice and advocacy while simultaneously respecting the client’s worldview

• Dilemma of retaining client autonomy and respecting their worldviews, while working from a multicultural and social justice model
“The worst outcome for a marginalized client is not having a bigoted therapist refuse to work with them. It's having that therapist agree to work with them out of a sense of obligation or a lack of self-awareness, and then do serious danger.”

–Article “Should Therapists Decline...”

“We are both right, in our way... Our worldviews are so wildly different that just expressing our perspectives feels like a fundamental and dangerous challenge to our disparate values and perceptions of reality... We scare each other at a very primate and regressed level... We have years between us, a small room, a therapeutic contract, and many opportunities for repair. Without this, I wonder, how easily could it happen that we would be willing to harm each other, each deeply convinced of the malign intent and potential for cruelty in the other? I fear it would be very, very easy.”

–https://www.psychotherapy.net/blog/title/i-m-rubber-you-re-glue

Change Our Goals (Murphy, 2014)

- Beyond demonizing
- Downgrading intuitions
- More ethical framing

Human Development
Social & Cultural Diversity

- Reflective journals to access and govern intuition (Schmidt, 2014)
- Video case studies

Four Things We Must Do in a Pluralistic Society

- Be open to everybody (including all of our unprovable intuitions)
- As much as possible, look for overlapping values between frameworks and argue within the other person's framework
- Take a vote -> democracy
- Really, really respect minorities
- We don't have a pluralistic society not because of the righteous mind - but because of the self-righteous mind.

References


