

Common ground on the common good: Study finds Republicans and Democrats can agree on some moral issues

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(Phys.org)—A new University of British Columbia study that asked U.S. conservatives and liberals to rate the most influential historical figures of the 20th Century finds that the two sides of America's "culture wars" share a surprising level of common moral ground.

While the study reaffirms some conflicts between Republicans and Democrats – [Planned Parenthood](#) founder Margaret Sanger, gay rights activist Harvey Milk and [Ronald Reagan](#) divided participants most – it also offers new advice for bridging the political gap on controversial social issues, such as abortion and reproductive rights.

According to the findings, moral disagreements between Republicans and Democrats centre on two of five psychological aspects of morality: attitudes towards authority and sexual matters. Compared to conservatives, liberals showed a stronger preference for figures who challenged authority – such as Rosa Parks, Che Guevara and Milk – and people who supported sexual freedom and women's and gay rights.

The study found the two groups' share overwhelmingly similar attitudes towards individuals known for fairness and care for humanity. The study involved 400 participants of both political stripes, who rated images of 40 of Time Magazine's former *People of the Century*. The study challenges previous research, and some popular notions, that suggest conservatives and liberals have differing moral foundations.

"The findings suggest that progress on divisive social issues is more likely when the discussion is framed as a question of fairness and care for humanity – that's where common moral ground exists," says Jeremy Frimer, who led the study as a postdoctoral researcher under UBC Psychology Prof. Lawrence Walker. Since conducting the study, Frimer has joined the University of Winnipeg as an assistant professor.

More information: [jeremyfrimer.com/Welcome_files/Frimer et al
%28in_press_%20JPSP%29.pdf](http://jeremyfrimer.com/Welcome_files/Frimer_et_al%28in_press_%20JPSP%29.pdf)
www.publicaffairs.ubc.ca/2012/...-nov-6-u-s-election/

Provided by University of British Columbia

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