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Generational Shifts in the Moral and Political Landscape

Christine Moriarty

University of Pennsylvania, christinelmoriarty@gmail.com

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Abstract

In modern America, political polarization is on the rise, especially among Millennials. This paper explores why, examining moral values, worldview, and other potential moderators. In addition to a literature review and theoretical discussion, this paper will present one study of online Americans ($N=500$). Results indicate that subtle yet potentially important differences exist among younger generations. Younger generations were more intellectually-egotistic ($p = .000$; $d = .65$), are more overconfident in their intellect ($p = .000$; $d = .45$), and adopt a hierarchical worldview ($p = .001$; $d = .36$). Further research might examine these factors over time with long-term studies that control for the effect of aging.

Keywords

generation, millennials, moral foundations, primals, worldview, intellectual humility, politics, polarization, positive psychology

Generational Shifts in the Moral and Political Landscape

Christine L. Moriarty

University of Pennsylvania

A Capstone Project Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Applied Positive Psychology

Advisor: Jeremy D. W. Clifton

August 1, 2018

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Christine L. Moriarty
christinelmoriarty@gmail.com

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Introduction

The present-day milieu is fixated on distinguishing the younger generations, the “Millennials” and “iGeneration”, from the older “Generation X” and “Baby Boomers”. American news and media outlets accuse the younger generations of being entitled, screen-captivated, and even “narcissistic praise-hounds” (Safer, 2007, p. 2). These call-outs are so ubiquitous that most of us have heard similar remarks in our own lives, possibly in the form of quips such as “kids these days” and “okay, boomer”. But do such accusations actually apply to today’s youth? Could it be that every generation eventually adopts disdain for the youngest cohorts? Or are all younger generations morally deficient and “cocky about their place in the world” (Stein, 2013, p. 3)? This paper will explore if and how younger generations are diverging from their elders in several facets.

Such accusations are not all speculation. Over recent decades, there have been numerous shifts in generational cohort characteristics. Research conducted by Twenge (2013) found increases in narcissism among Millennials, as well as shifts from holding intrinsic values (such as community) towards extrinsic values (such as status and wealth) in high esteem. Time Magazine broadcasted Millennials as being the “Me Me Me Generation” with a cover story issue in 2013 detailing their expectations of promotions, raises, and relying on their own inner voice as their leading moral compass. A study by PEW Research Center (2006) found the highest goals of Millennials (those who were 18-25 years old at the time) were to become rich or famous (as cited Jayson, 2007).

The study conducted for this capstone shows generational differences in some key and potentially important areas. As we approach the end of the 2010s, iGen and Millennials will

begin to increasingly rise and replace the retiring Baby Boomer generation in the workforce. Schneider (1987) argues that organizational climates mirror the values and goals of those in leadership (as cited by Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). As iGen and Millennials are becoming more significant players in society, albeit as graduates, employees, voters, or parents, examining their coinciding moral foundations, worldviews, and intellectual humility will help illuminate what shifts in values, perspectives, and discourse we can expect to accompany them.

This is especially important in today's fraught political atmosphere. Politics is one of the most salient platforms of our moral psychology (Haidt, 2012), and often acts as a "virtue debate stage". Against a political backdrop, we see where our morals and values overlap and diverge across groups. This paper explores the relevance of political polarization, generation cohort, morality, worldviews, and intellectual humility through the lens of positive psychology. As the discipline concerned with meaning (Seligman, 2013), it is essential to the advancement of the field to investigate changes in a culture's central values. I will first give an overview of the literature on generation cohorts. Then, I will introduce the field of positive psychology and how it can provide a contextual lens for some of the current trends that researchers are finding among younger generations. Then, I will review the literature on morality, worldviews, and intellectual humility as relevant value constructs examined within this study. Subsequently, I will provide the study and analysis conducted for this capstone, highlighting where Millennials and iGen stand today.

Part I: Generation Characteristics

Distinguishing Generation Cohorts

Establishing what date range qualifies as a ‘new generation’ is not always clear (Twenge, n.d.). Generational distinctions are often determined by cultural, economic, or historical events that cause significant pivots in societal values that affect the up-bringing of those in critical developmental years (Twenge et al., 2010). For example, the Baby Boomers who were born during or after World War II spent their developmental years in post-war progress and prosperity, and adopted an optimistic and hardworking disposition (Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008). Generation X are often referred to as “latchkey” children because they were commonly left unsupervised while both parents were at work (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). In examining the validity of “generation” as a construct, Campbell, Twenge, and Campbell (2017) found significant differences between birth year cohorts, as evidenced among factors such as parenting style, social norms, attitudes, behaviors, personality, and mental health (Twenge et al., 2010). This paper adopts their generational categories of the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and iGen.

Silent Generation. The Silent Generation, born between 1925 and 1945, makes up some of the oldest living people today (Twenge et al., 2010). Raised by parents who endured the Great Depression, this presumably influenced and garnered mature attitudes and resourcefulness, leading to a more cautious and unpretentious nature (Howe, 2014).

Baby Boomers. Baby Boomers are those born between 1946 and 1964 (Twenge, Honeycutt, Prislun, & Sherman, 2016). They received their namesake as the soldiers returning home from World War II quickly started families, creating a baby-boom (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). These postwar individuals grew up in a growing economy where success was measured

by acquiring the “American dream”. Having a good job, owning a family car and a home decked with modern amenities were the rewards earned by working hard. Baby Boomers also saw important social movements, such as the civil rights movement and anti-war demonstrations protesting the Vietnam War (Seemiller & Grace, 2016).

Gen X. Generation X (Gen X) includes those who were born between 1965 and 1979 (Twenge et al., 2016). Gen X grew up in a time where technology was advancing. As adolescents, Gen X saw personal computers and gaming systems reach the family household (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). During this era, married women were entering the workforce in unprecedented numbers, making it normal for Gen Xers to be periodically left home alone after school, encouraging independence at a young age. Seemiller and Grace (2016) suggest that nationally renowned events such as the economic recession of 2008 may have contributed to a generational disposition of skepticism and pragmatism.

Millennials. The year that best marks the end of Gen X and start of the next generation is particularly unclear. Here, Millennials, otherwise referred to as Generation Y, are considered as those born between 1980 and 1994 (Twenge et al., 2016). According to Lukianoff and Haidt (2015), many parents of Millennials were alarmed by the surge of child abductions making news in the 1980’s, making it appear that the world was not safe. Parents passed that sense of danger on to their Millennial children, coddling them throughout their up-bringing. Millennials are commonly thought of as being self-righteous, self-involved, and overly confident (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). They grew up with high expectations of career success and a leisurely lifestyle; contributing to being typecast as impatient and entitled. As early adopters of social media, their constant social connection has blurred the boundaries between work and play. As Millennials

entered their legal voting years in the early 2000s, political polarization increased (Haidt & Lukianoff, 2015).

iGen. The iGeneration (iGen) includes those born between 1995 and 2010 (sometimes referred to as Generation Z; Twenge et al., 2016). They received their moniker as the generation who grew up with the iPhone, which was released in 2007 (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). A year prior, in 2006, Facebook allowed 13 year olds to join the social media platform (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015). While most Millennials can remember when technology entered the palm of their hands, iGen never knew differently. Seemiller and Grace (2016) suspect that this serves as an advantage to iGen, equipping them with the technological skills to solve global issues that they have always had access to. Their research found that iGen self-reported as being compassionate, open-minded, thoughtful, determined, loyal, and responsible. In response to their “Generation Me” predecessors, they see themselves as “Generation We”.

Literature on Shifts

I have thus far highlighted today’s generational categories. Understanding the birth year cut offs that have been adopted for this paper, along with some significant events that may have influenced the various generations, provides a stronger contextual basis for understanding differences in morals, worldviews, and intellectual humility and polarization. I will now provide literature on the shifts that have been witnessed on college campuses, in the workplace, and within politics. These three sectors are important aspects of modern humanity, and provide tangible examples of how generational differences may be expressed in some of our most commonly shared domains.

On campus. Millennials and iGen have gone to college, and academics are noticing. Lukianoff and Haidt (2015) raise alarm to the new attitudes of students on college campuses.

They recognize the adoption of what they call *vindictive protectiveness*, a proactive kind of vengeance intended to protect against and punish that which is perceived as offensive. Lukianoff and Haidt (2015) note how this brings moral outrage to the classroom, contributing to a setting propagated by moral allegiance, fear and fragility. A prime example marking this new era can be seen in 2016's "New York University Forum: Right to Say: Freedom, Respect, and Campus Speech" in which several NYU professors and a student debated *trigger warnings* on campus ("Topical Punch", 2016). The differences among generational attitudes are palpable in this debate, marking a clear divide in moral approaches to how (academic) authorities should demonstrate care, fairness and loyalty (all of which are key factors of Haidt's *moral foundations*, discussed later in this paper). Lukianoff and Haidt (2015) point to the combined rise in mental illness, emotional protectiveness, political polarization, and use of social media as contributing factors to vindictive protectiveness. While social media has connected younger generations to more national and global issues, it may be precipitating the coupling of disagreement with escalation. With the advent Facebook's "like" button in 2009, online participation shifted toward creating content that generated the most likes, or eventually on Twitter, the most re-tweets. An easy way to illicit a large response is to activate strong emotions such as outrage and anger. This may point to not only the changing tide of values among younger generations, but how the social media norms of discourse crept into the classroom.

At work. Twenge et al. (2010) examined generational differences in career and work values in which participants were asked the same questions at the same stage and age in life. With a sample ($N= 16,507$) of high school seniors in 1976 (Baby Boomers), 1991 (Gen X), and 2006 (Millennials), Millennials were found to have lower altruistic work values, such as helping others and supporting society, than older generations. Additionally, they showed a decline in

favoring social values at work (such as making friends), and intrinsic values (such as having an interesting, results-oriented job) in comparison to Baby Boomers. What showed to be central to the younger generation was an increase in leisure values and “perks”. In recent years, organizations have hence added amenities, such as in-office gyms, flex-time, and catered lunches, to project a sense of relaxation and fun in the workplace. These findings not only highlight ways in which employers are attracting younger employees by aligning with their values, they show what values the younger generations will bring into organizations.

In politics. Current research signals a rising dichotomous political and ideological schema being hedged by generational cohorts. *Polarization* can be considered the tendency to view opposing partisans (the “out-group”) in a negative light, and co-partisans (the “in-group”) in a positive light (Iyengar & Westwood, 2014). Hill (2005) defines *political polarization* as a growing separation between distinct groups. Twenge et al. (2016) found that more Americans in the 2010’s were expressing more polarized political views, stronger affiliations with parties, and stronger ideological self-categorization (such as liberal versus conservative). The results of three national surveys ($N=10$ million) showed more individuals identifying extremely with their political party (mostly driven by Republicans), and fewer people holding moderate ideological stances, even when controlling for age effects. Iyengar and Westwood (2014) have also examined a dramatic increase in polarization across American party lines.

Newport (2014) and other researchers found that Millennials are more likely to identify as Democrats and liberals than Baby Boomers and Gen Xers (as cited in Twenge et al., 2016).¹

¹ There is a possibility that this may be due to the current age range of Millennials and iGen, as younger individuals historically trend towards identifying as Democrat (Twenge, Honeycutt, Prislín, & Sherman, 2016). Understanding the political and ideological self-

Because Americans become more politically polarized with age, there is a strong possibility that Millennials and iGen will continue to identify themselves as extreme with adulthood, rather than sway toward the moderately positioned middle. Further research points to younger generations maintaining the political positions they ascribe to today, as Ghitza and Gelman (2014) claim that the political events that occur over a person's life span, especially in their young adult years, inform how one votes ongoing throughout their life (as cited in Twenge et al., 2016). The most recent presidential election has coincided with polarization and outrage on both sides of the political spectrum, and will likely effect the young adults of today for the rest of their voting lives.

Political polarization and expressions of outrage are characterized by out-group hostility; and Haidt and Hetherington (2012) have found that negative views of "out-groups" have risen since the 1980s. Iyengar and Westwood (2014) suggest that the discrimination expressed across party lines is more-so out of animosity towards the opposing group than it is for in-group loyalty and preference. According to Van Boven, Judd, and Sherman (2012), those who identify extremely with their party or ideology have stronger perceptions of polarization than those who don't. This is not a result of viewing their own positions as drastic, but because they feel that the opposing "out-group" to be prejudiced and self-interested. Tajfel and Turner (1979) have shown that in-group members often assign negative traits to members of their opposing out-groups (as cited in Iyengar & Westwood, 2014). Mark Lilla wrote in the New York Times article, "The End of Identity Liberalism", that liberals interpret Donald Trump's 2016 presidential win in a way that

categorization differences between generations is best comprehended with long-term data collection and when age is controlled for.

posits liberals (the “in-group” in this case) as being superior to the corruptible, even racist, lower-middle class conservatives. This interpretation signifies *confirmation bias*, or the predisposition to notice, remember, and value evidence that supports our initial beliefs and to not notice countering evidence (Reivich & Saltzberg, 2018). The assumption of mal-intent and hatred towards those in the out-group, along with confirmation bias, naturally leads to the conflicts we see in our political discourse. Political campaigns are often fueled with out-group hostility, slandering, and attack ads. American politics falling significantly on a bi-partisan spectrum ranging from Democrat to Republican enhances the sense of polarization and may only encourage opposition.

While political party identification provides a framework for orienting and understanding the political schema or atmosphere, Tajfel and Turner (2010) claim that it also shapes our social atmosphere more significantly than other social agents (as cited in Twenge et al., 2016). A significant finding of Iyengar and Westwood (2014) concluded that the out-group partisan divide is as strongly influential with political identity as it is race. Race has remained a divisive factor in America for centuries. Activists have endlessly fought against racial discrimination, spawning movements such as The Civil Rights movement of the mid twentieth century, and the modern movement, Black Lives Matter. Political identity partisanship reaching as divisive effects as race is alarming. Compared to race, partisanship is something that is voluntary. Although race is often a more immediately identifiable trait in comparison to political association, affiliations can be embedded and signaled in who we socialize with, our place of work, attire, on our lawns, and on our social media (Iyengar & Westwood, 2014). The pervasion of social identity into our everyday self-representation is also on the rise. Neighborhoods (Bishop, 2008) and marriages (Rosenfeld, Reuben, & Falcon, 2011) are becoming more politically homogeneous (as cited in

Iyengar & Westwood, 2014), further contributing to the distancing and separation of in-groups from their out-groups.

Takeaways. We see indicators of culture-shifts as younger generations venture into college, the workplace, and politics. Politics in particular is the domain that houses a nation's virtues (Haidt & Joseph, 2004); and acts as a conduit of society's values. As more Americans flock to extreme and opposite ends of the political spectrum, there becomes less room for nuance and multiplicity. Haidt and Joseph (2004) argue that moral diversity is born out of political diversity. Political homogeneity may be a siren warning us of an endangered diversity of politics, moral values and worldviews. Furthermore, discrimination towards "out-groups" is becoming more pronounced, and the current socio-political environment does not have strongholds to prevent such marginalizing discourse. Productive discussion in a morally diverse society requires the acknowledgment that all proponents are morally motivated (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). By looking through the lens of positive psychology, we may better understand our human inclinations and moral motivations behind group membership, and where there is room to improve amidst this polarized political climate. I will continue by introducing positive psychology and its connection to moral psychology; followed by a review of moral foundations, primals, and intellectual humility and how they are relevant areas of study.

II: Positive Psychology

With an emphasis on scientific research and statistical data, positive psychology examines positive emotions, institutions, virtues and more to uncover what brings about well-being in human-beings (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Throughout history, there have been various approaches to well-being, or "the good life", but one of the most salient may be Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*. Aristotle examined that the road toward happiness is often

paved with struggle and hardship, and thus, our pursuits must be towards “higher virtues” rather than mere pleasure or amusement (Melchert, 2002). Eudaimonia is concerned with what makes a life well-lived. A major pillar of positive psychology pulls from this morally charged concept, asserting that focusing on strengths of character, as opposed to deficits, can support human flourishing (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Examining the historical underpinnings here will further build upon well-being’s connection to virtuous character, morality, world views and how groups adopt these at scale.

The agricultural revolution marked a profound change in humanity, as it ignited an abundance of resources and time. As farming gave way to a surplus of food, people were able to settle, establish societies, and generate culture (McMahon, 2017). Not having to hunt and gather led to more free-time, which opened individuals up to philosophizing about the natures of society, existence, happiness, and virtue. The excess generated by the agricultural revolution, however, also gave way to inheritable inequalities. Families would pass down their commodities to kin, generation to generation, setting the stage for hierarchies, slavery and oppression (McMahon, 2017). This system kept happiness outside of one’s control, and subject to the life you happened to be born into. Happiness was fleeting, or at best, considered a matter of luck. This is contrasted with today’s view, in which happiness is seen as something people can achieve. From the time where happiness seemed to rest on fate or chance, humanity looked to religion for answers.

The advancement and increasing complexities of society demanded more intricate explications of human conduct and existence. It is not a surprise that the world’s greatest religions emerged out of The Axial Age, including Buddhism, Judaism, Greek philosophy, and more (McMahon, 2017). Religion was not only a quest for understanding happiness, it was a

search for meaning, a code of right and wrong, and provided the safety and communal benefits of belonging to a group. Being a member of a group, tribe, or religion increased one's likelihood and means of survival, and hence, we saw our first emerging forms of in-group and out-group loyalty.

We have a deep, inner yearning to be part of a tribe. We have evolved to be *groupish* just as much as we are driven by our own individual pursuits (Haidt, 2012). While we may seek different types of relationships at different times in our lives (Smith, 2017), what remains is a need for some type of social structure to direct our sense of belonging and meaning. Haidt, Seder, and Kesebir (2008) claim that we often derive fulfillment from the collective identity that forms out of community belonging. Likewise, Baumeister and Leary (1995) maintain that the human condition cannot be understood without comprehending close relationships (as cited in Gable & Gosnell, 2011). Interestingly, the study of relationships was, at first, omitted from the consideration of positive psychology. Martin Seligman, the leading authority in positive psychology, initially neglected relationships in his first book, *Authentic Happiness*. It wasn't until over a decade later that he included relationships to be an important domain of the PERMA model² for well-being (Seligman, 2013). Positive psychology has since opened the floodgates beyond individualism to explore well-being within dyads and groups. On this account, political groups can serve as a valuable construct for understanding well-being; and polarization may be thought of as a hyper-activation of this psychological human trait to be part of and loyal to a group tribe.

² The PERMA model consists of five elements of well-being. These include positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement (Seligman, 2013).

Part III: Literature on Morality, Worldviews, & Intellectual Humility

I have thus far reviewed the literature on generational shifts in educational, vocational, and political settings. We can understand the rise in political polarization, especially among younger generations, through the lens of positive psychology and its concern for living well and virtuously. Now, I will cover the literature on morality, worldview, and intellectual humility as relevant value constructs examined in this study.

Moral Foundations

Haidt claims that morality was one of the strongest components influencing the human species reaching the top of the animal kingdom (personal communication, December 8th, 2017). Before the development and proliferation of language, humans could detect shared intentions among one another. This enabled our ancestors to communicate shared values, which led to cooperation and tribalism. Such cooperation is just as important in interpersonal relationships today, as we all exist in what Haidt (2012) describes as the *moral matrix*. Explained as the constructed moral system adopted by a given society, the moral matrix demands a negotiated way of interrelating with one another. Graham and colleagues (2013) have identified five ubiquitous, adaptive foundations of morality. The *moral foundations theory* posits care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation as the directing components of the human moral compass (Graham et al., 2013). A sixth foundation,

liberty/oppression, is currently being researched, and was not included in this study³. Further detail of the former five moral foundations and their properties are as follows.

Care/Harm. Caring for kin has been an adaptive necessity for all mammals (Graham et al., 2013). Offspring do not survive without being looked after and attended to, and thus, it is part of our evolutionary nature to care for others. This foundation has matured to a value spectrum of nurturing and suffering. If you measure high on the care/harm scale, having compassion for others, including victims, and anger for perpetrators is very relevant to your moral reasoning.

Fairness/Cheating. Social interaction demands cooperation. As a social species, cooperation is leveraged by the fairness in both the relational and transactional aspects of our interactions. This foundation encompasses virtues of trustworthiness and justice and the vices of cheating that are at play in our collaborations (Graham et al., 2013). Those who highly endorse fairness, aspire towards proportionality (Haidt, 2012).

Loyalty/Betrayal. Coalitions were advantageous to winning wars and finding food. Thus, loyalty to one's tribe emerged as a virtuous characteristic. Today, loyalty to the in-group may be expressed in politics, sports, consumer brands, etc. This moral foundation is concerned with group pride, rage, threat, and patriotism (Graham et al., 2013).

Authority/Subversion. Hierarchies often lend themselves to order and efficiency, and one's obedience or deference to such order has had social and survival impacts. Today,

³ The liberty/oppression foundation is concerned with the restriction of one's freedoms. Those who endorse this foundation are triggered by oppression and tyranny, often leading to *reactance* (Haidt, 2012).

hierarchies can be exhibited in a variety of ways, such as in relationships between teachers and students, bosses and employees, and so forth. It weighs aspects of respect, fear, and rank in moral considerations, as well as honoring traditions (Graham et al., 2013).

Sanctity/Degradation. This moral foundation is often referred to as the “purity” foundation. According to Graham et al., (2013), the emotion of disgust has adaptive advantages to survival. Cultures develop taboos as a way to discourage certain behaviors that are not advantageous, such as incest and food cleanliness. When we attach morality to our behaviors, it makes it much easier to negotiate whether or not to do certain things. We sanctify the things that are thought to be good for us, and we degrade those that are not. Modern considerations of purity can be seen in our views on sex and diet.

Moral Foundations and Politics. While each of us possess all of these moral foundations, they vary to certain degrees among individuals and across groups. Conservatives tend to value these foundations fairly evenly, whereas liberals rank authority, loyalty, and sanctity quite low comparatively (Haidt, 2012). Haidt and Joseph (2004) claim that liberals have an increased capacity to spot victimization, and also rely on virtues related to reciprocity, such as fairness, and equality. Whereas conservatives see hierarchies as relating to order, karma, and the capitalist notion of reaping what you sow, liberals view hierarchies as oppressive. The study reported below looks at how moral foundations are distributed among political and generational factors.

Worldview

According to Reivich and Shatte (2002), beliefs often give rise to our feelings and behaviors. In fact, a major therapeutic method emerged out of this very premise. Ellis and Ellis (2011) describe cognitive behavioral therapy as the approach that addresses one’s belief systems

in how they drive emotions, reactions, and their corresponding or resulting behaviors (as cited in Clifton, 2013). In Clifton's (2013) initial exploration of *primals* (which were previously referred to as "universal assessments"), he identified that world belief systems generated momentum when philosophers such as Kant and Hegel introduced the concept of *Weltanschauung*, or "world-view". Kant's approach to *Weltanschauung* posits the individual as having a centralized moral and cognitive perspective from which they extrapolate meaning or non-meaning in life (Clifton, 2013). This concept gained widespread attention in Europe, reaching psychologists such as Piaget and Bartlett, who eventually brought *schemas* under the consideration of psychology. Nash (2013) considers schemas to be the framework through which a person organizes and interprets information (as cited in Clifton, 2013). As such, schemas garner expectations around how we understand the world and our past, present, and future experiences.

Clifton and colleagues (in press) continued the exploration of universal assessments by examining over 80,000 Tweets, 358 historical texts, the 840 most used adjectives, the 24 strengths (as distinguished by the VIA character institute), 10 positive emotions, and conducted 10 religious focus groups and a literature review of six various disciplines to determine categories for general "beliefs about the world", otherwise known as *primals*. By identifying patterns of descriptions about the world, these researchers could determine not only how people talked about the modus operandi of the internal world, but their beliefs regarding how *everything in life* typically functions. The researchers created a "Primals Archive" containing the qualities that people attribute to their world descriptions. The final instructions developed for the Primals Inventory (PI-99) includes 99 items measuring 26 primals. Examples of primals include (believing the world is...) abundant, changing, funny, intentional, pleasurable, and so forth.

Oakerson asserts that primals potentially hold significant indications and influence over political beliefs (as cited in Clifton et al., in press, p. 70). If world beliefs bear notable impact on one's political identity, they will thusly impact one's political activity as well. It is easy to surmise how believing the world to be primarily hierarchical versus beautiful may influence how a person participates civically. For this reason, I examined seven primals in the survey conducted for this capstone that Clifton et al. (in press) found to be generally predictive and/or related to political ideologies. These select primals include: Hierarchical, Just, Progressing, Cooperative, Beautiful, and Harmless.

Intellectual Humility

An important aspect of positive psychology is the science of character, which aims to identify what is best about humanity, recognizing traits as being both stable and malleable in individuals. Peterson and Seligman (2004) created a classification of virtues in which twenty-four character strengths are categorized. Character strengths must meet the criteria of being fulfilling, morally valued, ubiquitous, and not diminish others (Seligman, Steen, & Peterson, 2005). They must also be distinct and have obvious and negative antonyms. The six virtue categories that house the strengths are wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Some examples of the character strengths under these virtue categories include curiosity, zest, kindness, fairness, humility, and humor respectively. The VIA Strengths test is a comprehensive and multidimensional questionnaire that identifies a person's top ranking strengths. This provides each individual a unique profile, stressing that strengths are expressed in combination with one another (Niemic, 2017). Signature strengths are the top strengths that are the most easy, effortless, energizing and essential to an individual.

The virtue category of temperance encompasses strengths that relate to one's ability to balance, moderate, and safeguard against life's extremes, excesses, and indulgences (VIA Character, n.d.). Humility falls under this category, and is considered to be the disposition of modesty. Tangney (2000) qualifies intrapersonal aspects of humility, such as having accurate views of one's self, accomplishments, and limitations. Other researchers, such as Davis, Worthington and Hook (2010) identify interpersonal qualities of humility such as the ability to be self-less (as cited in Krumrei-Mancuso & Rouse, 2016).

Krumrei-Mancuso and Rouse (2016) put forth the construct of *intellectual humility* (IH) as a potential agent for promoting thriving through a culture of tolerance, collaboration, and civil discourse. What distinguishes IH is having accurate and modest views of knowledge, ideas, beliefs, and opinions (Krumrei-Mancuso & Rouse, 2016). IH involves holding a humble stance, acknowledging the limits and biases that influence one's ideas. Niemiec (2017) stresses that character strengths can be developed, and that character involves a behavior or action in accord with virtue. While the overuse of humility is found to be positively associated with social anxiety (Freidlin, Littman-Ovadia, & Niemiec, 2017), the underuse may have equally consequential social impacts. Krumrei-Mancuso and Rouse (2016) assert that IH aims for an Aristotelian mean between these potential self-effacing and grandiose qualities. In this way, IH may be a nuanced strength to cultivate in light of political polarization and with the shifts in values of the upcoming generations.

Krumrei-Mancuso and Rouse (2016) conducted various studies to create the 22-item Comprehensive Intellectual Humility Scale that measures four aspects of intellectual humility which they find to be distinct but inter-correlated. The first category is independence of intellect

and ego⁴; the second: openness to revising one's viewpoint; the third: respect for other's viewpoints; the fourth: having a lack of intellectual overconfidence. These four components mirror Tangey's (2000) conception of humility as involving openness, self-forgetfulness, modest self-assessment, and a concentration on others (as cited in Krumrei-Mancuso & Rouse, 2016). Examining the levels of intellectual humility among today's generation cohorts will serve as an important tool for positive political discourse and initiate a baseline for future studies going forward.

Part IV: Study

This study examined the spread of generation and political polarization factors on morality, worldviews, and intellectual humility. The scales used to measure these factors included those discussed above: Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ) including the five subscales of care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation; six Primals scales including Hierarchical, Just, Progressing, Cooperative, Beautiful, and Harmless; and the Comprehensive Intellectual Humility Scale (CIHS), including the four subscales of independence of intellect and ego, openness to revising one's viewpoint, respect for other's viewpoints, and having a lack of intellectual overconfidence.

Method

A 93-item questionnaire was created on Survey Monkey and administered through the Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk) online platform on June 18th, 2018. Three items on the

⁴ Having a high independence of intellect and ego means to have a healthy identity not entirely dependent on one's own intellect. Having a low independence of intellect and ego indicates being intellectually-egotistic, in which someone may feel personally attacked when their ideas are challenged.

questionnaire were “attention checks” or validation questions. Participants who answered incorrectly on two or more of these questions were omitted from the data results. Participants who did not complete every question on the survey were also omitted. 537 responses were initially collected, 37 were omitted, resulting in a sample size of $N=500$. 311 (62.2%) of the participants were male; 188 (37.6%) of the participants were female, and 1 participant identified as “Other”. Generationally speaking, 8.2% of respondents were iGen ($n=41$); 72.2% of respondents were Millennials ($n=361$); 13.8% of respondents were Gen X ($n=69$); 5.4% of respondents were Baby Boomers ($n=27$); .4% of respondents belonged to the Silent Generation ($n=2$); The spread of political party affiliation amongst participants was as follows: 42.2% Democrat ($n=211$); 28% Republican ($n = 140$); 5% Libertarian ($n = 25$); 2.2% Green ($n = 11$); 18.2% Independent ($n= 91$); .2% Other ($n = 1$); 4.2% None ($n = 21$). The spread of political ideology held amongst participants was as follows: 8% Very conservative ($n = 40$); 17% Conservative ($n = 85$); 9.6% Slightly conservative ($n = 48$); 17.4% Moderate ($n = 87$); 9.6% Slightly liberal ($n = 48$); 21.2% Liberal ($n = 106$); 15.4% Very liberal ($n = 77$); 1.8% N/A ($n = 9$).

Measures. Participants were prompted with the thirty items on the MFQ. The prompt for the MFQ was as follows: “Our first set of questions give you some general prompts. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent are the following considerations relevant to your thinking?” Response options were placed on the following six-point Likert scale: 1= “Not at all relevant”, 2= Not very relevant”, 3= “Slightly relevant”, 4= “Somewhat relevant”, 5= “Very relevant”, 6= Extremely relevant”. For the second set of MFQ items, participants were given the following prompt: “These questions are slightly different. Please read the following sentences and indicate your agreement or disagreement”. Response options were posited on a six-point Likert scale and included: “1= “Strongly disagree”, 2= “Moderately

disagree”, 3= “Slightly disagree”, 4= “Slightly agree”, 5= “Moderately agree”, 6= “Strongly agree”. One “attention check” question was administered in each of the two MFQ sections. The lowest possible score on the MFQ is 0, meaning you completely reject the foundation. The highest possible score is 5, meaning you strongly uphold that foundation as a bedrock of your morality.

The following primals were selected due to their henceforth correlation to political beliefs and ideologies and well-rounded representation of main primal factors, such as (“the world being...”) safe, enticing, alive, and good. These primals are listed here with corresponding item examples. Hierarchical: “Most things in the world can be ranked in order of importance.” Just: “On the whole, the world is a place where we get what we deserve.” Progressing: “It feels like the world is getting better and better.” Cooperative: “The world runs on trust and cooperation way more than suspicion and competition.” Beautiful: “In life, there’s way more beauty than ugliness.” Harmless: “On the whole, the world is a safe place.”

The Comprehensive Intellectual Humility Scale (CIHS) includes 22-items and 4 sub-scales, which are listed here with corresponding item examples. Having a lack of intellectual overconfidence: “My ideas are usually better than other people’s ideas.” (This item was reverse coded.) Respect for other’s viewpoints: “I welcome different ways of thinking about important topics.” Openness to revising one’s viewpoint: “I am willing to change my position on an important issue in the face of good reasons.” Independence of intellect and ego: “I tend to feel threatened when others disagree with me on topics that are close to my heart.”

Following these three questionnaires, participants were asked general demographic questions including birth year, gender, ethnicity, education, household income, personal income,

political party preference, strength of political party affiliation, political ideology, and who they voted for in the 2016 presidential election.

Party polarization was determined by one question following a question concerning political party that asked “How strongly do you affiliate with that party?” Response choices were 1= “Strongly”, 2= “Moderately”, 3= “Slightly”, 4 = “I do not associate with a party even slightly”. Those who identified “strongly” with their party were categorized as being polarized.

Ideological polarization was determined by the following item: “When it comes to politics do you usually think of yourself as”, with the following response options: 1= “Very conservative”, 2= “Conservative”, 3= “Slightly conservative”, 4= “Moderate”, 5= “Slightly liberal”, 6= “Liberal”, 7= “Very liberal”, 8= “None of the above/ don’t know”. Those who answered as “Very Conservative” or “Very Liberal” were considered ideologically polarized.

Analysis

Independent samples t-tests were run to compare the younger generations to the older generations and younger polarized individuals to non-polarized individuals. For each independent samples T-test, the test variables included the 5 subscales of the MFQ (care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation), the 6 Primals scales (Hierarchical, Just, Progressing, Cooperative, Beautiful, and Harmless), and the 4 subscales of the CIHS (independence of intellect and ego; openness to revising one’s viewpoint; respect for other’s viewpoints; having a lack of intellectual overconfidence). Significance (2-tailed) was initially determined by $p < .05$. It was subsequently adjusted with Bonferroni’s correction, making $p < .003$. Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for each scale. For each relationship, Cohen’s d, or the effect size, was also calculated.

An independent samples t-test compared younger generations (those born in or after 1980; iGen and Millennials) to older generations (those born in or after 1980; Gen X, Baby Boomers, Silent Generation). See Table 1. Another independent samples t-test compared younger generations who were polarized by political party ($n=143$) to the rest of the sample. See Table 2. Another independent samples t-test compared the younger generations who had polarized ideological affiliations ($n=91$) versus the rest of the sample. See Table 3.

Results

The results of the first independent samples t-test compared younger generations (iGen and Millennials) to older generations (Gen X, Baby Boomers, Silent Generation). The younger generations more-so adopt a hierarchical worldview ($p = .001$; $d = .36$). Older generations more highly endorse moralities of care ($p = .001$; $d = .41$) and fairness ($p = .003$; $d = .3$), see the world as more cooperative ($p = .0005$; $d = .38$), and more-so lack overconfidence in intellect ($p = .001$; $d = .45$) and are less intellectually-egotistic ($p = .0001$; $d = .65$). See Table 1. When comparing younger, politically polarized individuals to the rest of the sample through an independent samples t-test, the former population showed to more highly endorse the loyalty ($p = .003$; $d = .28$) and purity ($p = .003$; $d = .3$) moral foundations, and were more intellectually-egotistic ($p = .000$; $d = .4$). See Table 2.

A descriptive and frequencies analysis revealed that 34.8% of the total sample identified strongly with their political party, and 82% of those individuals were iGen or Millennials. The generational makeup of those who identified strongly with their political party are as follows: iGen: $n = 13$; Millennials: $n = 130$; Gen X: $n = 23$; Baby Boomers: $n = 8$. 28.6% of the total sample population was made up of younger individuals who identified as being polarized by their political party affiliation.

Table 1

Younger Generations vs. Older Generations

	Moral Foundations					Primals					Comprehensive Intellectual Humility Scale				
	Care	Loyalty	Authority	Fairness	Purity	Hierarchical	Just	Progressing	Cooperative	Beautiful	Harmless	Lack of Overconfidence	Openness to Revision	Respect for Others' Viewpoints	Independence of Intellect and Ego
Mean	4.41	3.77	3.86	4.43	3.64	3.77	3.76	3.46	3.19	3.96	3.54	17.01	19.11	21.51	15.09
N	402	402	402	402	402	402	402	402	402	402	402	402	402	402	402
Std. Deviation	0.92	1.07	1.03	0.89	1.23	0.90	0.92	0.93	0.90	0.87	0.89	4.13	3.61	3.80	5.13
Mean	4.76	3.49	3.81	4.67	3.33	3.44	3.69	3.22	3.56	4.09	3.41	18.83	19.76	22.18	18.14
N	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	98
Std. Deviation	0.76	1.02	0.97	0.65	1.25	0.90	0.91	1.17	0.99	0.78	0.84	3.94	2.83	2.79	4.27
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000*	0.020	0.645	0.003*	0.020	0.001*	0.500	0.065	0.001*	0.164	0.209	0.000*	0.057	0.049	0.000*
<i>d</i>	0.41	0.26	0.05	0.30	0.25	0.36	0.08	0.22	0.38	0.16	0.14	0.45	0.20	0.20	0.65
α	0.74	0.83	0.78	0.72	0.86	0.69	0.71	0.69	0.62	0.57	0.70	0.67	0.82	0.66	0.91

Notes. The generational categories (Gen X, Baby Boomers, and Silent Generation) have been collapsed into "older generations".
**p* < .003 after Bonferroni's correction *p* < .05/15 = .003

Table 2

Young Generations Politically Polarized by Party

	Moral Foundations					Primals					Comprehensive Intellectual Humility Scale				
	Care	Loyalty	Authority	Fairness	Purity	Hierarchical	Just	Progressing	Cooperative	Beautiful	Harmless	Lack of Overconfidence	Openness to Revision	Respect for others' Viewpoints	Independence of Intellect and Ego
Mean	4.59	3.93	4.00	4.61	3.84	3.80	3.75	3.38	3.21	3.99	3.63	16.42	19.45	22.12	14.22
N	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
Std. Deviation	0.94	1.15	1.14	0.89	1.30	0.95	0.96	0.91	0.98	0.82	0.85	4.79	3.89	3.66	5.53
Mean	4.43	3.63	3.79	4.42	3.47	3.67	3.75	3.43	3.29	3.99	3.46	17.74	19.15	21.45	16.27
N	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357	357
Std. Deviation	0.88	1.01	0.96	0.84	1.20	0.89	0.90	1.02	0.91	0.87	0.89	3.81	3.30	3.60	4.83
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.067	0.003*	0.051	0.030	0.003*	0.145	0.969	0.625	0.412	0.983	0.049	0.004	0.423	0.064	0.000*
<i>d</i>	0.18	0.28	0.14	0.21	0.30	0.14	0.00	0.05	0.08	0.00	0.20	0.31	0.08	0.18	0.40
α	0.74	0.83	0.78	0.72	0.86	0.69	0.71	0.69	0.62	0.57	0.70	0.67	0.82	0.66	0.91

Notes. The generational categories (Gen and millennials) have been collapsed into "younger generations".
**p* < .003 after Bonferroni's correction *p* < .05/15 = .003

The general dispersion of political ideological polarization across the total sample comprised 8% self-identifying as “Very conservative”, and 15.4% identifying as “Very liberal”. In sum, 23.4% of the sample was polarized ideologically (identifying as “Very conservative” or “Very liberal”). 18.2% of the total sample consisted of younger individuals identifying as ideologically polarized, who showed to more highly endorse the fairness moral foundation ($p = .001$; $d = .37$). They also scored lower on the just ($p = .003$; $d = .38$) and progressing ($p = .004$; $d = .32$) primals, and thus on average, do not hold the view that the world is a just or progressing place as much as other individuals. See Table 3.

Table 3

Young Generations Politically Polarized by Ideology

		Moral Foundations					Primals					Comprehensive Intellectual Humility Scale				
		Care	Loyalty	Authority	Fairness	Purity	Heirarchical	Just	Progressing	Cooperative	Beautiful	Harmless	Lack of Overconfidence	Openness to Revision	Respect for others Viewpoints	Independence of Intellect and Ego
Younger Generations Polarized Ideologically	Mean	4.71	3.51	3.55	4.74	3.41	3.54	3.44	3.15	3.19	3.93	3.40	17.25	19.77	22.11	15.36
	N	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92
	Std. Deviation	0.96	1.39	1.32	0.90	1.46	1.12	1.12	1.08	1.07	1.00	1.06	4.85	3.94	4.30	5.95
Remainder of Sample	Mean	4.42	3.76	3.92	4.42	3.62	3.74	3.82	3.48	3.28	4.00	3.54	17.39	19.12	21.54	15.76
	N	408	408	408	408	408	408	408	408	408	408	408	408	408	408	408
	Std. Deviation	0.88	0.97	0.93	0.84	1.18	0.85	0.86	0.96	0.89	0.82	0.84	3.98	3.36	3.46	4.91
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.006	0.102	0.015	0.001*	0.214	0.115	0.003*	0.004	0.390	0.533	0.235	0.771	0.102	0.174	0.546
Between Groups	d	0.31	0.21	0.32	0.37	0.16	0.20	0.38	0.32	0.19	0.07	0.15	0.03	0.18	0.15	0.07
	α	0.74	0.83	0.78	0.72	0.86	0.69	0.71	0.69	0.62	0.57	0.70	0.67	0.82	0.66	0.91

Notes. The generational categories (iGen and millennials) have been collapsed into 'younger generations'.
* $p < .003$ after Bonferroni's correction $p < .05/15 = .003$

Discussion

This study has examined how younger generations may be shifting the moral and political landscape, with special consideration of the rise in political polarization. The most pronounced differences were found in comparing generations on the CIHS scales. Younger individuals in this study possessed less intellectual humility, being more highly intellectually-egotistic and overconfident. In other words, they are more overly confident in regards to their intellect; and their intellect is more-so connected to their ego, or sense of self. Younger

individuals who are polarized by political party also scored lower in intellectual humility in these same areas. (However, younger individuals did score higher on showing respect for others viewpoints.) Scoring low in these categories indicate more defensive and combative reactions to intellectual discord.

Younger generations scored higher on the hierarchical and progressing primal scales. The hierarchy primal is concerned with seeing the world in terms rank-order, and “involves an assumption about the extent to which difference implies something is better or worse...or meaningless” (Clifton et al., in press, p. 99). Younger generations seeing the world in terms of hierarchy may relate to their marked stance on seeing hierarchies as oppressive (Haidt & Joseph, 2004), and increased levels of tolerance for minorities. According to Twenge (2013), millennials and iGen value equality across race, gender, sexuality, and for minorities over any previous generation. While this can be noted as one of the younger generations’ greatest attributes, it coincides with a societal shift towards individualism, as it strives to eliminate distinctions (and importantly, discrimination) between groups. Even if younger generations see hierarchies as oppressive, the results show that they are nonetheless seeing the world as under those very terms. This, coupled with younger generations not adopting a cooperative worldview as much as older generations, compounds on seeing the world as more competitive than collaborative.

The results showing that younger individuals who are more polarized ideologically score higher on care/harm moral foundation, as well as the fairness/cheating foundation, indicates that iGen and Millennials who are more ideologically polarized consider factors of whether someone is being harmed or cared for, and whether someone is being treated fairly, in high regard.

Limitations

Understanding the political and ideological self-categorization differences between generations is best comprehended with long-term data collection and with controlling for ageing effects. A long-term study tracking how individuals score on the various scales may lead to more significant findings about score variance being a factor of age, generation, or political polarization.

Future research

I recommend examining these factors over time with long-term studies that control for the effect of aging. This will help assess what different generations are valuing at the same ages and stages in life, providing a more comprehensive understanding of shifts between birth cohorts. Additionally, if the sixth moral foundation is formally established and inducted into the MFQ, I recommend administering the liberty/oppression subscale as part of a revised MFQ.

While the focus of this paper is on generations, the positive psychology literature on individuals will be pertinent in a few key areas; the first being character strengths. The field of positive psychology asserts that individuals can build towards a life of flourishing by focusing on strengths as opposed to deficits (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The classification of character strengths rests on virtues being paired with action, and may be an important area of study in regards to understanding iGen and Millennials. I recommend that a follow up study assess what traits are becoming more prevalent in younger generations. The factors should include character strengths (as determined by the VIA classification) and the Big Five personality traits. If these factors were assessed in tandem with the scales administered for this survey, analyses of trends in not only the 24 VIA character strengths but openness, extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism could be examined. This would provide information on not only

the values younger generations are endorsing, but any major shifts in character and personality as well. The finding that younger generations have a strong connection between their intellect and sense of self (ego) could also prompt further studies into the constructs of identity that are driving younger individuals.

The psychology of traits is used to recognize individual differences that are stable and general, but are also shaped by environment and are capable of change (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). An additional survey approach assessing who iGen and Millennials “look up to” could reveal the character strengths they value and aspire towards. Exemplars have thus far been shown to be important assets to an individual’s ability to cultivate *resiliences*. While one’s resilience may be partially hereditary, it has been shown that certain factors protect and promote this trait, including having good role models⁶. In this way, exemplars not only serve as prodigies embodying certain character traits, they are forces in fostering them as well. Further exploration could uncover individuals who embody certain moral foundations, worldviews, or who strongly possess intellectual humility. Such role models could help bridge understanding across groups, or help to balance shifts in generational trait trends.

⁵ *Resilience* is the quality of demonstrating positive adaptation in the context of adversity, risk, or significant challenges (Masten, Cutuli, Herbers, & Reed 2009).

⁶ Other protective and promotive factors that predict positive outcomes in the face of high risks of adversity include mental agility, optimism, and self-efficacy. (Masten et al., 2009; Reivich & Shatte, 2002)

Summary & Conclusions

The moral and political landscape is shifting as younger generations enter important social domains such as college, the workplace, and politics. Engaging in moral discourse will always require establishing virtue terms (Graham et al., 2013), and this study undertook and examined Moral Foundations, Worldviews, and Intellectual Humility as important constructs for understanding the changes we are seeing. The results showed that younger generations are ascribing to more polarized political groups, seeing the world as more hierarchical and less cooperative, all while possessing less intellectual humility. In a disparaging political climate where our moral feuds are at their most potent, we may consider further exploration and research of intellectual humility as a potential agent for a culture of tolerance, collaboration, and civil discourse. The current polarized environment may be signaling the endangerment of political and intellectual diversity, multiplicity and nuance. Positive psychology may be the field primed for answering to this blaring siren, acceding to it as a beacon, redirecting the course for generations to come.

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