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Individual Moralities and Institutional Ethics: Implications for the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*

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ABSTRACT *Since the creation of the Canadian Psychological Association's Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists in 1986, there has been serious debate about the rank ordering of the ethical principles contained therein, despite a general consensus that the code itself represents a great leap forward in conceptualizing issues in professional ethics, and making its content available to its constituents in the most useful form possible. However, new research regarding the psychology of morality has painted a much more diverse landscape of human moral functioning than is reflected in the current rank ordering of principles within the code. This paper will examine "the new synthesis in moral psychology" and apply its findings to the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists. Three primary arguments are advanced. First, Canadian psychologists as a profession are more liberally oriented than the Canadian society they seek to serve, and their code of ethics reflects this bias. Second, as the Code of Ethics reflects a social contract with Canadian society generally, Canadian psychologists have a duty to acknowledge moral biases and to understand the ways in which systems of morality differ in peoples of different cultures and political orientations. Finally, in order to address these concerns, it is argued that the rank ordering of ethical principles in future revisions of the Code be dropped in favour of a format that includes raising awareness about the ways in which moralities differ across groups, cultures, and individual political orientations.*

Key words: ethics; morality; *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*; Moral Foundations Theory; moral psychology

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Psychological Association's (CPA) *Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (now in its third edition) (CPA, 2000) was developed in response to growing dissatisfaction with revisions to the American Psychological Association's (APA) Code of Ethics, which the CPA had routinely adopted without major revision until 1977 (Sinclair, Poizner, Gilmour-Barrett, & Randall, 1987). The first edition of the CPA's made-in-Canada Code

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appeared in 1986, and by general consensus (Seitz & O'Neill, 1996; Malloy & Hadjistavropoulous, 1998; O'Neill, 1998; Sinclair, 1998) represented a major conceptual and practical leap forward in ethical guidelines for professional organizations. Much of this advantage was due to the fact that the developers of the first version of the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (hereafter "the *Canadian Code of Ethics*", "the *Canadian Code*", "the *Code of Ethics*", or "the *Code*") had access to an extensive literature concerning the purposes, and relative strengths and weaknesses of similar codes previously constructed by other groups and professional organizations (Sinclair, 1998). Using this literature as a guide (for a review of which see Sinclair et al., 1987), the CPA set out four broad objectives for their new regulatory professional document:

1 To be conceptually cohesive and thereby a more effective educational tool.
2 To be more inclusive of recently developed areas of practice.
3 To give more explicit guidelines for action when ethical principles conflict.
4 To reflect explicitly the most useful decision rules (ethical principles) for ethical decision-making (Sinclair, 1998, p. 167).

In response to these lofty goals, the resulting *Canadian Code of Ethics* incorporated several features that are relatively unique amongst otherwise similar contemporary codes of ethics and professional ethical guidelines (Sinclair, 1998). First, the *Canadian Code of Ethics* is organized around four key ethical principles in an effort to satisfy the first and fourth objectives listed above. These principles are: "Respect for the Dignity of Persons", "Responsible Caring", "Integrity of Relationships", and "Responsibility to Society". It was thought that organizing the document around these core principles, rather than around specific areas of practice, for example, would increase the educative value of the *Code*, and also aid members in the application of the *Code's* content to practical situations likely to be encountered within the field. In situations where these ethical principles conflict and lead to competing directives for ethical behaviour, the *Code* explicitly rank orders the above ethical principles according to ethical and moral importance, which is its second unique characteristic. The specific ranking of the ethical principles during the development of the *Code* was based on responses of 59 psychologists to 37 hypothetical ethical dilemmas. Their moral reasoning processes were analysed and categorized until the four superordinate principles were arrived at, and descriptively ranked in order of importance based on these 59 responses (Sinclair, 1998). Although the *Code* formally acknowledges the impossibility of the ultimate primacy of one ethical principle over another across all situations, it does recommend that, *generally*, the principles should be afforded ethical consideration based on their relative ranking, in the order they are listed above: "The complexity of ethical conflicts precludes a firm ordering of the principles. However, the four principles have been ordered according to the weight each generally should be given when they conflict" (CPA, 2000, p. 2). Thus, when situations arise in research or clinical settings that pit one of the above ethical principles against another, according to the *Code of Ethics*, "Respect for the Dignity of Persons" should take precedence over each of the other three principles, "Responsible Caring" over the two subordinate to it, and so on down to "Responsibility to Society", which is to be weighted the least in arriving at ethical decisions. Ranking the principles in this way helps the *Code* achieve its third objective as outlined by Sinclair (1998) above. However, the third unique characteristic of the *Canadian Code* is that it explicitly allows for, and in fact encourages,

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the role of personal conscience in further recognition that ethical dilemmas are not always so easily solved via adherence to rigid application of one ethical rule over another (O'Neill, 1998). The preamble to the third edition of the *Code* stated:

> Even with the above ordering of the principles, psychologists will be faced with ethical dilemmas that are difficult to resolve. In these circumstances, psychologists are expected to engage in an ethical decision-making process that is explicit enough to bear public scrutiny. In some cases, resolution might be a matter of personal conscience. However, decisions of personal conscience are also expected to be the result of a decision-making process that is based on a reasonably coherent set of ethical principles and that can bear public scrutiny. (CPA, 2000, p. 2)

The fourth unique characteristic of the *Canadian Code* germane to the present discussion is the inclusion of a model for ethical decision which aimed at making the best decision rules explicit and available to users of the *Code of Ethics*, thereby achieving the CPA's third and fourth objectives for this *Code of Ethics*. To this end, the preamble to the *Code* lists ten steps recommended for arriving at ethical decisions, beginning with the identification of individuals and groups potentially affected by the decision; the development of several viable alternatives, and short- and long-term risk/benefit analyses of the alternatives; and, finally, the choice of a course of action, taking responsibility for its consequences and ultimately seeking to avoid future iterations of the same ethical dilemma. Finally, the fifth unique characteristic of the *Canadian Code* is its inclusion of an "overriding ethic of a social contract" (Sinclair, 1998, p. 168), which essentially mandates psychologists who subscribe to the *Code of Ethics* to have a commitment to hold the welfare of the society within which it operates above the welfare of the members of the profession/discipline of psychology.

Due primarily to the inclusion of these unique characteristics, the *Code* is generally highly regarded within Canada and internationally (Sinclair, 1998) and is generally thought to live up to its stated purposes, succinctly summarized by Sinclair et al. (1987, p. 1):

> . . . to help establish a group as a profession, to act as a support and guide to individual professionals, to help meet the responsibilities of being a profession, and to provide a statement of moral principle that helps the individual professional resolve ethical dilemmas.

Indeed, a number of articles published in *Canadian Psychology* (the journal of the Canadian Psychological Association) since the mid 1990s have praised the *Canadian Code of Ethics*, commenting on a wide variety of its merits and innovative approach to professional ethics. Seitz and O'Neill (1996) provided additional empirical support of the rank ordering of its ethical principles by presenting a series of vignettes involving situations pitting one of the *Code's* four ethical principles against another to 30 pre-professional undergraduate students in psychology. Their results indicated that the students' responses were consistent with the ordering prescribed by the *Code*. Similarly, Malloy and Hadjistavropoulous (1998) undertook a philosophical value analysis of the *Canadian Code* and concluded that the rank ordering of the ethical principles was generally consistent with prominent theoretical and philosophical hierarchies of ethical values, thus granting the *Code's* rank ordering of ethical principles theoretical support in addition to the empirical support provided by Seitz and O'Neill (1996). Dunbar (1998) lauded the *Code* for its unifying and professionalizing effect on the

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discipline of psychology within Canada via seven key strategies, including marketing psychology as a discipline, establishing exclusive rights and influencing public policy. O'Neill (1998) praised the structure of the *Code* in lending itself to seemingly incompatible philosophies of ethical decision making and its consequent utility in teaching the distinction between them. In an article which drew on and summarized relevant literature, Sinclair (1998) noted that the *Canadian Code* is reported to:

> . . . be helpful to the socialization of new (and established) Canadian psychologists; to support psychologists in resolving ethical dilemmas related to the complexities of teaching, conducting research, and providing services in today's complex society; and, to provide an alternative model for the development of ethics codes in other disciplines and countries. (p. 174)

In 2002, Malloy, Hadjistavropoulous, Douaud, and Smythe undertook a functional grammatical analysis of the *Code of Ethics* in comparison to the code of ethics of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) and concluded that the CPA's *Code of Ethics* provides much more guidance to its users, and is more educational, comprehensive and informative than that adopted by the CMA.

However, for all the praise that the *Canadian Code of Ethics* has received for its unique approach to professional ethics, its limitations have also been variously explored in the literature. Of interest to the current discussion specifically is the rank ordering of the ethical principles, which has been an area of contention and debate since the *Code of Ethics* first appeared in 1986. Although granting pre-eminence to one principle over another provides a utility when applied within populations that place the same level of importance on each of the values, the benefits may be diminished, disappear completely, or even cause harm or confusion when dealing with populations of divergent moral leanings. For example, although respect for individual autonomy, self-determination, individual achievement, individual responsibility and individual accountability (i.e. those values reflected in the first ranked ethical principle of "Respect for the Dignity of Persons") appear to be firmly entrenched values in modern western society, the same priority ranking of these values does not necessarily hold across all cultures found worldwide, or within Canada:

> The values of other cultures, including those of aboriginal people, sometimes emphasize the place of the person within the context of the extended family or community and give priority to collective decision-making over that of the individual. (Pettifor, 1998, p. 232)

Thus members of particular cultures may in fact value the fourth ranked ethical principle, "Responsibility to Society", ahead of the other three, a situation which almost certainly would not have been reflected in the empirical justification of the rank ordering based on the original 59 Canadian psychologists in the 1980s (Sinclair, 1998), or the 30 undergraduate honours students in the 1990s (Seitz & O'Neill, 1996). On this point, Truscott and Kenneth (2004) appropriately noted that the agreement of psychologists to be bound by certain rules of behaviour in no way guarantees that the rules arrived at are in any way correct or ethically valid. Given this apparent discrepancy in intuitive moral leanings across cultures, the question becomes how applicable the *Canadian Code of Ethics* is in arriving at ethical decisions when conflicting moral intuitions are involved. Pettifor (1998) stressed the importance of cultural

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sensitivity, emphasizing re-evaluating the definitions of competency, respect, confidentiality, caring and professional boundaries in the context of the conflicting culture in an effort to respect cultural values, maximize respect, and limit harm. However, a more nuanced view of the problem suggests that the solution may in fact require more than cultural sensitivity.

In recognition of this problem, recent collaborative work by the International Union of Psychological Science and the International Association of Applied Psychology has focused on building a more culturally sensitive model of professional ethical conduct, and the emphasis is abundantly clear from just the title: *The Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists: A Culture-Sensitive Model for Creating and Reviewing a Code of Ethics* (Gauthier, Pettifor, & Ferrero, 2010). The *Universal Declaration* actually shares much in common with the *Canadian Code of Ethics*: it is structured around four ethical principles, and the principles themselves bear significant resemblance to those of the *Canadian Code*; they are:

- Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples
- Competent Caring for the Well-Being of Persons and Peoples
- Integrity
- Professional and Scientific Responsibilities to Society.

These four principles are even listed in the same order as they appear in the *Canadian Code*; however, the primary difference between these two documents is that the *Universal Declaration* explicitly refrains from ranking them in order of ethical or moral import:

> The *Universal Declaration* recognizes that ethical principles are likely to be prioritized differently in different cultures. This is why ethical principles are not prioritized in the *Universal Declaration*. Although all four principles need to be taken into account and balanced in making ethical decisions, there are instances in which ethical principles will conflict and it will not be possible to give each principle equal weight. (Gauthier et al., 2010, pp. 184–185)

If international collaborative efforts have essentially transformed the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* into a culturally sensitive document by removing the rank ordering of the ethical principles, can it be assumed by deductive reasoning that the rank ordering of ethical principles itself is not culturally sensitive? As if this deduction were not a strong enough argument against the rank ordering of ethical principles in the *Canadian Code*, divergence in moral leanings *between* cultures does not guarantee homogeneity of moral leanings *within* cultures. That is, moral variability should be expected within cultural groups as well. Indeed, Pettifor (1998) discussed the moral stance of community psychologists in Western society who generally espouse greater importance on the development of community rather than the development of the individual, and are often concerned that collective or community welfare is not adequately accounted for in professional codes of ethics: "community psychologists sometimes argue that responsibility to society should be a higher priority than respect for the individual" (p. 232).

How is it that intelligent, well-educated, and well-intentioned people across different cultures, or even within the same culture, can arrive at such discrepant answers to the same moral and ethical questions? How is it that some people place an emphasis on personal rights and freedoms, i.e. "Respect for the Dignity of Persons", where others firmly believe that the greater

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good arises from the rights of a community essentially trumping the rights of the individual, i.e. "Responsibility to Society"? Which way of viewing the world and its ethical problems is correct, or, at least, which produces the best possible outcome for all involved? Although there can be no objective answer to these questions, the questions and issues of how and why peoples and cultures vary in their moral leanings is an empirical issue well suited to the scientific and investigative tools of psychology. In fact, these questions have received much scientific attention in recent years (Haidt, 2007), and Canadian psychologists are bound via their *Code of Ethics* to a social contract with Canadian society to have an awareness of this new research:

> The concept of the social contract obligates psychologists to place the public interest above self interest. There is strong emphasis on professionals being aware of their own personal attitudes and beliefs in order to serve the needs of diverse populations without inadvertently imposing their own views. Psychologists are expected to acquire knowledge of and convey respect for the culture, social structure and customs of every community in which they work. (Pettifor, 1998, pp. 232–233)

In this sense, Canadian psychologists have a duty to examine, and be aware of, the ways in which intuitive moral positions differ between people, groups, and cultures in the Canadian population which they serve. Recent empirical investigations of human morality have begun to look into these intuitive moral differences, and have returned some very unintuitive results.

THE NEW SYNTHESIS IN MORAL PSYCHOLOGY

"The new synthesis in moral psychology" is a term coined by social psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2007) to describe the integration of the traditionally philosophical study of ethics and new findings from the psychological science of human morality. This new synthesis consists of several domains of novel findings that inform inquiries that were previously only amenable to study via philosophy and introspection. Two of these domains are directly relevant to the profession of psychology and the *Canadian Code of Ethics* (See Haidt, 2007, for a succinct review of all four domains). The first is the intuitive primacy of moral judgements, which contrary to previous thought contends that morality is primarily an affective endeavour as opposed to a cognitive one. The second is Moral Foundations Theory, which is a unique attempt to differentiate empirically the different moral processes of different peoples and groups.

Whereas the discussion this far has primarily been about *ethics* in a professional sense, the next section will focus heavily on *morals* at an individual level. Although the two words carry much the same connotation, they are differentiated here for the sake of clarity. In the discussion that follows, it is assumed that individual morals, in aggregate, bear directly on the ethical values espoused at an institutional or professional level. Each will be discussed in some detail below before turning to an application of these new insights to the *Canadian Code of Ethics* in subsequent sections.

INTUITIVE PRIMACY OF MORAL JUDGEMENTS

The question of whether moral judgements are arrived at via a process of quick intuition based on gut reaction and emotional content or more calculated algorithms of moral

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reasoning has been a topic of philosophical debate for hundreds of years (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010). Concerning the origins of moral and ethical judgements, the Scottish philosopher David Hume in 1777 asked:

> There has been a controversy started of late . . . concerning the general foundation of morals; whether they be derived from reason or sentiment; whether we attain the knowledge of them by a chain of argument and induction, or by an immediate feeling and finer internal sense. (Hume, 1777/1960, p. 2, cited in Haidt & Kesebir, 2010, p. 802)

More than 200 years later, the science of psychology has finally arrived at a substantive (yet still tentative) answer to this question, and has reformulated the terms of the original question to do so. What Hume called "sentiment" is now "moral intuition" and what Hume called simply "reasoning" is now "moral reasoning". Haidt (2007) has defined the new terms:

> Moral intuition refers to fast, automatic, and (usually) affect-laden processes in which an evaluative feeling of good–bad or like–dislike (about the actions or character of a person) appears in consciousness without any awareness of having gone through steps of search, weighing evidence, or inferring a conclusion. Moral reasoning, in contrast, is a controlled and "cooler" (less affective) process; it is conscious mental activity that consists of transforming information about people and their actions in order to reach a moral judgment or decision. (p. 998)

Haidt's (2001) social intuitionist model of moral judgement posits that although the more controlled processes of moral reasoning can, and do, often occur during the course of moral decision making, they occur only after the initial affective processes have taken place, and furthermore that subsequent processes of reasoning are often influenced by the initial affective process. Reactions to morally dumbfounding situations (Haidt, 2001) (in which people are able to label a situation or an action as immoral, but are at a loss to provide logical reasons in support of their beliefs) provide initial evidence of the causal primacy of moral intuition over moral reasoning in moral decision-making situations. Haidt (2001) noted:

> Moral reasoning is usually an ex post facto process used to influence the intuitions (and hence judgements) of other people. In the social intuitionist model, one feels a quick flash of revulsion at the thought of incest, and knows intuitively that something is wrong . . . In the social intuitionist model it becomes plausible to say "I don't know, I can't explain it, I just know it's wrong". (p. 814)

Since Haidt's introduction of the social intuitionist model in 2001, additional research has arisen that either directly or tangentially supports the notion of intuitive or affective primacy in moral judgement. Broadly summarizing these rich fields of research, the following conclusions have been drawn: (i) people make rapid evaluative judgements of others; (ii) moral judgments involve brain areas related to emotion; (iii) morally charged economic behaviours involve brain areas related to emotion; (iv) psychopaths have emotional deficits; and (v) manipulating emotions changes moral judgements (see Haidt & Kesebir, 2010, for a detailed review of these areas of research).

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Knowing that people tend to make decisions in a moral context via intuition rather than by formal reason – or at least intuit right and wrong before reasoning their way to it – is a powerful finding. However, its explanatory power is somewhat lacking without the additional knowledge of the specific content of people's moral intuitions in the first place. That content of moral intuition that appears to be so powerful in swaying moral decisions is the topic of the next section.

MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY

"When deciding whether something is right or wrong, to what extent are the following considerations relevant to your thinking?"

1 Whether or not someone was harmed.
2 Whether or not some people were treated differently from others.
3 Whether or not someone did something to betray his or her group.
4 Whether or not someone respected the traditions of society.
5 Whether or not someone violated standards of purity and decency.

Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009) asked a sample of over 1600 participants to answer these and other similar questions on a six-point scale in order to assess individual differences in moral intuition and reasoning. Their results not only confirmed that individuals do indeed differ in terms of which of the above values guide their moral thinking (and likely, behaviour) but, more importantly, they found that endorsement of the above values varies systematically depending on the political orientation of the respondent. Participants who identified as "Strongly Liberal" rated statements number 1 and 2 from the above list higher, (i.e. more important to their moral decision making), than participants who identified themselves as "Strongly Conservative". Conversely, the self-identified conservatives rated items 3, 4 and 5 higher than self-identifying liberals. As interesting as these results are, they were not unexpected. To the contrary, Graham et al. (2009) designed these questions as a formal test of their suspicions – a set of hunches about human morality that were eventually consolidated in what they termed "Moral Foundations Theory".

Moral Foundations Theory attempts to extend the work of previous scholars in the realm of moral psychology by investigating the roots of human moral intuition and reasoning (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010). Haidt and Joseph (2008) surveyed the broad literature on taxonomies of social and cultural values held across human groups, in addition to recent work by primatologists, in an effort to discern what might constitute the basic building blocks of human morality, upon which more complex systems of morality are built (for a review of this literature see Haidt & Joseph, 2008; Haidt & Graham, 2009). The result was the identification of five distinct sets of moral concerns, each linked with an evolutionarily adaptive challenge, and to one or more typically occurring moral emotions. These five values constitute what Haidt and Kesebir (2010) refer to as the moral foundations:

1 Harm/Care: concerns for the suffering of others, including virtues of caring and compassion. The chief moral emotion involved with this foundation is compassion.
2 Fairness/Reciprocity: concerns about unfair treatment, cheating, and more abstract notions of justice and rights. Moral emotions related to fairness and reciprocity include anger, gratitude and guilt.

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3 Ingroup/Loyalty: concerns related to obligations of group membership, such as loyalty, self-sacrifice, and vigilance against betrayal. Moral emotions related to ingroup loyalty include group pride, belongingness and rage at traitors.
4 Authority/Respect: concerns related to social order and the obligations of hierarchical relationships, such as obedience, respect and the fulfillment of role based duties. Related moral emotions include respect and fear.
5 Purity/Sanctity: concerns about physical and spiritual contagion, including virtues of chastity, wholesomeness, and control of desires. The primary moral emotion involved with purity is disgust. (p. 822)

Each of these five foundations corresponds, in the order presented, to one of the questions posed to the participants of the study conducted by Graham et al. (2009). The authors correctly predicted that each of the survey questions would activate the respective moral foundation differently in people of different political orientations. On average, liberal-minded people tended to value the Harm/Care and Fairness/Reciprocity foundations above the other three. Conservatives, on the other hand, were found to value all of the five foundations, placing a much greater emphasis on foundations 3, 4, and 5 than liberals; also regarding foundations 1 and 2 as important – however, slightly less so than liberals. This, and two additional innovative empirical investigations, confirmed Graham and colleagues (2009) hypotheses, which led them to conclude that liberals operate primarily on moral values related to Harm/Care, and Fairness/Reciprocity, whereas the values of conservatives are more evenly distributed across all five foundations. Importantly, this pattern of data is not limited to the United States, North America, or even Western culture generally. Through the use of large sample sizes, Graham and colleagues (2011) were able to show that this pattern of moral intuition is, in fact, robust across 12 geographic regions including the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

One might argue here that all of human morality ought not be equated with political ideology, and especially not the narrowly defined unidimensional scale of liberal versus conservative, or "left" versus "right", represented by Haidt and his colleagues. However, investigations into exactly this concern have revealed that the left versus right spectrum of political views is actually surprisingly good at organizing political and moral attitudes and orientations (Haidt & Graham, 2009). For example, Jost (2006), noted that:

> Although the left–right distinction is by no means airtight, it has been the single most useful and parsimonious way to classify political attitudes for more than 200 years. It has found resonance in almost every cultural context in which it has been introduced. (p. 654)

Thus, although human morality is certainly about more than political ideology, the dichotomized spectrum of "left" and "right" serves as a good scheme by which to organize the root moral foundations on which all peoples seem to operate, and to highlight the ways in which thinking and reasoning about moral issues typically differs between human groups. Indeed, Haidt and Graham (2009) argued that the words "liberal" and "conservative" refer to families of political and moral ideologies: liberty and equality are the fundamental liberal goods, whereas conservatives also endorse a desire to maintain the status quo, long-standing institutions, and traditions that have been arrived at through the wisdom of many prior generations.

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Recent empirical support for moral foundations theory supports this distinction (Graham et al., 2011).

In fact, the differential usage of the five moral foundations by liberals and conservatives led Haidt and his colleagues (Haidt & Graham, 2009; Haidt & Kesebir, 2010) to label the first two moral foundations typically endorsed in exclusivity by liberals as the "modern" or "individualizing" foundations, and the three remaining as "traditional" or "binding" foundations because of their importance in building strong moral communities (an aspect of the new synthesis not described in detail in this present paper). Haidt and colleagues have asserted that peoples of all cultures have the capacity to develop moralities based on all five moral foundations, but that typically and over time cultures have tended to become more individualistic, and begin to shed the values associated with the more traditional foundations: "But as a society becomes more modern and more individualistic, the first two foundations become ever more important in daily life and in moral and political philosophy while the last three become less important" (Haidt & Graham, 2009, p. 12). In essence, modernity has generally had the effect of increasing the relative value of the individualizing moral foundations and decreasing the value of the binding foundations. Haidt and Graham (2009, p. 7) discussed the work of sociologist Emile Durkheim, who conceptualized modernity as "a centrifugal force flinging people out from tight communities maintained by respect for traditional authority, into a more open, freer, individualistic world in which people often have difficulty finding connection, order, and meaning."

Two important points need to be clarified here. First, Haidt and his colleagues are not claiming that "individualistic" moral values are in any way superior to "traditional" moral values; nor are they claiming the opposite. Rather, they are simply making a descriptive distinction between the two, based on the findings of their research. Thus it is still possible to reject the traditional moral foundations as the basis for fascism, racism, or homophobia from a normative or prescriptive view, while still acknowledging their existence, and indeed their persuasiveness within certain groups of people (Haidt, 2011). Second, it is important to note that Haidt and his colleagues are not arguing for innately immutable moral tendencies. Rather, they are claiming that all humans have the capacity to operate morally with each of these five foundations, and that their use in or exclusion from the moral repertoire is mouldable by cultural experience. Following Marcus (2004), Haidt and his colleagues argue that these foundations are innate in the sense that they are "organized in advance of experience" (Marcus, 2004, p. 40). As Haidt and Graham (2009) put it: "The genes create the first drafts of our brains, but experience in our families and cultures then edits those drafts to produce unique individuals and divergent cultures" (p. 11).

A serendipitous consequence of investigating morality via the empirical methods that Haidt and his colleagues have utilized over the past decade is the ability to examine the extent to which people of different political and moral persuasions are accurate or inaccurate in their perceptions about those who do not share their particular pattern of moral foundations. Previous research in the areas of ideological polarization and ideological extremity suggest two hypotheses relating to the accuracy with which liberals view conservative morality, and conservatives view liberal morality (see Haidt & Graham 2009). The first possibility is symmetrical inaccuracy, in which liberals and conservatives are equally inaccurate in their views of each other's moral stance and, as a consequence, political or moral moderates should have the least biased view of both persuasions. The second possibility is asymmetrical inaccuracy,

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with the more traditionally "rigid" conservatives understanding comparatively less about liberal ideology. However, moral foundations theory predicts a third alternative: that the inaccuracies will indeed be asymmetrical, but that conservatives ought to actually be in a better position to understand liberal ideology because of their utilization of all five moral foundations, including the two on which liberals tend to operate exclusively. That is, moral foundations theory predicts that liberals will be more inaccurate about conservative ideology related to moral issues because they generally do not value or even recognize the three "traditional" or "binding" moral foundations that conservatives reliably do.

To test this hypothesis, Haidt and Graham (2009) had a web sample of over 2000 participants complete moral questionnaires similar to those discussed above, *as if* they were typical liberals, and then *as if* they were typical conservatives. They then calculated difference scores for each participant's ratings made as a typical liberal and typical conservative, and then compared that difference score to the average discrepancy found between genuine typical liberals and typical conservatives on each measure to arrive at what they termed a "moral stereotype inaccuracy" score for each participant. Their results indicated symmetrical inaccuracies in moral stereotypes on the three traditional moral foundations, but confirmed the hypothesis predicted by moral foundations theory for the two modern moral foundations: that liberals would evince proportionately greater inaccuracy in portraying the views of conservatives. Specifically, liberals tended to underestimate the extent to which conservatives would be concerned with ethical values relating to the first two "modern" or "individualizing" moral foundations, i.e. Harm/Care and Fairness/Reciprocity.

Again, it is important to stress here that Haidt and his colleagues are in no way making a value judgement about the types of morality people *ought* to have, or that one pattern of moral foundation endorsement is inherently better than another. Nor do their results, which indicate that conservative-minded people tend to operate on more bases of morality (i.e. all five) than liberal minded people (i.e. only two), suggest that conservatives are any "more moral" than liberals. On the contrary, Haidt and his colleagues have consistently described moral foundations theory as a purely descriptive endeavour, and that if any sort of prescriptive dictum is to be drawn from their research it is that people ought to have a better understanding of those who do not share their own moral intuitions. Indeed Haidt and Graham (2007) discuss the lack of understanding between liberal and conservative moral mindsets and liken the divide to a wall. They suggest that moral foundations theory can be used as a doorway through which one moral mindset might view the other. As an example, they suggest that conservative resistance to the classically divisive issue of gay marriage may perhaps be better understood by liberals through the lens of moral foundations theory:

> Conservatives generally believe . . . that human beings need structure and constraint in order to flourish, and that social institutions provide these benefits . . . These are not crazy ideas . . . Conservatives and many moderates are opposed to gay marriage in part due to moral intuitions related to ingroup, authority, and purity, and these concerns should be addressed, rather than dismissed contemptuously. (Haidt & Graham, 2007, pp. 111–112)

To sum up, the new synthesis in moral psychology is informative in two ways to the present discussion of the *Canadian the Code of Ethics for Psychologists*. The first is that moral judgements are based primarily, or at the very least, initially, on moral intuition rather than processes of moral reasoning. The second is that the content of these moral intuitions can be reliably and validly conceptualized in terms of five separate moral foundations that are the building blocks of

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more complex systems of morality: Harm/Care, Fairness/Reciprocity, Ingroup/Loyalty, Authority/Respect, and Purity/Sanctity. Additionally, the political spectrum of liberal versus conservative, or left versus right, nicely parses the five moral foundations into groups that utilize these five foundations differentially. Specifically, people of a more typically liberal persuasion tend to value individualization and justice as moral goods, and thus reliably indicate the first two modern or individualizing moral foundations as inherently important to moral decision making. Conversely, people of a more typically conservative persuasion also value traditions and longstanding institutions as moral goods and so reliably endorse all five moral foundations more evenly than liberals. Finally, due to this two-versus-five structure of differential endorsement of moral foundations, Haidt and his colleagues have empirically demonstrated that typical liberal moral ideology is inherently more blind to the moral functioning of conservatives than conservatives are to the moral functioning of liberals. Given what is now known about the ways in which people differ in terms of moral thinking, what are the implications for ethical conduct within the realm of Canadian psychology and for the *Code of Ethics* in particular?

THE CANADIAN CODE OF ETHICS REVISITED

If individual people differ in terms of the weight they place on the five moral foundations, is it possible that groups of people differ similarly with respect to how they conceive of ethical principles at a professional or institutional level? It is argued here that the answer to this question is in the affirmative: aggregations of individuals with similar moral intuitions should be expected to build communal moralities and ethical systems that reflect these individual moral intuitions. Anecdotal evidence for this notion comes from the fact that moral foundations theory as described by Haidt and his colleagues can be used to help explain patterns in the United States' electoral map in 2004 and other years. If endorsement of moral foundations do vary systematically according to geography, we should expect concentrations of liberal and conservative moralities in certain areas depending on specific causal factors that lead people either to bind together into tightly knit communities via the binding moral foundations or, as suggested by Durkheim, to be tossed from those binding traditions and institutions by the centrifugal force of modernity by shedding the binding moral foundations in favour of the individualizing ones exclusively. Haidt and Graham (2009) contended that those specific causal factors are mobility and diversity:

> Mobility and diversity make a morality based on shared valuation of traditions and institutions quite difficult (Whose traditions? Which institutions?) . . . When viewed at the country level, the great majority of counties that voted for John Kerry are near major waterways, where ports and cities are usually located and where mobility and diversity are the greatest. Areas with less mobility and less diversity generally have the more traditional five-foundation morality and therefore were more likely to vote for George W. Bush. (p. 113)

From this perspective, it seems plausible – perhaps even obvious – that morality on an individual level is quite easily "scaled up" to ethical principles at an institutional level, at least in the United States for federal elections, but what about Canada, and what about the population of interest, i.e. Canadian psychologists?

The argument is advanced here that Canadian psychologists, operating mainly on the modern or individualizing moral foundations of Harm/Care and Fairness/Reciprocity), are, as a

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group, oriented more towards the liberal end of the spectrum and thus have built a *Code of Ethics* that reflects primarily these values. Comparing the tenets of the four ethical principles in the *Canadian Code* to moral foundations theory, it becomes apparent that the first- and second-ranked principles "Respect for the Dignity of Persons" and "Responsible Caring", respectively, map quite well on to the first two "individualizing" or "modern" moral foundations, which advocate the primary importance of personal safety, compassion, care, protection from harm, fairness, equality, justice, egalitarianism, and individual rights in general. The third-ranked principle, "Integrity in Relationships", is somewhat more oblique to moral foundations and the liberal–conservative dichotomy in that it prescribes open and honest practice, which neither morally liberal nor conservative-minded people would likely oppose. Finally, the fourth-ranked principle, "Responsibility to Society", is the only principle which is explicitly sensitive to the more "binding" or "traditional" moral foundations, on which the *Code of Ethics* noted (in Section IV.15) that psychologists should: "Acquire adequate knowledge of the culture, social structure, and customs of a community before beginning any major work there" (CPA, 2000, p. 30). This principle also includes a duty to conduct professional practice in such a way that society is advanced. In the context of the preceding discussion of moral foundations, and regarding the type of society psychologists are to advance, the *Code of Ethics* is, however, at best, ambiguous. Should psychologists seek to use their specialized knowledge to strive toward a modern and individualistic society emphasizing personal rights and freedoms, or toward a more traditional society in which tightness of communities, respect for authority, and purity are also highly valued?

LEFT, RIGHT, AND WRONG

Based on the preceding analysis, overall, it appears that the *Canadian Code of Ethics* places more weight on the individualizing moral foundations via its heavy emphasis on individual rights and personal freedoms, primarily mandated through the first two ethical principles. It should be noted, however, that although the *Canadian Code* makes no specific mention of protecting traditional moral values driven by community, authority, or purity explicitly, sections of the last three ethical principles require that psychologists examine their own biases, and understand the social structure of the communities within which they work. Working backwards through the reasoning presented at the beginning of this section regarding the connection between individual moralities and institutional ethics, what can we infer about the individual moralities of Canadian psychologists from their generally agreed upon ethical principles? From this apparent left-leaning bias of the *Canadian Code of Ethics*, can we assume that Canadian psychologists in general are, as a group, left-leaning too?

Guessing at the political and moral leanings of Canadian academics or Canadian psychologists in particular might be made more accurate by knowing something about (a) the rank ordering of the ethical principles in their code of ethics, and (b) which moral foundations are more or less left out of the *Code of Ethics* – but it is just that: a guess. Empirical research on the topic of political ideology amongst Canadian academics is admittedly scarce, and particularly so in contrast to the masses of political ideology research generated in the United States of America (USA) (Nakhaie & Adam, 2008). Researchers in the USA have consistently found that political orientation of academics is more left-leaning than the general population, particularly in the arts and

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social sciences (see Nakhaie & Adam, 2008, for a review of such findings from the USA). In Canada, only three such studies have been undertaken based on the results from only two surveys of Canadian academics regarding their political orientations and affiliations. In the most recent survey of over 3300 respondents, Nakhaie and Brym (2011) found that Canadian academics did indeed identify as more left-leaning than right-leaning, and were more likely to identify themselves as left of center than respondents in the general population – and this result has been stable across time (Nakhaie & Brym, 1999; Nakhaie & Adam, 2008). The data here, however, must be interpreted carefully – for two reasons. First, there are several methodological problems associated with generalizing the political values of academics, including sampling bias, as well as the inadequacy of the single "left versus right" spectrum to account for the multidimensional complexity of political ideology. For example, one may hold socially liberal, but fiscally conservative views concurrently. The second, and most important limitation of the data discussed by Nakhaie and colleagues is that its relation to moral intuitions is still an assumption. However as discussed above, Moral Foundations Theory informs us that simple self ratings of right versus left political ideology go a long way in uncovering correlations with moral ideology.

The data presented by Nakhaie and colleagues (Nakhaie & Brym, 1999, 2011; Nakhaie & Adam, 2008), combined with insights from Moral Foundations Theory, give us a better idea about the individual moralities of Canadian psychologists and their reasoning about communal ethical principles. Indeed, from this perspective it is not particularly surprising that the 59 psychologists surveyed in the 1980s (Sinclair & Pettifor, 1992) arrived at the particular ethical principles they did, nor should their particular rank ordering of the principles be surprising. Likewise, Seitz and O'Neill's (1996) empirical support for the rank ordering of the principles in the *Canadian Code* based on a sample of 30 undergraduate honours students in psychology, who more than likely shared the same left-leaning moral intuitions of Canadian academia in general, should not be surprising either. Both of these samples endorsed modern moral foundations, much to the exclusion of the traditional ones. But what about members of the general population in Canada which the *Code of Ethics* ultimately serves? Would they arrive at the same ethical principles, or rank them in the same order of importance?

Up to this point all observations and claims about individual moralities and institutional ethics have been descriptive: the fact that Canadian academics are measured to be slightly more left-leaning than centrist or right does not imply that the political orientation of Canadian academics ought to be more right-leaning or conservative. Relatedly, the fact that the political orientation of Canadian academics is more left-leaning than the general population does not imply that Canadian academic political orientation ought to be consistent with that found in the general population. Finally, suggesting that the resulting *Code of Ethics* is inherently biased toward the left does not thereby mean that it ought not to be. Haidt and his colleagues termed the first two moral foundations "modern" for a reason. An emphasis on individual rights and personal freedoms is, in general, the direction in which modern societies appear to be headed, due in part to increasing mobility and diversity. Indeed, within the modern context, organizations that emphasize all moral foundations in building tight social communities with an overriding respect for authority and a commitment to sacred values would be more in line with religious practice than professional organization. What is being argued for here prescriptively, in essence, is a more knowledgeable population of Canadian psychologists with respect to their left-leaning biases, especially in light of new findings that reveal the extent to which liberal moral ideology lends

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itself to misunderstanding conservative moral ideology (Haidt & Graham, 2009). To borrow from Haidt and Graham (2009):

> Modern social scientists are for the most part secular cosmopolitans; we find pleasure and freedom in our desacralized lives and our pursuits of self expression. But we must understand that many of our fellow citizens find the ethos of tolerance, individualism, and anything-goes-as-long-as-it-doesn't-hurt-anyone to be ugly, anti-social and profoundly immoral. (p. 8)

It ought not to be the responsibility of a professional organization's code of ethics to formally account for the full range of human moral intuitions or emotions. However, the *Canadian Code* does have a responsibility to be sympathetic to the ways in which some of the moralities not explicitly endorsed or protected by the *Code of Ethics* (i.e. Ingroup/Loyalty, Authority/Respect, and Purity/Sanctity) operate in members of the society it serves. If, as Pettifor (1998) asserted, "Psychologists are expected to acquire knowledge of and convey respect for the culture, social structure and customs of every community in which they work" (pp. 232–233), then Canadian psychologists ought to have a basic understanding of the new science of morality, for greater ethical insight in teaching, research, and practice.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Historically, psychological research on the science of human morality has focused on only two of the five moral foundations discussed by Haidt and his colleagues (Graham et al., 2009). Given the evidence suggesting that academics, particularly those in the social sciences, in both the United States and Canada, lean left politically, it should come as no surprise that those two foundations are the first two: Harm/Care and Fairness/Reciprocity. While research has focused on the primarily liberal notions of a morality based on harm and fairness for decades, research on the remaining three moral foundations has historically associated each with a particular source of *immorality.* As Graham et al. (2009) noted:

> The psychology of ingroups has been closely linked with the psychology of racism; the psychology of authority has been studied as the psychology of fascism and blind obedience; and the study of purity and disgust has been related to the psychology of stigma. (p. 1040)

The point here is that human morality is in fact about more than just harm and fairness and, consequently, that there is inherent value in traditional notions of morality involving community, authority and purity. The new synthesis in moral psychology is making great strides in disseminating this counterintuitive point, and is unearthing a plethora of empirical findings about the newfound depth of human moral systems and the ways in which they differ between people, groups, and cultures. Several implications arise from the application of these new findings to the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*. First, the ethical principles contained within the *Canadian Code*, and the particular rank ordering of them, is consistent with a view of human morality that principally values only the modern or individualizing moral foundations, based on individual rights and personal freedoms. This, combined with the fact that Canadian psychologists as a group are likely to share this liberal view of morality,

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precipitates the possibility that psychologists engaged in teaching will misunderstand the views of their more conservatively minded students; psychologists engaged in research may misinterpret results from their more conservatively minded research participants; and that clinical psychologists involved in practice may profoundly misunderstand the ways in which their more conservatively minded clients find meaning and purpose in the world.

The *Canadian Code of Ethics* is more than a document advocating prescribed methods of solving ethical dilemmas within psychology. It represents a social contract between its adherents and the society within which those adherents operate: "By virtue of this social contract, psychologists have a higher duty of care to members of society than the general duty of care that all members of society have to each other" (CPA, 2000, p. 1). Several parts of the *Code* mandate that Canadian psychologists be familiar with and understand the culture within which they work. For example, "Integrity of Relationships", Section III.10, states that psychologists adhering to this principle would: "Evaluate how their personal experiences, attitudes, values, social context, individual differences, stresses and specific training influence their activities and thinking, integrating this awareness into all attempts to be objective in their research, service and other activities" (CPA, 2000, p. 24). Given the evidence suggesting that the culture within which Canadian psychologists operate is more conservatively minded that those within the field, Canadian psychologists thereby have a duty to understand the content of the whole spectrum of moral views, including those that they do not normatively endorse, whether they fall right of center or not. This, of course, is not to say that all Canadian psychologists are liberal-minded, or even that all of those who are liberal-minded fail to understand the tenets of conservative morality. However, by the chain of reasoning presented above, we should expect that a great number of Canadian psychologists are more liberal-minded than conservative, and therefore may fail to appreciate the moral foundations central to a conservative thinking, and consequent behaviours.

I suggest that the way to accomplish this greater moral awareness among individual psychologists, and consequently greater ethical conduct as a discipline, is to strive to have future revisions of the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* acknowledge, reflect, and indeed incorporate lessons from the new science of morality. Specifically, future revisions of the *Code of Ethics* should list the existing ethical principles without regard to rank order, and include a primer (or at least references) regarding moral foundations theory and recent research on the moral leanings of Canadian psychologists in the preamble, as a tool by which to educate all adherents to the *Code of Ethics* about differences in moral intuition across people, groups, and cultures within Canadian society. In this way, the ostensible clarity that the rank ordering of ethical principles now provides in solving ethical dilemmas where the ethical principles conflict would then be substituted for greater emphasis on "personal conscience" or individual judgement and decision-making processes. Psychologists would thereby be better informed about "their own personal attitudes and beliefs in order to serve the needs of diverse populations without inadvertently imposing their own views."(Pettifor, 1998, p. 232) and, as a consequence, be better able to judge what ethical principles and decision-making processes would withstand public (i.e. on average, more morally conservative) scrutiny, as, indeed, the *Code of Ethics* currently mandates. Using the *Canadian Code of Ethics* in this way would establish it as a more relevant document: not just a set of rules and procedures to follow in times of ethical conflict, but rather a reflection of our own moral humanity, and how our individual moral leanings factor into the larger endeavour of ethical conduct at an institutional level. Following Haidt and Graham (2007), the new science of morality is the key to

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understanding that moral positions that you do not hold are not patently crazy or misguided. Rather, they are part of a system of morality that must not be contemptuously dismissed in intuiting or reasoning our way to correct moral action – both individually and as a discipline.

Ultimately, a Canadian society within which conservatively minded students are better served by their professors, research participants of all political or moral backgrounds spend their time contributing to better informed and more meaningful research, and morally right-leaning clients benefit from clinicians who understand the value of tight social communities, is one in which Canadian psychologists embrace the new synthesis in moral psychology.

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