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The Interrelation of Punitiveness, Morality, and Socio-demographics

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Abstract. This study explores the relationship between morality (in the form of the moral foundations theory) and punitiveness. Specifically, the aim of the study is to replicate earlier findings of Silver and Silver (2017), who found a positive correlation between the moral valuing of authority, loyalty, and purity (labelled together as the binding foundations), and punitiveness. Furthermore, they noted a negative correlation between the moral valuing of harm and fairness (labelled together as the individualising foundations), with punitiveness. In addition, this study includes an exploratory aim to evaluate the influence of socio-demographics on punitiveness, the binding, and individualising foundations. 133 participants responded to a survey, 58 of the participants identified themselves as "Man" and 75 as "Woman". Using regression analysis we successfully replicated the earlier findings of Silver and Silver (2017). Furthermore, education level and age demonstrated a negative correlation with the binding foundations. A gender difference was also noted with women tending to score higher on the individualising foundation. Education level and age were also found to negatively correlate with punitiveness, although this correlation was rendered insignificant when the binding and individualising foundations were also included as predictors.

In recent times, a punitive shift can be observed within several countries around the world, with their populace supporting harsher sentencing for lawbreakers (Gerber & Jackson, 2016; Jennings et al., 2017; Spiranovic et al., 2012). Within Sweden, similar trends have been observed, with a survey by SOM-institutet (2020) indicating that 90% supported harsher punishments for "Gang related crime". The Swedish government has also recently pushed for harsher sentencing, possibly as a response to the perceived punitiveness of the Swedish population (Justitiedepartementet, 2023). This conforms with earlier research that indicates that there may be a causal link between a punitive populace and harsher penal policies (Jennings et al., 2017). The shift of penal attitudes among Swedes, in combination with its likely effect on legislation, demonstrates the need for a deeper understanding of punitiveness and its underlying factors. Fortunately, international research have been dedicating attention to studying several underlying factors (Adriaenssen & Aertsen, 2015), for example: political ideology (Gerber & Jackson, 2016; Silver & Silver, 2017), personal experience as a victim (Gerber & Jackson, 2016), fear of crime (Armborst, 2017; Gerber & Jackson, 2016; Spiranovic et al., 2012), and knowledge about crime and punishment (Kääriäinen, 2019; Spiranovic et al., 2012). Despite this extensive coverage, some factors seem to be underexamined, with a prominent one being how a person's morality affects their punitive sentiments: only a few earlier articles covering it (Jorgensen & Nilsson, 2022; Silver, 2017; Silver & Silver, 2017; Silver & Ulmer, 2023). Furthermore, penal attitudes can be said to at least partly stem from moral intuitions, giving them a theoretical link; making it an especially fruitful topic of inquiry (Darley, 2009). One theory assumes that attitudes towards punishment evolved in congruence with morality, both acting as means to further group cooperation, through the prosocial punishment of perceived moral transgressors (Greene, 2014). Based on this background, the purpose of this article will be to further examine the relationship between morality and punitiveness.

Morality in the Form of Moral Foundations

Traditionally, the concept of morality has, in the psychological domain, been considered a process primarily rooted in reason (Haidt, 2001). Although, modern psychological theories tend to move away from this pure rationalism, pointing to the importance of intuition (Greene, 2014). Proposing instead, that people rely on two different types of systems when forming moral beliefs: an

automatic intuition based system, and a manual reason based system. Overall, people tend to rely heavily on the automatic system, due to the manual system requiring significantly more time and cognitive resources. Haidt (2001) suggests, through his *social intuitionist theory*, that the manual system is mainly used for post hoc rationalisations of already formed moral beliefs. Instead, he proposes that moral beliefs are primarily formed through biologically grounded moral intuitions, formed as result of the evolutionary process. These intuitions are then later shaped through a process of socialisation, where the social environment significantly affect the intuitions form and perceived salience. In a sense, the brain learns to focus on specific intuitions that are considered important in its given social environment, in turn making them more salient. As an example, a person from India may be able to perceive some completely different moral intuitions about bodily purity than someone from the United states, simply because each culture emphasise it in different ways.

Building on the Social intuitionist theory, Haidt and Graham (2007) developed the *Moral foundations theory*, for which they identified and categorised moral intuitions into several different moral domains, classifying them as *moral foundations*. This resulted in the following five foundations:

- The harm/care foundation focuses on the well-being of individuals. Acts that harm others are seen as moral violations, while acts that promote the care and well-being of others are seen as morally good.
- The fairness/reciprocity foundation centre on individual justice and fairness, where the just and fair treatment of others is seen as a moral good, while treating others unjustly or unfairly is seen as a moral violation.
- The in-group/loyalty foundation emphasise the value of loyalty and devotion to the larger social group. Under which, acts of individual sacrifice for the larger collective are seen as morally good, while acts that betray or exploit the group are considered to be moral violations.
- The authority/respect foundation emphasising the obedience and reverence of legitimate social authorities. Under which, the respect for social hierarchy and the conformity to social roles is seen as a moral good, while acts of disobedience and defiance against legitimate authorities are seen as moral transgressions.
- The purity/sanctity foundation revolves around societal standards of purity and decency. Actions that are deemed impure, are seen as moral violations, while acting in a way in which one remains "pure" is seen as morally good¹.

While each foundation is qualitatively unique, there are still certain foundations that display similar characteristics, for this reason some researchers chose to categorise them further (Graham et al., 2009). The harm/care and fairness/reciprocity foundations, both morally emphasise the individual, therefore they are often labelled as the individualising foundations. While, the in-group/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity foundations are categorised as the "binding" foundations, as they place the moral focus on the group; binding people together. Furthermore, the binding and individualising distinction has been found to be a valid predictor in earlier research. With Graham et al. (2009) finding that American liberals tended to score higher on the individualising foundations while conservatives tended to score higher on the binding foundations. Although, it should be noted that later research has found that this "grouping" is mainly applicable in weird (western educated industrialised rich democratic) cultures (Atari et al., 2023). Finding that non-weird cultures' moral foundations tended to co-vary in different ways.

Defining Punitiveness

Within previous psychological research, there has been a lack of consensus regarding a precise definition of punitiveness, with its meaning shifting between publications (Adriaenssen & Aertsen, 2015). Furthermore, punitiveness can also be studied on different scales, therefore it is

¹An example of acts that could be seen as impure, are the abuse of drugs and acts of sexual deviancy, while pure acts mainly appear to focus on the avoidance of the "impure" such as chastity.

important to make it clear that this study will only be concerned with punitiveness on the micro scale; focusing on individuals' punitive attitudes. Hence, any further use of the term "punitiveness" will only be referring to punitiveness in the sense of individuals' particular penal attitudes. Under the same demarcation, Adriaenssen and Aertsen (2015) was able to identify three central aspects common to most operationalisations of punitiveness: (i) an attitude towards the intensity of penal sanctions and specific sentencing policies, (ii) an attitude towards specified forms of penal sanctions, and (iii) an attitude towards the goals of punishment. In most cases, they found that at least two of these aspects were present in any given definition, while it was uncommon that any contained all three.

Building on this background, we can begin to formulate a more precise definition of punitiveness. Beginning with (i), which equates a high degree of punitiveness with a preference for more intense penal sanctions. This is arguably the most central part of the punitiveness definition, as it directly ties it to attitudes towards degrees of punishment. The next aspect (ii) is more complex, being described as consisting of two parts. First, where a preference for certain punishments is seen as more punitive, an example would be a preference for prison sentences over probation (Adriaenssen & Aertsen, 2015). Second, in which the support for specific types of penal policies are seen as more punitive, for example supporting a three strikes policy². Whereas (ii) is clearly conceptually relevant, it may not be necessary for a definition regarding degrees of punitiveness. The reason being that (ii) is explainable in the form of (i), for instance a preference for imprisonment over probation and support of three strikes policy could simply be described as preference for more intense punishments, i.e (i). Therefore (ii) while still being conceptually relevant, its inclusion becomes unnecessary in any parsimonious of punitiveness. Lastly (iii), in which "goals of punishment" refers to the actual goal behind the punishment. In general, penal sanctions with the purpose of retribution, incapacitation, and deterrence are often classified as having a punitive goal, while punishments for the purpose of rehabilitation and reformation are categorised as less punitive. An example of this type of operationalisation would be a study conducted by Mackey et al. (2006), in which they partly equate higher punitiveness with a retributive goal of punishment. We do not dispute the conceptual relevancy of (iii), although it is not clear that it is appropriate for estimating degrees of punitiveness. A person (a), who has a greater preference for more intense punishments in comparison to person (b), could be viewed as less punitive than (b), only because the punitive goals of (a) are considered less punitive than the goals of (b). In other words, there is no necessary relationship between (i) and (iii) (Maruna & King, 2009). For this reason we suggest that these should be separated, with (i) describing degrees of punishment, while (iii) describes types of punitive attitudes. Considering that this study is specifically concerned with degrees of punitiveness, (iii) will be excluded. Therefore, we define higher degrees of punitiveness as a "preference for more intense penal sanctions".

From Morality to Punitiveness

As previously mentioned, punitiveness is likely to be at least partly, rooted in morality. The theory being that people's desire to punish wrongdoers evolved as a mean to further cooperation within social groups. People experience a type of righteous indignation when faced with people that sabotage or refuse to cooperate with the group (Greene, 2014). Consider now that the binding foundations emphasis the well-being of the group, placing a higher moral value on the larger social whole than the individual (Graham et al., 2009). Then it stands to reason, that a person who scores higher on the binding foundation may also experience more righteous indignation or rather punitiveness, when faced with saboteurs or non-cooperators (in this context criminals). Furthermore, this speculation is supported by earlier psychological research, which has found that people who are more inclined towards the binding foundations tend to also be more punitive (Silver, 2017; Silver & Silver, 2017). In addition to this, Silver and Silver (2017) also found that a higher score on the individualising foundations had an overall lessening effect on punitiveness. They speculated that this may be caused by an individualising

²Three strikes policy refers to some type of sentencing policy in which a person receives a harsher punishment on the basis of them having been sentenced twice before

person's tendency to focus on the well-being of individuals, including perpetrators of crimes, in turn leading to a lessening effect on punitiveness.

Socio-demographics

Furthermore, other factors have been shown to affect both punitiveness and moral foundations, which may hint at a more complex underlying relationship. In regards to punitiveness, it has been found that it may be affected by certain socio-demographic factors, specifically a person's gender identity, age, education (Adriaenssen & Aertsen, 2015), and income level (Spiranovic et al., 2012). Overall, the findings regarding gender have been fairly mixed, with some studies showing that men tend to be more punitive, while others indicate that women tend to be more punitive, and some studies found no significant relationship at all (Adriaenssen & Aertsen, 2015). For age, the findings have been more consistent, indicating a positive correlation with punitiveness, with younger people tending to be less punitive. In regards to education, it has been shown to have a lessening effect on punitiveness. Finally, it has been found that a lower income level tend to positively correlate with punitiveness, however, these findings have also varied to some extent (Spiranovic et al., 2012). Albeit, it should be noted that the overall effect sizes of socio-demographic factors are rather small and somewhat inconsistent, although the latter may be explained by the inconsistent operationalisation of punitiveness (Adriaenssen & Aertsen, 2015). When it comes to moral foundations, the influence of socio-demographic factors appear to have been less examined, with only gender and age being found to be properly covered in earlier research. For gender, most findings have been consistent with women having a greater tendency towards the foundations of harm/care and purity/sanctity, while men tended to be more inclined towards the authority/respect and in-group/loyalty foundation (Atari et al., 2020, 2023; Graham et al., 2011). For age, a meta-analysis of previous research by Castilla-Estévez and Blázquez-Rincón (2021) found no significant linear relationship between age and a person's moral foundations, although they did identify a small non-linear relationship with older people tending to score higher on the binding foundations. Considering the relationship between gender and moral foundations one could also expect that men are more punitive than women. The reason being that men tend to lean more towards the binding foundations, which had a positive correlation with punitiveness, while women tend to lean more towards the individualising foundations which had a negative correlation with punitiveness. In this sense, one could speculate that there may be a more complex causal relationship between all variables, and not necessarily a direct correlation between gender and punitiveness. Furthermore it can be speculated that similar patterns could be observed when regarding other socio-demographic factors.

Aim and Hypotheses

This study aims to primarily examine the relationship between the binding and individualising moral foundations with punitiveness, specifically we aim to replicate some of the findings by Silver and Silver (2017). Given their findings, we first hypothesise that there is a positive correlation between the binding foundations and punitiveness, secondly we hypothesise to find a negative correlation between the individualising foundations and punitiveness. Furthermore, with the hopes of covering for some of the shortcomings of earlier research, we aim to investigate potential influence of socio-demographic factors³ on both punitiveness, the binding, and individualising foundations. Lastly, as an additional exploratory purpose of the study, we aim to attempt to identify indicators of more complex aspects of the interrelated relationship between the moral foundations variables, punitiveness, and socio-demographics.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive correlation between the binding foundations and punitiveness.

³Note that age is only included as a control variable as we do not expect to find any correlation between it and moral foundations, given the earlier research by Castilla-Estévez and Blázquez-Rincón (2021).

Hypothesis 2: There is a negative correlation between the individualising foundations and punitiveness.

Hypothesis 3: a) There is a difference between men's and women's scores on the binding or individualising foundations.

b) There is a difference between men's and women's punitiveness scores.

Hypothesis 4: a) There is correlation between income level and the binding or individualising foundations.

b) There is correlation between income level and punitiveness.

Hypothesis 5: a) There is correlation between education level and the binding or the individualising foundations

b) There is correlation between education level and punitiveness

Method

A survey was constructed using the application Qualtrics, and distributed through an anonymous link via social media, emails, and physical flyers. The survey itself contained two separate scales; one for measuring punitiveness and another for measuring moral foundations. Furthermore, a separate section was included for measuring socio-demographics. Both measuring scales contained two separate blocks of survey items, resulting in a total of five item blocks. In order to control for order effects, the order between and within the moral foundations and punitiveness items blocks were randomised. The final fifth block was designed to always survey socio-demographics, as these questions had static answers that are unlikely to be affected by any order effects. Participants were also given a quick rudimentary briefing on the purpose of the study and the handling of their personal data, while also being asked for their consent in participating.

Sample

The original sample of the survey totalled 201 participants, but was later narrowed down to 133 participants, a total loss of 33.83%(N = 74). 14 participants were removed for failing either a "bot detection" or a duplicate id check. Another 37 participants were removed for failing one or more of our control questions. Furthermore, 4 participants did not identify as either male or female, as this sample was too small to analyse statistically they were also excluded. Lastly, 13 participants were removed since they did not want to disclose their income level.

Socio-demographic Factors

The participants were question about 4 different socio-demographic factors, three of which are considered as independent variables: gender, level of education, and income, while age was included as a control variable. Gender was surveyed by asking participants the following: "Which gender identity do you identify as?", with the response options:"Man", "Woman", and "other". Education level was surveyed using the following question: "Which alternative describes your level of education the best?", with the response alternatives: "Primary school", "High school", "Unfinished University/College studies", "Bachelor degree", "Masters degree", and "Doctoral degree". Income level was surveyed using the following question: "What is your gross salary per month?", with the following response options: "Do not want to answer", "0 – 12000kr", "12000 – 25000kr", "25000 – 35000kr", "35000 – 50000kr", and "50000kr or more". Lastly, age was surveyed using the question "How old are you?", where participants had the option to enter any age, given a few

reasonable limitations. A minimum age requirement of 15 was set and a max age of 111, the former was set as to avoid requirement for parental consent, while the later was set in order to minimise the risk of false input ages.

The sample gathered for the study, was fairly varied with 43.6% ($N = 58$) of participants identifying themselves as "Man" and 56.4% ($N = 75$) as "Woman". The ages of our participants ranged from 18 to 75, with a mean age of 36.13 years ($SD = 10.4$). The most frequent ages were 38 and 33, with both including 6% ($N = 8$) of participants each. The most frequent reported income was in-between 35000 – 50000kr with 29.3% ($N = 39$) respondents, followed by: 25000 – 35000kr with (28.6%) ($N = 38$), 0 – 12000kr with 12% ($N = 16$), and lastly 50000kr with 11.3% ($N = 15$) of the participants. On the question of education the responses ranged from "Primary school" all the way to a doctoral degree, with the most common education level being a bachelor degree, totalling 40.6% ($N = 54$) of the participants. This was followed by: 27.8% ($N = 37$) that had some unfinished university studies, 14.3% ($N = 19$) had a masters degree, 12.8% ($N = 17$) had secondary school as their highest education, 2.3% ($N = 3$) of the participants had only finished primary school, and lastly 2.3% ($N = 3$) had a doctoral of the participants degree.

Measures

Punitiveness

To measure punitiveness, we used a previously validated scale which was first designed in German by Armbrorst (2014). Later, the study was re-published in English and so the scale was also translated to English by Armbrorst (2017). The entire scale consisted of a total of 11 items, of which, 3 items were placed on a Likert-scale from 1 – 4 while the rest ranged between 1 – 5. In order to allow each question to bear equal statistical weight we changed the former so that all items were on a scale of 1 – 5. For 3 of the items, participants were presented with general statements about sentencing, after which they were asked whether they considered the sentencing as being too low or too high. An example of this type of question is the following: "In general, imposed sentences for overall crime are..." 1 = "way too low", 5 = "way too high". The remaining 8 items questioned participants whether they agreed with a particular punitive statement. An example being: "If the police could get tough on crime there would be less crime", 1 = "fully do not agree", 5 = "fully agree". Note that some questions were reversed so responding with a 5 did not always result in the most punitive score. The scale was evaluated using a Chronbachs alpha test, receiving a Alpha value of .885 indicating a good internal consistency. Furthermore, for the purposes of this study, we translated the original scale items to Swedish so that it would be more appropriate for use on a Swedish population. To see the translated items see Table A1 in the appendix, and to see the original English items see Table A2 in the appendix.

Moral Foundations

For the purpose of measuring individuals' moral foundations score, the moral foundations questionnaire (MFQ) finalised by Graham et al. (2011) was utilised. The MFQ has been translated to several different languages, all available for download at Moralfoundations.org or see appendix table B1 and B3. For this study we utilised the Swedish version; validated by Nilsson and Erlandsson (2015) see appendix table B2 and B4. To further evaluate the scale a Chronbachs alpha test was conducted, specifically its capability to measure the binding and individualising foundations as index variables. The items corresponding to the individualising foundations produced an alpha score of .703, while the individualising items produced an alpha score of .871. This indicates that it is appropriate to group both into individual index variables.

The moral foundations questionnaire contains 32 items in total, with 6 items being attributed to each of the five foundations, and the remaining two functioning as control questions. The questionnaire is split up into two separate blocks each containing one control question, and half of the items corresponding to each moral foundation. The first block aims to measure the degree to which an item is relevant for one to determine whether or not something is morally right or wrong. An example of some

items are the following: "Whether or not someone suffered emotionally"(harm/care) and "Whether or not someone showed a lack of respect for authority" (authority/respect). Participants responded to the items on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 6, indicating to what degree said statement is relevant for them, with 1 equalling "Not at all relevant" and 6 equalling "Extremely relevant". The second block measured a person's agreement with different moral judgements, two examples being: "Chastity is an important and valuable virtue" (Purity/sanctity) and "When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly" (fairness/reciprocity). These items were also responded to on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 6, where 1 equals "Strongly disagree" and 6 equals "Strongly agree".

The control questions were the following: in the first block "Whether or not someone is good at math" and in the second block "It is better to do good than to do bad". The former were designed to force participants to use the lower part of the scale, excluding anyone responding with 3 or above. The latter were designed to force participants to use the higher part of the scale, excluding anyone responding with 3 or below. Hence, a combination of both control questions serve as a comprehension check and as a way to catch lazy respondents who may be straightlining their answers, such as responding with the left most answer each time.

Analysis

Starting out we performed a hierarchical linear regression analysis consisting of two steps. We will be referring to step one as M1(model 1) and step two as M2 (model 2). M1 includes the binding and individualising foundations as predictors and punitiveness as the dependent variable. In M2 we also included the socio-demographics factors (age, gender, education, and level of income) as predictors. The purpose of both these models are to evaluate hypotheses 1 and 2, while also controlling for the effect of socio-demographics. In addition, for the purpose of evaluating hypothesis 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 5a, and 5b, three statistical models were constructed M3 (model 3), M4 (model 4), and M5 (model 5). Each model utilises a standard multiple linear regression analysis, with the socio-demographic factors as its sole predictors, while each also having an unique dependent variable: for M4 the individualising foundations, and for M5 the punitiveness. Lastly, all models were assessed for multicollinearity.

Results

The mean score of binding foundation was 2.80 and for the individualising foundation it was 4.42, with both having a having a range of 1-6. While the mean score for punitiveness was 2.64 with a range of 1-5, for further descriptive details see Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Range	Mean	SD
Punitiveness	133	1-5	2.64	.83
Binding	133	1-6	2.80	.78
Individualising	133	1-6	4.42	.65
Gender identity	133	1-2	-	-
Age	133	18-75	36.13	10.40
Education level	133	1-6	3.59	1.03
Income level	133	1-5	3.09	.78

Note: that gender is in fact, a dichotomous variable.

Binding and Individualising Foundations, Regression Model 1-2

M1, was constructed in order to evaluate the relationship between the binding and individualising foundations with punitiveness. The model produced overall significant results ($R^2_{adjusted} =$

.319, $F(2, 130) = 31.947, p < .001$), with the binding and individualising foundations explaining 31.9% of the total variance in punitiveness. Specifically, the binding foundations showcased a positive relationship ($\beta = .526, p < .001$) with punitiveness, supporting hypothesis 1. Furthermore, the individualising foundations demonstrated a negative relationship ($\beta = -.219, p = .003$) with punitiveness. Lastly, we found no issues regarding multicollinearity within this model, with each predictor having a VIF score 1. For M2, which serves the same purpose as M1 while also controlling for socio-demographic factors, including them as additional predictors with the binding and individualising foundations. The regression model remained significant ($R^2_{adjusted} = .327, F(2, 126) = 11.688, p < .001$), increasing the predictive value ($R^2_{adjusted\ change} = .008$), explaining .8% more of the total variance in punitiveness. Both the binding foundations ($\beta = .517, p < .001$) and the individualising foundations ($\beta = -.246, p = .002$) remained significant predictors. In comparison, all socio-demographic predictors were found to be insignificant, see table 2 for details. Lastly, all variables were tested for multicollinearity, receiving VIF scores between 1.111 – 1.767 which indicates that there are no problems with multicollinearity. Overall M2 further support both the first and second hypothesis, demonstrating that the binding and individualising foundations remains significant even when controlling for socio-demographic factors.

Table 2: Regression Models 1 and 2, dependent variable is punitiveness

Model 1	Beta	Sig	CI-95%
Binding	.526	$p < .001$.410, .714
Individualising	-.219	$p = .003$	-.464, -.099
Model 2			
Binding	.517	$p = .001$.393, .711
Individualising	-.246	$p = .002$	-.516, -.117
Gender identity	.141	$p = .082$	-.030, .504
Age	-.120	$p = .180$	-.024, .005
Education level	-.107	$p = .192$	-.219, .044
Income level	.145	$p = .129$	-.030, .234

Note: Beta = Standardised beta coefficient, Sig = Significance value, CI = Confidence interval

Socio-demographics, Regression Model 3-5

M3, which served to examine socio-demographics potential influence on the binding foundation produced overall significant results ($R^2_{adjusted} = .065, F(4, 128) = 3.287, p = .013$), with socio-demographics explaining 6.5% of the total variance in the binding foundation. Specifically education level ($\beta = -.199, p = .038$) and age ($\beta = -.232, p = .024$) were found to be significant predictors, the remaining socio-demographic factors were insignificant, for more details see Table 3. These findings support hypothesis 5a, that there is correlation between education level and the binding or the individualising foundations. M4, which examined the relationship between socio-demographics and the individualising foundation was also significant ($R^2_{adjusted} = .143, F(4, 128) = 6.508, p < .001$). Indicating that socio-demographics can explain a total of 14.3% the variance within the individualising foundations. Although, all predictors except for gender ($\beta = .367, p < .001$) was found to be insignificant, for more details see Table 3. It was found that women on average scored higher on the individualising foundations with a mean score of 4.64 compared to men's 4.13⁴. Lastly, M5, which examined the relationship between socio-demographics and punitiveness, also produced significant results ($R^2_{adjusted} = .055, F(4, 128) = 2.921, p = .024$), indicating that socio-demographics *on their own* can predict punitiveness. Although, it should be noted that the effect is seemingly weak only explaining a total of 5.5% of the total variance of punitiveness. More specifically, only education and age were significant predictors of punitiveness with the former producing a result of

⁴The given range here is 6, as can be seen in table 1

($\beta = -.223, p = .021$) and the later ($\beta = -.282, p = .006$). The rest of the predictors were insignificant, for specific details see Table 3. Lastly, there were no concerns with multicollinearity for any of the models as all variables received a VIF score in-between 1.077 – 1.745.

Table 3: Regression model 3-5

Variable	Model 3 Binding index			Model 4 Individualising index			Model 5 Punitiveness index		
	Beta	Sig	CI-95%	Beta	Sig	CI-95%	Beta	Sig	CI-95%
Gender identity	-.121	$p = .167$	-.463, .081	.367	$p < .001$.264, .696	-.012	$p = .890$	-.312, .271
Age	-.232	$p = .024$	-.033, -.002	.172	$p = .079$	-.001, .023	-.282	$p = .006$	-.039, -.006
Education level	-.199	$p = .038$	-.293, -.009	.51	$p = .572$	-.081, .146	-.223	$p = .021$	-.334, -.028
Income level	.100	$p = .370$	-.079, .210	-.088	$p = .408$	-.164, .067	.219	$p = .053$	-.002, .309

Note: Beta = Standardised beta coefficient, Sig = significance value, CI = Confidence interval

Discussion

Binding and Individualising Foundations

We found evidence that supported both our first and second hypothesis, replicating the findings of Silver and Silver (2017). We observed that the binding moral foundations correlated positively with punitiveness, while a smaller negative correlation was noted for the individualising foundations. Building on our earlier theoretical background, we can speculate further on the reasons for why these relationships were observed. We believe that the positive correlation between the binding foundations and punitiveness, may be caused by the former affecting the moral perception of crime. For instance, criminal acts most often go against the social consensus and the larger social group, prioritising individual gain at the expense of the group. In this sense, on the account of the in-group/loyalty foundations, crime can be viewed as a betrayal towards the social group and thus also morally wrong. Furthermore, criminal acts per definition, go against established legitimate authorities. Therefore, it may be perceived under the authority/respect foundation, as an act of disobedience; further adding to the moral wrongness of crime. Lastly, under the purity/sanctity foundation, crime may be associated with acts that could be considered as "impure", such as sex work and drug abuse, also increasing the perceived moral wrongness of crime. Altogether, if correct, then this would explain why a person who scores higher on the binding foundation would also be more punitive.

The smaller negative correlation between the individualising foundations and punitiveness, may be explained by how its underlying foundations of harm/care and fairness/reciprocity affect a person's perspective on punishment. Both foundations place their moral significance on the individual (Graham et al., 2009), hence an individualising person may place extra concern on the well-being and rights of the individuals involved (Silver & Silver, 2017). Specifically, they might be concerned with the rights and well-being of both the victim and perpetrator. On the one hand the concern for the perpetrator may have a lessening effect on punitiveness, while on the other hand the concern for the victim may increase it. In this sense, the individualising person is likely to be more ambivalent towards punitiveness, with their intuitions pulling them in two opposite directions. This may in turn, explain why the individualising foundations correlation with punitiveness is comparatively small.

Socio-demographics

Socio-demographic factors were found to have some effect on both the binding and individualising foundations. Specifically, only two factors were found to have a significant effect on the binding foundations, with education level and age showcasing a negative correlation. The finding regarding education level supports hypothesis 5a, while the findings regarding age goes contrary to the earlier finding of Castilla-Estévez and Blázquez-Rincón (2021)⁵. Lastly, gender was found to be

⁵Note that this result may be an artefact of our limited sample, with the age distribution being skewed towards the younger side.

a significant predictor of the individualising foundations. It was found that women tended to score higher on the individualising foundations compared to men, which overall goes inline with earlier research (Atari et al., 2020, 2023; Graham et al., 2011).

Overall, the findings that socio-demographics have some influence on moral foundations falls in line with the theoretical background of the moral foundations theory. The theory being based on the idea that moral intuitions are grounded in biology and then later shaped through the social environment (Haidt, 2001). Based on this we have formulated some possible causal relationships that may explain our findings. First, it may be the case that a socio-demographic factor correlates with some biological quality which in turn may affect moral foundations, for instance gender tends to correlate with certain biological qualities. Second, a socio-demographic factor could affect a person's social environment which then in turn would affect one's moral foundations, for example a person with a higher education may be treated differently than a person with a lower education. Third, it could be the case that a specific social environment affects both a specific socio-demographic factor and moral foundations, as an example: being brought up in a well off neighbourhood may lead to greater academic success and also affect a person's moral foundations. Lastly, it could be the case that moral foundations more directly affect some socio-demographic factors. For instance the valuing of the well-being of others may lead to a person having an easier time in school.

The observed relationship between socio-demographics and punitiveness was somewhat more complex. When the socio-demographics factors were included as the sole predictors in M5 they were found to be significant. Specifically education level and age had a negative correlation with punitiveness, see Table 3. Although, when both the socio-demographic factors and moral foundations were included as predictors in M2 (see Table 2), then the former was rendered insignificant. On their own, in M5, socio-demographics displayed an R^2_{adjusted} equalling .055, yet when they were introduced as additional predictors in M2 it only resulted in R^2_{adjusted} change of .008. This means that the socio-demographic variables' unique explained variance is only .8%. Furthermore, considering that the other models found a negative correlation for education level and age with both the binding foundations and punitiveness, which in turn showcased a positive correlation. All this together indicates that it is possible that moral foundations may act as a mediator variable in between socio-demographics and punitiveness. Although, we stress that this is only a speculation as more complex statistical methods would be required in order to test for any specific mediating relationship.

Limitations

Several limitations has been identified in the present study. First, there are apparent issues with the sample selection method and size. We utilised convenience sampling; gathering most participants from different social media groups, which may have led to a systematic selection that favoured certain groups. As an example, the age distribution within the study was skewed, with most of the participants being middle aged or younger. For this reason the study's external validity is fairly limited, as it is unlikely that our sample is Representative of the larger population. Furthermore, the sample size of the study may have also been a limiting factor for finding significant results given the predicted small effect sizes of socio-demographic variables.

Second, there are some issues concerning the punitiveness scale that have been identified. Specifically, some of the scales items contain statements that may be significantly affected by the participants' empirical beliefs. As an example, consider item one of the punitiveness scale, this item questions participants whether or not they think overall sentencing is too harsh⁶. If a participant (a) believes that the average prison sentence is 2 days while person (b) believes that it is 20 years, then it stands to reason that person (a) is more likely to think that sentencing is not overall too harsh. Furthermore, earlier research also indicates that accurate knowledge regarding judicial policy, sentencing, and crime statistics is negatively correlated with punitiveness (Kääriäinen, 2019). There-

⁶In addition item 2, 3, 4, and 8 (see Table A2) have also been identified to be particularly affected by this.

fore, it is possible that the punitiveness scale does not solely measure a person's punitive tendencies, as the measurements may be significantly affected by a participant's degree of knowledge. Third, the items in the punitiveness scale primarily leans towards more extreme and provocative statements. For example, it asks about sexual abuse, life sentences and the punishing of minors. For this reason, the measured punitiveness may not be representative of individuals attitudes towards less severe crimes. As an example, the punitiveness measured may not be applicable to crimes such as shoplifting and fare dodging.

Forth, there are some limitations that stem from the moral foundations theory. The biggest issue is that the theory was developed fairly recently and is therefore subject to change. Unfortunately, this study was limited to the use of an older iteration of the theory, finalised by Graham et al. (2011)⁷. This version has been subject to criticism, such as that the theory may not fully cover all domains of moral intuitions (Atari et al., 2023). Furthermore, the measuring tools have also been criticised as some items in the MFQ are somewhat related to an American context, making the scale less applicable in a Swedish context. Fortunately, these problems are starting to be addressed, most recently in Atari et al. (2023), in which they designed a new and improved measuring scale, the MFQ2. +Lastly, we were limited by our statistical models, in order to measure for a mediating relationship we would have required to use more complex models such as path analysis. Unfortunately we lacked the educational resources to conduct such an analysis.

Concluding Remarks and Future Research

The findings of this study can be summarised in four points. First, a positive correlation between the binding foundations and punitiveness was found. This correlation remained when controlling for socio-demographics. Second, a smaller negative correlation between the individualising foundations and punitiveness was found, which also remained when controlling for socio-demographics. Third, it was found that age and education level had a negative correlation with the binding foundations. Furthermore, a significant gender difference was observed with women on average scoring higher on the individualising foundations compared to men. Lastly, it was found that when socio-demographics were the only included predictors of punitiveness, both education level and age displayed a significant negative correlation. Although, both were found to be insignificant predictors of punitiveness, when included with both the binding and the individualising foundations. Furthermore, we speculate that this loss of significance may be caused by a mediating relationship between socio-demographics and the moral foundations.

Based on these findings and the limitations of this research we have some suggestions for the direction of future research. First, this study's sample had some limitations. Therefore, we suggest that future research should attempt to address this preferably using a larger and more representative sample. Second, we suggest that future research should utilise better measuring scales, by first controlling for "knowledge" when measuring punitiveness and also expanding the scale to include less extreme items, furthermore the new MFQ2 should also be utilised. Third, this study only measured the correlation between socio-demographics and other variables, therefore nothing beyond the speculative level can be said about causality. So there is a need for future experimental or longitudinal research in order to evaluate possible causal relationships. Lastly, research using more complex statistical methods are needed to test for the existence of a mediating relationship between moral foundations, socio-demographics, and punitiveness.

⁷The reason why the study was limited to an older version was the lack of a validated Swedish translation of the new MFQ2

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Appendix A

Table A1: Swedish translated punitiveness scale

Items	Ratings on a scale of 1-5
Item 1. Generellt sett så är de utdelade straffen för brott överlag. . .	1= För låga 5= För höga
Item 2. Generellt sett så är de utdelade straffen för ungdomsbrottslingar. . .	1= För låga 5= För höga
Item 3. Överlag så är de utdelade straffen för sexualförbrytare. . .	1= För låga 5= För höga
Item 4. Fängslade i svenska fängelser har det för bra ställt.	1= Håller inte med 5= Håller helt med
Item 5. För grova brott, som exempelvis sexuellt utnyttjande av barn, är dödsstraff lämpligt.	1= Håller inte med 5= Håller helt med
Item 6. Frigivna sexualförbrytares adress, namn och bild bör vara offentligt tillgängligt så att allmänheten kan skydda sig själva.	1= Håller inte med 5= Håller helt med
Item 7. Om en invandrare är kriminell så bör denne bli utvisad, även om personen har bott här i tio år samt innehar ett svenskt pass..	1= Håller inte med 5= Håller helt med
Item 8. Om polisen tog till med hårdare tag mot brottsligheten skulle brottsligheten minska.	1= Håller inte med 5= Håller helt med
Item 9. De som har begått samma brott tre gånger bör bli dömda till livstid per automatik.	1= Håller inte med 5= Håller helt med
Item 10. Åldersgränsen för straffmyndighet borde sänkas från nuvarande 15 års ålder, så att barn kan bli straffade.	1= Håller inte med 5= Håller helt med
Item 11. Även sexualförbrytare förtjänar att bli frisläppta efter avtjänat straff, så länge risken för att återfalla inte är hög.	1= Håller inte med 5= Håller helt med

Table A2: English punitiveness scale

Items	Ratings on a scale of 1-5
Item 1. In general, imposed sentences for overall crime are. . .	1= way too high 5= way too low
Item 2. In general, imposed sentences for juvenile offenders are	1= way too high 5= way too low
Item 3. In general, imposed sentences for sexual offenders are	1= way too high 5= way too low
Item 4. Prisoners in Swedish prisons have it too good.	1= totally agree 5= totally disagree
Item 5. For grave offenses, like sexual abuse of children, the death penalty would be appropriate.	1= totally agree 5= totally disagree
Item 6. Names, photos, and addresses of released sex offenders should be made public, so that everyone can protect themselves.	1= totally agree 5= totally disagree
Item 7. When immigrants become criminal they should be deported, even if they have lived here for ten years and own a Swedish passport.	1= totally agree 5= totally disagree
Item 8. If the police could get tough on crime there would be less crime.	1= totally agree 5= totally disagree
Item 9. Those who commit the same offense three times should get a life sentence by default	1= totally agree 5= totally disagree
Item 10. The minimum age of criminal accountability should be less than the current age of 15, so that children can be punished	1= totally agree 5= totally disagree
Item 11. Even sexual offenders have a right to be released after they have served, as long as the risk of recidivism is not high.	1= totally agree 5= totally disagree

Appendix B

Table B1: MFQ part 1 in English

Item type	Items	Ratings on a scale of 1-6
Harm/Care	Whether or not someone suffered emotionally	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
Fairness/Reciprocity	Whether or not some people were treated differently from others	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
In-group/Loyalty	Whether or not someone's action showed love for his or her country	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
Authority/Respect	Whether or not someone showed a lack of respect for authority	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
Purity/Sanctity	Whether or not someone violated standards of purity and decency	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
Controller	Whether or not someone was good at math	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
Harm/care	Whether or not someone cared for someone weak or vulnerable	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
Fairness/Reciprocity	Whether or not someone acted unfairly	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
In-group/Loyalty	Whether or not someone did something to betray his or her group	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
Authority/Respect	Whether or not someone conformed to the traditions of society	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
Purity/Sanctity	Whether or not someone did something disgusting	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
Harm/care	Whether or not someone was cruel	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
Fairness/Reciprocity	Whether or not someone was denied his or her rights	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
In-group/Loyalty	Whether or not someone showed a lack of loyalty	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
Authority/Respect	Whether or not an action caused chaos or disorder	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant
Purity/Sanctity	Whether or not someone acted in a way that God would approve of	1= Not at all relevant 5= Extremely relevant

Note: This is the context for each item: When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent are the following considerations relevant to your thinking? Please rate each statement using this scale

Table B2: MFQ part 1 in Swedish

Item type	Items	Ratings on a scale of 1-6
Harm/Care	Huruvida någon led emotionellt	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
Fairness/Reciprocity	Huruvida några människor behandlades annorlunda än andra	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
In-group/Loyalty	Huruvida någons handling uppvisade kärlek för hans eller hennes land	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
Authority/Respect	Huruvida någon visade brist på respekt för auktoritet	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
Purity/Sanctity	Huruvida någon bröt mot regler för renhet och anständighet	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
Controller	Huruvida någon var bra på matematik	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
Harm/Care	Huruvida någon tog hand om någon som var svag eller sårbar	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
Fairness/Reciprocity	Huruvida någon agerade orättvist	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
In-group/Loyalty	Huruvida någon gjorde något för att svika sin grupp	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
Authority/Respect	Huruvida någon rättade sig efter samhällets traditioner	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
Purity/Sanctity	Huruvida någon gjorde något äckligt	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
Harm/Care	Huruvida någon var grym	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
Fairness/Reciprocity	Huruvida någon förnekades sina rättigheter	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
In-group/Loyalty	Huruvida någon uppvisade en brist på lojalitet	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
Authority/Respect	Huruvida en handling orsakade kaos eller oordning	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant
Purity/Sanctity	Huruvida någon handlade på ett sätt som Gud skulle godkänna	1= Inte alls relevant 5= Mycket relevant

Note: This is the context for each item: I vilken utsträckning är följande överväganden relevanta för ditt tänkande när du avgör om något är rätt eller fel? Var god bedöm varje påstående med hjälp av denna skala

Table B3: MFQ part 2 in English

Item type	Statements	Ratings on a scale of 1-6
Harm/Care	Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
Fairness/Reciprocity	When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
In-group/Loyalty	I am proud of my country's history	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
Authority/Respect	Respect for authority is something all children need to learn	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
Purity/Sanctity	People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
Controller	It is better to do good than to do bad	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
Harm/Care	One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenseless animal	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
Fairness/Reciprocity	Justice is the most important requirement for a society	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
In-group/Loyalty	People should be loyal to their family members, even when they have done something wrong	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
Authority/Respect	Men and women each have different roles to play in society	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
Purity/Sanctity	I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
Controller	It can never be right to kill a human being	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
Harm/Care	I think it's morally wrong that rich children inherit a lot of money while poor children inherit nothing	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
Fairness/Reciprocity	It is more important to be a team player than to express oneself	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
In-group/Loyalty	If I were a soldier and disagreed with my commanding officer's orders, I would obey anyway because that is my duty	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree
Authority/Respect	Chastity is an important and valuable virtue	1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree

Note:This is the context for each item: Please read the following sentences and indicate your agreement or disagreement:

Table B4: MFQ part 2 in Swedish

Item type	Statements	Ratings on a scale of 1-6
Harm/Care	Medlidande med dem som lider är den mest avgörande dygden	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
Fairness/Reciprocity	När de styrande politikerna skapar lagar bör den främsta principen vara att försäkra sig om att alla behandlas rättvist	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
In-group/Loyalty	Jag är stolt över mitt lands historia	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
Authority/Respect	Respekt för auktoritet är något som alla barn behöver lära sig	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
Purity/Sanctity	Människor bör inte göra saker som är äckliga, även om ingen kommer till skada	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
Controller	Det är bättre att göra något gott än att göra något ont	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
Harm/Care	En av de värsta sakerna en person skulle kunna göra är att göra illa ett försvarslöst djur	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
Fairness/Reciprocity	Rättvisa är det viktigaste kravet på ett samhälle	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
In-group/Loyalty	Människor bör vara lojala mot sina familjemedlemmar även när dessa har gjort något fel	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
Authority/Respect	Män och kvinnor har olika roller att spela i samhället	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
Purity/Sanctity	Jag skulle kalla någons handlingar fel baserat på att de är onaturliga	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
Controller	Det kan aldrig vara rätt att döda en människa	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
Harm/Care	Jag anser att det är moraliskt fel att rika barn ärver mycket pengar medan fattiga barn inte ärver något alls	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
Fairness/Reciprocity	Det är viktigare att vara en lagspelare än att uttrycka sig själv	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
In-group/Loyalty	Om jag vara en soldat och inte höll med om min överordnades order så skulle jag lyda ändå eftersom det är min plikt	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med
Authority/Respect	Kyskhet är en viktig och värdefull dygd	1= Håller absolut inte med 5= Håller fullständigt med

Note:This is the context for each item: Var god läs följande påståenden och markera hur mycket du håller med dem: