

Supplemental Materials

Liberals Condemn Sacrilege Too: The Harmless Desecration of Cerro Torre

Study 1: Rhetoric

Samples and procedure. We downloaded the full text of a public online forum thread discussing the removal of the bolts from Cerro Torre and used computer software to content analyze the text for the density of certain words. The *bolt thread* was the full text¹ of a thread called “Cerro Torre, A Mountain Consecrated” on <http://supertopo.com>, which included 2122 posts totalling 187,320 words. To allow us to make (statistical) inferences from this particular situation to discussions about bolting mountain in general, we needed to assess both the density of each foundation, and also how much variability there was around the mean. So we divided the *bolting thread* into $n_{bolt} = 95$ segments of ~2000 words per segment². We then used the Moral Foundations Dictionary (Graham et al., 2009) and computer software (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count; Pennebaker, Booth, & Francis, 2007) to content analyze the segments for the density of words belonging to five moral foundations: care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation. LIWC simply counts up the number of words in a given text that match a pre-determined dictionary, and divides the sum by the total number of words in the target text.

To estimate the base-rate moral word usage on this forum, we also downloaded a set of 31 *baseline threads* (totalling 2,466,934 words). To qualify, comparisons needed to be of medium length (100 to 5000 posts)³ and recently active. Baseline threads were about climbing and climbers (e.g., on U.K. gritstone), social and world issues (e.g., firearms), and on topics of general interest (e.g., sunsets). The comparison threads were comparable to the Cerro Torre thread in that both sets included climbing-specific content and social/moral issues. We similarly content analyzed the threads in 1267 segments of ~2000 words per segment. Threads ranged in length from 3 to 222 segments. To sample evenly from the 31 different threads, we retained four randomly selected segments from each thread, leaving $n_{comparison} = 93$ segments totalling 176,425 words in the *comparison thread* sample. We content analyzed the baseline threads similarly.

Study 2: Perceptions

Opinion question preamble. The following introductory text was given: “Recently, the removal of Cesare Maestri’s bolt ladder on Cerro Torre has received a great deal of media coverage. Some people side with Maestri for having installed the bolt ladder. They think that he did a good thing. Or they defend his freedom to do what he wants. Others disagree with Maestri’s installation of the bolt ladder. Whether or not the bolts should have gone in remains a topic of debate.”

¹ Downloaded on 13 March 2014.

² The segmenting choice was an attempt to divide a fixed entity to balance competing concerns for statistical power (favoring more segments of smaller size) and reliability of signal (favoring fewer segments of larger size). With $n \sim 95$ per cell, the study had 80% power to detect a small-medium effect ($d = 0.40$).

³ We excluded six long threads (ranging from 6,895 to 51,250 posts) because trying to download these threads caused a computer error (due to their length).

Table S1. *Modified Moral Foundations Questionnaire measuring the perceived moral effects of the original installation of the bolt ladder on Cerro Torre. Reverse scored items are denoted by “(R).”*

Foundation	Did/Was the installation of the bolt ladder...	Slider Anchors	
		-100	100
Care ($\alpha = .54$)	relieve or cause emotional suffering? (R)	Relieve	Cause
	harm or protect the weak or vulnerable?	Harm	Protect
	amount to an act of compassion or cruelty? (R)	Compassion	Cruelty
Fairness ($\alpha = .80$)	amount to the unfair or fair treatment of others?	Unfair	Fair
	protect or deny the rights of others? (R)	Protect	Deny
Authority ($\alpha = .51$)	respectful or disrespectful? (R)	Respectful	Disrespectful
	dishonor or honor tradition?	Dishonor	Honor
	amount to order or chaos? (R)	Order	Chaos
Sanctity ($\alpha = .76$)	undermine or promote standards of purity?	Undermine	Promote
	tasteful or disgusting? (R)	Tasteful	Disgusting
	desecrate or sanctify the mountain?	Desecrate	Sanctify

Results: Which foundations best predict condemnation? We entered demographic characteristics (that varied substantially in this sample) in the first step, then allowed the four foundations to enter in a stepwise fashion. Sanctity was the only foundation that entered as a predictor. In a third analysis, we ran a simultaneous forced entry regression (demographics and foundations). No foundation uniquely predicted moral judgment (likely due to collinearity among the foundations, $.39 \leq r_s \leq .66$, and limited power to detect individual differences.)

We also more directly tested whether perceived harm in sanctity violations explains moral condemnation. If it does, then perceptions of harm should mediate the relationship between perceived sanctity violation and moral condemnation (i.e. perceived sanctity violation \rightarrow perceived harm \rightarrow moral condemnation). We tested this using bootstrapping procedures and found that perceived sanctity violation had a direct effect on moral condemnation, $B = 0.79$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [.38, 1.20]$ but harm perception did not mediate the relationship, $B = .01$, $95\% \text{ CI} = [-.12, .14]$.

Table S2. *Foundation level justifications for condemning Maestri's bolting.*

	Type of Regression		
	Zero-Order	Stepwise	Enter
Demographics			
Education	.28 [†]	enter .14	.14
Age	.06	enter .22	.20
Income	-.19	enter -.22	-.14
Foundations			
Care	.23	out .01	-.04
Fairness	.54***	out .16	.22
Authority	.49**	out .21	.18
Sanctity	.57***	in .55***	.31

Note. Zero-order, stepwise regression, and force entry regression predictors of individual differences in moral judgment. [†] $p < .10$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Study 3: Experiment

Scenario Wording. Accompanying two images—one of Cerro Torre and the second of a mountain climber standing beside a painted arrow (see figure 4)—was the following text.

Jim and Rick are very experienced mountain climbers. One summer they decide to climb Cerro Torre, one of the most challenging and dangerous mountains in the world. They brought a large American flag with them, which they planned on hoisting temporarily when they reached the summit (for photographs). The climb takes four days normally. Two of their friends were coming up the same route the next day. The climb turned out to be very difficult to navigate. After getting lost several times at one key spot, they finally found the right way. But with no cell phone reception in the mountains, they had no easy way of notifying their friends. They decided to leave them a large and visible sign. All they had with them was their climbing equipment, their sleeping gear, a plastic sheet, the flag, and fluorescent green paint for marking trails. They decided to use the paint to draw a large arrow, pointing to the right route. But the paint would be essentially permanent – it would not wash off, even after many years. They tried to decide whether to apply the paint directly to the rock, or to something else.

Experimental manipulation. The control (sheet) condition continued, “In the end they decided to apply the paint directly on the plastic sheet and anchored the sheet in place by putting large rocks on each of the four corners.” In the rock condition, the scenario read, “In the end they decided to apply the paint to the rock wall of the mountain.” And the flag condition was identical to the sheet condition wording except we replaced *sheet* with *flag*.