

The emotional ties that bind us to concerns of harm and fairness

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Abstract: The present research examines evidence for the sentimentalist claim that emotions are the foundation of moral judgment. It considers the psychopath, known for his deficient emotional capacities, as a case study to test intuitions about the emotion's role in moral judgment. Graham and colleagues (2009) examined moral judgment differences between psychopaths and non-psychopaths. Psychopaths showed lack of concern for moral fairness and harm. However, they showed as much concern as non-psychopaths for moral foundations of in-group loyalty, purity, and authority. I propose that a sentimentalist theory best explains these findings. It is a result of psychopaths' deficient guilt and sympathy that they are unable to develop appreciation for harm and fairness. The other foundations are tied to emotions that remain intact in psychopaths; for example, psychopaths have appropriate disgust reactions and purity is tied to disgust. These intact emotions result in their ability to express according moral judgment.