

*After the Storm:
Analyzing Chris Christie's Use of Hurricane Sandy in New Jersey's 2013 Gubernatorial
Elections*

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This study evaluates what role Hurricane Sandy played in Chris Christie's campaign strategy and more specifically, how the disaster has altered his moral foundations and leadership style long-term. By analyzing television advertisements and speeches during the 2009 and 2013 campaign seasons, this study will consider his moral foundations and leadership style to assess how the governor's strategy has evolved. While Christie's motivations cannot be fully considered, this study finds that the governor has become increasingly focused on the harm v. care dichotomy moral foundation, while shifting to a Visionary Motivator leadership style in order to more widely appeal to voters nation-wide. The merging of these two methods should be further explored to understand leadership styles during crisis.

INTRODUCTION

"I wasn't here to be elected Prom King." Chris Christie peppered this signature mantra in many of his 2009 stump speeches, emphasizing that principle, not popularity, would help him lead New Jersey. These kinds of sweeping, yet pragmatic statements acted as one crux in Christie's campaign and bolstered his reputation as a dynamic, determined problem solver who trivialized party lines.

Christie had developed and honed these skills while serving as U.S. Attorney for the State of New Jersey. Prior to his appointment, Christie was a lawyer and for a brief time, a lobbyist. He worked to deregulate state utilities and prevent security fraud. As a U.S. Attorney from 2002 to 2009, Christie was noted for exposing public corruption cases. His administration notably found Republican Essex County Executive James W. Treffinger and Democratic State Senator Wayne R. Bryant guilty of bribery and fraud (nj.com, 2009). His aggressive, dogged approach to state corruption established his credibility and earned New Jerseyans' respect (nj.com, 2008). Chris Christie resigned his post as U.S. Attorney in October 2009 with the intention of unseating Democratic Governor Jon Corzine.

New Jersey's 2009 gubernatorial race was highly contested, seen through week-by-week percentage marking periods throughout the election season. The state was politically divisive, but Christie won 48.46% of the vote, in comparison in Corzine with 44.88% (Pollster 2009).

Hurricane Sandy, the 2012 Category 3 storm that plowed through New Jersey and ranked the second costliest in US history, occurred between Christie's first and second gubernatorial campaign. The governor received both praise and disapproval for his response to the state crisis. Christie gained considerable media attention when he met President Obama to survey the damage and comfort survivors, which suggested a sense of bipartisanship. The governor also admonished the GOP for refusing to vote for Sandy aid unless pork barrel legislation was included (articles.washingtonpost.com 2012). Conservative think tank analysts criticized Christie's response after Sandy and pointed to New Jersey's lack of emergency planning and dependence on federal disaster aid as a larger issue of poor state leadership (Bucci, Inserra, and Lesser 2012, 12-15).

Christie's campaign used Hurricane Sandy, which most severely affected New Jersey, to leverage his public image. In 2012, the Christie campaign would pursue completely different strategies and campaign phases to reach new parts of the electorate, such as young families, Korean-Americans, and Hispanics. Christie emerged as a clear victor and defeated challenger Barbara Buono with 60.4% of the vote (*New York Times* 2013). Christie's leadership, therefore, suggests that the governor's bipartisan appeals have minimized party politics. Understanding if and how the superstorm led Christie to change his political strategy is important to understanding the evolution of his moral foundations and leadership style.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE

There was a significant amount of literature about political communication and media before Christie's 2009 gubernatorial campaign and election. Relevant previous work in this discipline can be divided into three distinct groups: politics and rhetoric, leadership, and the differences between liberals and conservatives.

In the field of political rhetoric, arguments have been made to consider the importance of a candidate's strengths when choosing a campaign theme and emphasized issues (Steinberg 1976, 42). Candidates additionally need to determine their targeted group in the electorate, although they should aim to appeal to the widest, most diverse support base as possible. Some media experts assert that natural disaster and crisis situations serve as prime examples to evaluate leaders' political ideology and public image. Studies have found that in crisis, such as Hurricane Katrina, the media adopts a position to blame and criticize authority figures (Littlefield 2007, 42-45). In addition, the media, and arguably similar, political campaigns, accordingly make rhetorical decisions about coverage. This study concludes that media portrayals can affect how authorities react to initial crisis. For example, Hurricane Sandy impacted the 2008 campaign in swing states, but the explanation is unclear. While political leaders are not always responsible for crisis, they are expected to respond quickly and appropriately, which gives citizens an opportunity to reflect on their leaders' competency (Velez 2013, 316-320).

In previous arguments about city and state authority, authors conclude that mayoral visibility, especially in noncontroversial events, is critical to developing a positive public image (Ferman 1985, 73-78). Crisis can impact one's political agenda, depending on their response to the situation. Effective leaders, such as Boston mayor Kevin White in 1968, turned a crisis scenario into an administrative success. Helping citizens after a disaster or crisis situation makes governmental systems more accessible to thousands of citizens. How a leader responds can either create a fresh image of community involvement and municipal responsiveness (Ferman 1985, 130-135), or decrease leaders' legitimacy (Burling 1997, 240).

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, conservative policy experts made recommendations for disaster and leadership, emphasizing the importance of state defense. Recently, policy experts have made strong appeals to give states more responsibility in crisis management. Without stronger state

leadership, conservatives propose that disaster preparedness will be deemphasized (Bucci, Inserra, and Lesser 2012, 17).

The difference in liberals and conservatives' political ideologies has been studied at length, with some policy experts arguing that political distinctions can, depending on the issues, lead to more effective policies. When both parties' initiatives are consistent and based on a clear demarcation of the policy's effect, the conflict can positively contribute to policy development (Grafton 2008, 585-588).

METHODS

This study collects data from Governor Chris Christie's 2009 and 2013 campaign television advertisements and public speeches, spanning from October 17th, 2009 to November 5th, 2013, when the last electoral results were determined. The television advertisements and taped speeches were chosen as clear, accessible examples of political rhetoric. The clips, in addition to Christie's public speeches, were used to compare how the campaign planned and executed their strategy in the two election seasons. Gubernatorial debates were initially collected and watched, but the researcher found that the clips presented an unintentional bias. Christie's shift in moral foundations and leadership style would have to be gauged against his opponents, which would be difficult to objectively compare. Therefore, clips of the 2009 and 2013 debates have been omitted from this study. Exhibits were retrieved from either C-SPAN or YouTube archives, or the Vanderbilt University Video Library database. A few of the 2009 taped speeches were from New Jersey newspaper websites. Because the 2009 campaign was significantly less publicized outside of New Jersey, the number of clips and exhibits found was substantially less than the 2013 election season. Based on these parameters, a total of 15 television advertisements and 16 speeches were selected for analysis.

Both qualitative and quantitative analysis was used while reviewing the advertisements and speeches of previous hypotheses (Moral Foundations Theory and Leadership Styles perspectives). Specifically, the methods of Moral Foundations Theory and Leadership Styles provide words and

attributes to code for, which provides a qualitative analysis. The frequency of exhibits displaying these characteristics was counted, providing a quantitative perspective. When the author analyzed each exhibit, she looked for examples of rhetoric that both support and violate the moral foundations theory for liberals and conservatives.

Moral Foundations Theory is comprised of five dichotomies: harm v. care, fairness v. reciprocity, ingroup v. outgroup, authority v. respect, and purity v. sanctity. Harm v. care refers to values of “kindness, gentleness, or nurturance”(Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009 1030). Fairness v. reciprocity can be related to ideas about equality and justice. Ingroup v. outgroup underlines principles of commitment and self-sacrifice for a particular coalition. Authority v. respect is defined as one’s ideas about leadership and followership, including respect for traditions. Lastly, sanctity v. purity is shaped by obedience, religious values, and morality (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009 1030). The Moral Foundation Theory was chosen for its clarity in qualitatively analyzing an abstract topic, political attitudes.

TABLE 1

Dichotomy	Possible Words
Harm v. Care	Recovery; compassion; neighbor; children; friend; suffering; pain; harm; safe; hurt; exploited
Fairness v. Reciprocity	Opportunity; bipartisan; bipartisanship; compromise; everyone; reform; equality; fair; justice
Ingroup v. Outgroup	Different; difference; together; community; mission; unconventional; loyal; Washington D.C. v. NJ comparisons
Authority v. Respect	Commitment; leadership; honored; references to other national or state leaders; respect; obey; tradition; serve
Sanctity v. Purity	Integrity; honest; mess; corrupt; prevention; fraud; ethical; clean (in reference to record, morals)

This study also analyzed the application of these moral foundations within Cameron's Five Leadership Models because when studying leadership, Christie's long-term political agenda should be evaluated (Cameron 2008, 190). To determine whether Governor Christie's moral foundations and leadership style have changed between his first and second gubernatorial election, the exhibits were coded for the moral foundation dichotomies using the word list below. The specific words were a combination of phrases or in the case of leadership styles, attributes, in the original studies, in addition to the researcher's original contributions. The five leadership styles presented by Cameron and Green—the Edgy Catalyzer, the Visionary Motivator, the Measured Connector, the Tenacious Implementer, and the Thoughtful Architect (Cameron and Green 2008, 11-17)—were also used to analyze Christie's campaign exhibits. The leadership models were chosen because the method extended concepts of Moral Foundations Theory, but the Leadership Styles are apolitical. A Thoughtful Architect could be a liberal, conservative, or independent; leadership characteristics are not conducive to political ideology. The two significant leadership styles for this study were the Edgy Catalyzer and Visionary Motivator. The Edgy Catalyzer is a leader who asks the difficult, yet essential questions and creates discomfort and unease when conditions are not improved. Edgy Catalyzers are further described as not being intimidated by politics, but respecting the system's history and power (Cameron and Green 2008, 36-40). The Visionary Motivator leadership model works to energize and engage people, but also has strong purpose, influence, and dynamism. These kinds of leaders focus on applying an organization's resources and talents to develop a sense of potential. For more information on the three additional leadership styles and a summary of each model's attributes, consult Table 2.

To relate the exhibits to these methods, the author counted the number of times Christie's advertisements and speeches related to these criteria and definitions. Each dichotomy or leadership style was a category and Christie's words, actions, and appeals were sorted to determine his emphasized moral foundations and adopted leadership styles.

TABLE 2

Leadership Style	Definition and Characteristics
Edgy Catalyzer	Focuses on and enjoys discomfort; asks the difficult questions; spots dysfunction; troubleshooter; respects power; tackles difficult topics; confrontational; cares about “getting things right”; argumentative; robust.
Visionary Motivator	Articulates a compelling view of future; connects with and energizes people easily; wants to focus on organization’s strengths; uses emotionally charged language; good for low morale or complex situations; upbeat.
Measured Connector	Establishes a few ground rules; goal is “focused reassurance;” connects different agendas and strives for common purpose; slowly creates trust; influences in an unhurried way; well respected; not interested in power politics.
Tenacious Implementer	Driving force in projects; forward-thinking; uses persuasive logic; works on task-related progress; has continuous and targeted communication; has very high integrity; constantly seeks to make things better.
Thoughtful Architect	Designs plan or strategy; may appear introverted; values depth in ideas; respects competence and expertise; very passionate; focused on long-term; sometimes struggles to favor people over concepts; reflective

In their studies, Cameron and Green found that while leaders are capable of all five models, individuals have a “default mode” (Cameron and Green 2008, 20). Understanding the concept of “default mode” is critical in analyzing how Christie’s leadership styles evolved as a result of Hurricane Sandy, a primary focus in this study.

FINDINGS

According to data, Chris Christie did shift his moral foundations and leadership style, largely from Hurricane Sandy, from 2009 to 2013. As previous studies predicted (Graham, Haidt, Nosek 2009, 1040), Christie’s first gubernatorial campaign strategy reflected typical conservative moral foundations in his commercials and speeches. His appeals to the five moral foundations were equally

distributed among the five dichotomies. Coding for Cameron and Green’s Leadership Styles clearly demonstrated that the Edgy Catalyzer was Christie’s default role in 2009. One hundred percent of both campaign commercials and speeches were sorted under this style. Christie’s commercials were quantitatively based, focused presented facts and statistics, and were direct and frank (Cameron and Green 2009, 40).

Findings show that Christie also increased his appeals in the harm v. care dichotomy during the 2013 campaign, in percent and in speeches from 40 to 83 percent. Christie also fully embraced the Visionary Motivator leadership model in 2012. In one of his television spots, a voiceover describes his leadership after Sandy: “When tragedy struck, he was there, every step of the way.”

The researcher found Moral Foundations Theory and Leadership Models related when examining how Christie uses the former to bolster his latter position. This point can be primarily seen when looking at Christie’s appeals to ingroup v. outgroup. A Visionary Motivator already has established support and credibility; Christie strategically used the characteristics of ingroup v. outgroup in his speeches to demonstrate how he is a Motivator to his audience. In a speech with his 3rd grade teacher present, Christie charismatically explained that voters, “can’t disappoint her,” which creates an ingroup of people who support strong public schools, teachers, and Christie, and those

TABLE 3

television ads from 33 to 100

Tel evis ion Ads	2009 Coverage		2013 Coverage	
	H/C: 33%	EC: 100%	H/C: 100%	EC: 18%
F/R: 66%	VM: 0%	F/R: 58%	VM: 100%	
I/O: 33%	MC: 33%	I/O: 50%	MC: 17%	
A/R: 66%	TI: 66%	A/R: 33%	TI: 50%	
P/S: 66%	TA: 0%	P/S: 17%	TA: 25%	
Spe ech es	H/C: 40%	EC: 80%	H/C: 83%	EC: 8%
	F/R: 40%	VM: 20%	F/R: 42%	VM: 75%
	I/O: 40%	MC: 0%	I/O: 33%	MC: 42%
	A/R: 40%	TI: 60%	A/R: 17%	TI: 17%
	P/S: 40%	TA: 20%	P/S: 8%	TA: 17%

who do not. Such appeals show that with growing numbers of support and popularity, Christie is moving toward a Visionary Motivator role as he emerges as a national leader.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study questioned the validity of Graham, Haidt, and Nosek's Moral Foundations Theory. The Moral Foundations Theory argued that liberals emphasize the harm v. care and fairness v. reciprocity dichotomies, while conservatives equally focus on all five, including ingroup v. outgroup, authority v. respect, and purity v. sanctity. In 2009, the Christie campaign generally reflected Moral Foundations Theory. His speeches followed the model accurately, with forty percent of speeches coded for each foundation. In particular, the television advertisements uniquely emphasized Christie's role as a U.S. Attorney in cleaning up government corruption, which is a form of the purity v. sanctity dichotomy. Therefore, Christie's rhetorical appeals in 2009 were consistent with a conservative platform.

The 2013 results suggested Christie's shifted approach in leadership and violation of Moral Foundations Theory. Chris Christie's second gubernatorial campaign's television advertisements overwhelmingly demonstrated Christie's stressed appeals to harm v. care and fairness v. reciprocity instead of equally distributing appeals to each of the dichotomies. This shift shows that Christie is increasingly adopting liberal moral foundations, which proves his self-reported bipartisanship. For example, one of Christie's ads, entitled "Compassion," discusses New Jersey's prison system. Christie remarks that drugs can ruin lives, but also explains, "no life is disposable." His plan of sending drug offenders to rehabilitation services instead of jail time represents bipartisan ideals. These statements reflected Christie's humanitarianism and value of life, which relate back to the harm v. care dichotomy. The television advertisements and in particular, Christie's speeches, additionally emphasize fairness v. reciprocity. Christie's teacher tenure reforms and increased funding to public schools confirmed that he strongly supported equal opportunity.

In one 2012 speech, “Put People Ahead of the Party,” Christie explained that every citizen deserves to hear partisan arguments publicly, in order to develop his or her own opinions. However, he declared, “It’s got to stop when we need to get things done. It’s only fair to New Jerseyans.” Christie expanded the definition of “fairness,” showing that he and other state leaders must give back and fulfill their executive duty for New Jerseyans. This pattern in his speeches showed a departure from the Catalyzer, “whistleblower” role and reiterated that Christie is not a government obstructionist.

Christie’s default leadership style, an Edgy Catalyzer, may have influenced this campaign decision. While efficient, Edgy Catalyzers are not preferred leaders. Cameron and Green found that even individuals who identified as Edgy Catalyzer in their natural, default roles were less inclined to favor their own leadership style. Ten percent of Edgy Catalyzers surveyed that their model was the most attractive, the lowest percentage out of the five roles. This statistic is a sharp contrast to fifty-six percent of Visionary Motivators finding Visionary Motivators as the most preferred leadership style (Cameron and Green 2008, 108). This strongly indicated that either Edgy Catalyzers have an established belief of what a leader should be and find their style is undesirable or realize the importance of and admire other leadership models. As U.S. Attorney, Christie was known as a hard-hitting, determined leader who fought corruption and fraud. These results shows that campaign strategists wanted to show Christie’s differences, yet saw a need to earn the Republican Party’s respect. Also, they did not want to turn off voters through Christie’s gruff image as a U.S. Attorney. Christie demonstrated resoluteness and gained esteem in his work with political lawbreakers, but the campaign needed to show him as a leader for all New Jerseyans. This reasoning possibly explains why the 2009 Christie campaign worked within the party platform and avoided taking risks when developing television advertisements and speeches.

Cumulatively, only four percent of participants found the Edgy Catalyzer style most attractive (Cameron and Green 2008, 108). New Jersey’s circumstances, however, favored Christie’s

default leadership style. Edgy Catalyzers were rated most effective when improving management and tightening compliance (Cameron and Green 2008, 112). Christie acted as an Edgy Catalyzer in order to draw attention to the fact that New Jersey was failing from social, economic, and political positions and without guidance, the state and its citizens would be direly affected. Screenshots from his television advertisements showed stiff posture, a roving eye, and direct eye contact. This body language matches that of an Edgy Catalyzer (Cameron and Green 2008, 40). Like Cameron and Green address, Edgy Catalyzers are effective in situations in which rapid change is necessary and traditions are getting in the way. In 2009, Christie took advantage of his natural leadership style and structured his rhetoric and campaign accordingly.

Hurricane Sandy, which occurred between the two campaigns, created an unusual political circumstance and as a result, provides an exception to Moral Foundations Theory. The superstorm, which severely damaged parts of New Jersey, was a catalyst for Christie to appeal to the harm v. care moral foundation. Hurricane Sandy allowed Christie, like White in 1968 (Ferman 1985, 73), to unite his community under a noncontroversial, nonpartisan event. Christie used the hurricane as a springboard to energize voters and discuss the importance of listening and working with local officials. This shift in strategy can be further seen through Christie's body language. He smiles more, seems to always be moving, and is quite expressive. Television advertisements illustrate Christie hugging fellow New Jerseyans, patting them on the back, or even affectionately tussling his son's hair. Christie's increased expression of physical contact shows both his familiarity and warmth. Cameron and Green characterize this posture and outer presentation as a traditional Visionary Motivator (Cameron and Green 2008, 51).

Hurricane Sandy gave Christie both the publicity and in turn, confidence to distinguish himself from the Republican Party. His appeals to harm v. care show a stronger dissent from conservative ideology. It is possible that Christie made deliberate attempts to appease moderates in

preparation for a future presidential nomination. By showing his genuine care about his state and citizens, Christie continued to gain respect and support.

Christie's dramatic shift to the Visionary Motivator leadership model further suggests that his campaign is thinking long-term. Forty-seven percent of participants found the Visionary Motivator style to be the best leadership style in terms of both efficiency and popularity (Cameron and Green 2008, 113). As the most popular leadership style, it is natural that the Christie campaign encouraged Christie to adopt this model in 2013. It should be noted again that while each leader has a default style, each leader can exhibit attributes from the other categories. Christie is still an Edgy Catalyzer; Hurricane Sandy has softened his approach and helped him express the harm v. care dichotomy, in addition to the Visionary Motivator model. Harm v. care appears to be a central characteristic of being a Visionary Motivator. A Visionary Motivator needs to understand and relate with individuals' concerns before encouraging and inspiring them. In order to influence, one must be caring and approachable first.

In addition, Christie adopted many strategic tactics of a Visionary Motivator in his 2013 campaign, such as having dinner with people, speaking in large groups, and spending time with colleagues, such as other New Jerseyan politicians. His is shaping his leadership style based on New Jersey's current situation. From Sandy, there is still a need for transition, risk-taking, and improved morale. Participants ranked the Visionary Motivator model highest (55%) for situations involving "Cultural Change" and fifty-three percent for "Growing a New Enterprise" (Cameron and Green 2008, 112). Under a Visionary Motivator model, Christie has articulated a compelling long-term view for New Jersey when further explaining the importance of a great public school system and continued economic growth. The permanence of his niceness is questionable, but Sandy has given Christie motivation to be a concerned Motivator.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed an intersection between two distinct methods: Moral Foundations Theory and Five Leadership Models. Hurricane Sandy influenced the New Jersey gubernatorial elections by causing Governor Christie to adopt a harm v. care dichotomy and Visionary Motivator leadership style, both of which he applied to revitalize his 2013 reelection campaign strategy. It is possible that a crisis situation, like Hurricane Sandy, causes generally conservative politicians to temporarily exhibit and emphasize more liberal moral foundations. Moral Foundations theorists should further study if different leadership models have propensities to exhibit certain dichotomies and how crisis change the prominence of different styles or roles. Understanding the relationship between Graham, Haidt, and Nosek's Moral Foundations Theory and Cameron and Green's Five Leadership Styles would further help business, media, and civic leaders understand their own approach to crisis while recognizing colleagues' roles and skills. More exploration from the Five Leadership Styles theorists would allow more connection between leadership, temperament, and responsibilities. Elements of different moral foundations and leadership styles could be further evaluated to determine the most effective leaders for a given scenario. This study serves as a valuable learning and development resource for leaders' crisis prevention, response, and management.

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LIST OF EXHIBITS

2009

Chris Christie Television Ad—“Corruption”
 Chris Christie for Governor 2009 Ad “A Leader”
 Chris Christie Television Ad “Leadership”
 Christie Launches Campaign Speech
 Chris Christie Campaigns in Woodland Park Speech
 Catching Up With Chris Christie on the Campaign Trail Speech
 New Jersey Gubernatorial Debate (10/01/09)
 Christie Campaigns in Morristown Speech
 Chris Christie Victory Speech (11/03/09)

2013

“Leo” Christie for Governor Ad
 “Frank” Christie for Governor Ad
 Chris Christie: Right Direction TV Ad
 Shaq Endorses Republican Chris Christie TV Ad
 “The Difference” TV Ad
 “Courageous Leadership” TV Ad

“Bipartisan” TV Ad
“Compassion” TV Ad
“Un Mejor Futuro, Mas Brilliante” TV Ad
“They Said” TV Ad
“Meet Barbara Buono” TV Ad
“Governor Christie: Real Leadership for State” TV Ad
“Getting the Job Done” TV Ad
Both Parties Could Use a Seminar Speech
Don’t Disappoint My 3rd Grade Teacher Speech
I’m Honored to Stand with These Men and Women Speech
It’s Been An Incredible Honor to Be Your Governor Speech
Put People Ahead of the Party Speech
This is a Historic Day Speech
This Isn’t a Job Anymore; It’s a Mission Speech
“I Love You, New Jersey” Victory Speech
2013 New Jersey Gubernatorial Debate