No Compromise: The Politics of Moral Conviction

by

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In memory of my father

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

When it comes to politics, people care what other people think. Although a familiar phenomenon, existing theories of public opinion poorly understand the psychological underpinnings of this impulse. Here, I draw on cross-disciplinary findings that highlight the distinctiveness of human moral psychology and examine the role it plays in politics. In three stand-alone chapters that use an array of survey and experimental data, I find that citizens' intuitions about morality profoundly influence how they respond to political disagreement, their acceptance of political compromise, and how they process political information.

The first paper, "Reconsidering Moral Issues in Politics," challenges the conventional claim that moral and economic issues are natural kinds, fundamentally distinct in the mind of the average citizen. Instead, I show that some citizens "moralize" economic issues, and that the psychological patterns typical of morality—e.g. growing angry at disagreement—arise on economic and noneconomic issues alike.

The second paper, "No Compromise: Political Consequences of Moralized Attitudes," examines the relationship between moral conviction and approval of political compromise. I find that attitudes can be intense in ways that permit compromise, but that morally convicted attitudes orient citizens to oppose compromises and punish compromising politicians. One study in "No Compromise" shows that citizens with morally convicted attitudes eschew even concrete monetary benefits to prevent a disliked group from gaining.

The third paper, "Unthinkable! How Citizens with Moralized Attitudes Process Political Arguments," identifies a connection between moral psychology and patterns discussed under the heading of "motivated reasoning." I find that many citizens are responsive to political information that challenges their existing attitudes, but that citizens with morally convicted attitudes are particularly resistant to disconfirming information. As such, I argue moral psychology represents one chief mechanism by which motivated reasoning operates.

This research demonstrates that taking account of different aspects of attitude intensity enriches the scholarly understanding of how citizens interact with the political environment—with moral conviction playing a powerful role. It invites future research on what causes moral convictions to take hold and the extent to which political elites can galvanize or stifle their effects.

Chapter 1:

A Mystery Hiding in Plain Sight

As is typical, the 2012 presidential campaign elicited sundry acts of hostility engendered by clashing political opinions. Some were uncouth, such as posters that invited passers by to express their opinion of the candidates by sticking chewing gum on the likeness of either Barack Obama or Mitt Romney (Figure 1.1). Some were petty, such as a man refusing to feed a dinner guest upon learning that the guest planned to vote for Obama (This American Life 2012). Some were frightening, such as reports of presidential candidates' lawn signs being set on fire (Davey 2012). People care what other people think about politics.

At first blush, this observation is mundane. Of course people care what other people think about politics! The examples surround us. They abound in the media, where talking heads condescend, scorn, and seethe. They populate the shelves of book stores, where the Politics section is likely to feature best sellers with indignant titles like *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*; *Dude, Where's My Country?;* and *Treason.* They also punctuate our everyday social life, as anyone who has unwittingly stumbled into a heated political conversation can attest. There is a reason that we advise each other to make politics, along with religion, a *verboten* topic in mixed company.

In another sense, caring what other people think about politics is strange. Not all matters of disagreement have the potential to evoke animosity the way politics does. Two people might differ in terms of whether they love or hate Brussels sprouts, for instance, but the disagreement has little potential to conjure up anger or turn them into enemies. Thinking biologically, caring about what is going on in the brain of another creature is a distinctly human behavior. Where there is no direct link to fitness considerations—such as mating or predation—animals do not invest precious mental energy worrying what other animals are up to. They ignore each other and go about their business (cf. Kurzban 2011, 204). But humans do worry, at least sometimes. More than that, as the examples above show, the motivation to police others' opinions leads people to antisocial—even violent—behavior.

Caring what other people think about politics is also peculiar when considered in terms of political science theories. It is not explained by self-interest. After all, political opinions tend to be disconnected from self-interest (Kinder 1998; Sears et al. 1980), and in any case aggressions like those I mention above are poorly attuned to change minds. It is not explained by deeply considered stances about political issues,

Figure 1.1: An Opportunity to Exhibit Contempt

A poster that appeared in New York and other cities. Photo courtesy of The Huffington Post (2012).

for these are notoriously scarce in mass publics (Converse 1964; Delli-Carpini and Keeter 1997). The idea that citizens acquire partisan social identities (Campbell et al. 1960; Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002) might be relevant, but in a sense this explanation simply moves the puzzle back one step. (Why do differing views between partisans necessitate anger?)

Young researchers are often advised to direct their energy toward solving a puzzle. The advice is for the best. Those who focus on a method or a topical area risk producing valid findings that few people find important. In contrast, puzzle solving is an epistemologically self-justifying enterprise (Kuhn 1970). And yet it is one of the hardest pieces of advice to follow. Puzzles are elusive. It takes time to recognize the candidates. Even then, more often than not, they turn out to be mirages, the byproduct of inconsistent definition, measurement, or some other esoteric matter.

Now into my fourth year thinking about it, I still see the way citizens often respond to political disagreement—their tendency to get angry when they encounter it, their drive to police others' opinions and rebuke them for being 'wrong,' the difficulty they have comprehending any reasonable basis for a divergent point of view—as a puzzle of the first degree. Puzzles do not need to stem from arcane matters. Some hide in plain sight—the sort of phenomena that are regular until they are bizarre, ordinary until they are not.

Caring what other people think about politics is a far-reaching mystery, for it speaks to one of the central features that make the political realm distinctive. One reason social science separates the study of political preferences from the study of economic preferences is that the former do not behave like the latter (Simon 1985). In contemplating why a person would prefer Corn Flakes to Shredded Wheat, the realm of relevant considerations—crunchy or flakey? sweet or fiber-rich?—is reasonably well defined. Political choices, such

as the choice between a Republican and a Democrat, might involve some considerations of the same ilk—free trade or protectionism? Pro-choice or pro-life?—but they also involve a complex set of interacting emotional, "symbolic," and expressive considerations. (What does this choice say about me? What will my friends think? Which politician better embodies my values and aspirations? Who would make me feel safe? Who would make me feel proud?)

The theoretical advance in the pages that follow is to show that citizens' moral psychology plays a profound role in determining how they approach the political realm. As the discussion above foreshadows, some attitudes are connected to a person's sense of right and wrong. These "moralized" attitudes engage a distinctive mode of processing notable for its ability to evoke punitive emotions, to motivate political action, to make concessions unthinkable, and to close people to disconfirming information. Moralized attitudes can be identified with survey methods; they can be distinguished from attitudes that are intense in other ways (cf. Abelson 1988; Petty and Krosnick 1995; Skitka 2010). And taking account of moral conviction improves understanding of core topics in the study of political behavior.

Outline of the Dissertation

Which topics? The dissertation is organized into three empirical chapters (papers), each capable of being read in isolation, which I shall outline presently. Where a book-style dissertation would have a standard location for certain details—e.g. a literature review in the theory section—this is not true of a paper-style dissertation. My hope is that the information here will clarify how the chapters relate to each other, and help the reader find the details he or she seeks. The key analyses are all in the text, but I wish to highlight that numerous supplementary analyses can be found at http://dissertation.timothyjryan.com. All the original data I collected for the dissertation will be made available there as well, as the corresponding articles are published. Question wordings appear in two places: in online supplementary information, but also in three appendices included at the end of the dissertation.

"Reconsidering Moral Issues in Politics" was the first chapter to be written. It engages the idea, traceable to Theodore Lowi's (1972) work, that characteristics of specific issues determine some aspects of the politics that surround them—that "policies determine politics" (1972, 299). As I review in "Reconsidering," there is a prominent distinction between moral, versus nonmoral issues, but there is no consensus as to how to draw a line between the two realms. I show, in a marked departure from past work in political science, that one way to draw the distinction is by thinking about moral conviction as being "in the eye of the beholder." The purchase that comes from doing so is to see that morality as a psychological phenomenon—feeling punitive emotions toward political detractors, being motivated to participate in politics—emerges in some

unfamiliar places. Putatively moral issues (e.g. stem cell research) are moralized for many people, but not everyone. And ostensibly nonmoral issues (e.g. Social Security reform) are moralized for a subset of citizens. "Reconsidering" has now been published in the *Journal of Politics* (Ryan 2014).

The germ for "No Compromise: Political Consequences of Moral Conviction" was work on a chapter of my book with James M. Glaser (Glaser and Ryan 2013, ch. 3). That chapter is the first work I know of that studies attitudes about political compromise as a *sui generis* phenomenon. "No Compromise" tests the idea that citizens' orientation toward compromises is determined, in part, by their ability to think of them through a cost/benefit framework. I find that moral conviction interferes with this style of processing, leading citizens to oppose compromise even when it would be in their material interest to support it. I make an effort to structure the empirical work in "No Compromise" such that it illustrates political ramifications of this pattern. I present evidence, for instance, that citizens with moralized attitudes punish politicians who engage in political compromise, and eschew concrete monetary benefits if it means compromising on a morally convicted issue. As I write this introduction, "No Compromise" is under peer review.

The last chapter, "Unthinkable! How Citizens with Moralized Attitudes Process Political Arguments," goes into the most detail as concerns the psychological mechanisms underlying moral conviction. There, I put a spotlight more squarely on an idea that the other two chapters assume: that attitudes perceived as a matter of right and wrong are processed in a *deontological* manner. (That is, in a matter based on rules and obligations.) I expect that psychologists will find the theoretical argument in "Unthinkable" to be the most mature and carefully laid out. Political scientists, especially those for whom psychology is a background consideration, might become weary with how far into the psychological weeds I go. But if they persevere, they will be rewarded with findings relevant to the study of motivated reasoning. I show that aspects of attitude intensity relate to citizens' rejection of uncongenial information in a textured way, with moral conviction making them especially difficult to persuade. "Unthinkable" will undergo some additional revision before it is submitted for publication.

Because I plan to publish my work in political science journals, each chapter focuses on a contribution to a political science literature. Here, I wish to highlight a broader takeaway that might be of interest to psychologists. It is to note that at least four distinct bodies of work in psychology have arrived at complementary insights, but exist in striking isolation from each other. I can do no more than sample the tip of each iceberg, but they are as follows: First, Jonathan Haidt and his various collaborators emphasize the intuitive and emotional basis of morality and show that powerful psychological responses crop up in response to considerations *other than harm* (Haidt 2001, 2012; Haidt, Koller and Dias 1993).[1] Second, although

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[1] I wish to distinguish this contribution of Haidt's from his work on moral "foundations" (e.g. Graham, Haidt and Nosek 2009). I see the moral foundations work as still grappling with issues of measurement and

they seldom use the word "moral," Tetlock and colleagues identify so-called "unthinkable" cognitions, and associate these with powerful emotional responses (e.g. Tetlock 2003; Tetlock et al. 2000). Third is the above-mentioned research of Linda Skitka and colleagues who, in an especially important contribution, provide a useful survey-based measurement paradigm for studying moralization. Fourth, and potentially most unifying, is a rapidly growing body of work that establishes a *naturalistic* basis for moral cognition, whether this be through neuroscience (e.g. Greene 2007*b*) or evolutionary theory (e.g. de Waal 1997; DeScioli and Kurzban 2013). These bodies of work engage and cite each other less often than one might expect. As the pages that follow reflect, I think there is an exciting opportunity for synthesis, and I have attempted to begin the synthesis in my own modest way.

And I do mean modest. The more I study moral psychology, the more I appreciate its complexity. The chapters here are a beginning, not a conclusion. My answer to the guiding question—why do people care what other people think about politics?—is partial. There are many limitations. In particular, the work herein has much more to say about the political consequences of moral conviction than its causal antecedents, though the latter is an important area for future research. There is also more work to be done to understand how a political system can best accommodate the divisive effects of moral psychology. But I will have more to say about all that in the conclusion.

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validity.

Chapter 2:

Reconsidering Moral Issues in Politics[1]

Abstract

Political scientists commonly distinguish issues that are moral from ones that are not. The distinction is taken to be important for understanding persuadability, the stability of opinions, and issue salience, among other phenomena. However, there are inconsistencies in how scholars have conceived which issues are moral. Drawing on insights from psychology, I suggest that it is fruitful to think about moral conviction as a dimension of attitude strength. Using three data sources, I examine how much this perspective contributes to our understanding of politics. I find evidence that moral conviction shapes political opinions and action in surprising ways: it varies across issues, but also within them, including issues usually considered not to be moral. It contributes to participatory zeal, but also may be related to political extremism and hostility. The findings point to much promise in a micro-level understanding of the role of morality in politics.

Issues are a driving force in politics. How citizens feel—and how strongly they feel—about specific policies organizes their thinking about candidates and parties, galvanizes interest groups to action, and causes political coalitions to splinter and churn (Carmines and Stimson 1989). Elites' decisions about which issues to emphasize, versus downplay, can make or break their electoral fortunes (Riker 1988; Schattschneider 1960). Clearly a developed understanding of issues and how they influence citizen behavior is central to understanding politics more generally.

An extensive literature surrounds the idea that there is a distinction to be drawn between moral, versus nonmoral issues (Mooney 2001*b*; Tatalovich and Daynes 2011*b*, for book-length treatments). There is an intuition that this distinction would matter in a host of ways. Perhaps attitudes on moral issues are especially based on values, and therefore detached from economic interests (Frank 2005; Tatalovich, Smith and Bobic 1994) and immune to suasion from facts and reason (Dye 1984). Perhaps politicians can take a stand on moral issues without committing to spend money, making them more conducive to position-taking (Meier 2001). Perhaps moral issues are persistent and easy to understand, making them a crucial driver of party

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[1]A version of this chapter was published in the *Journal of Politics*, Volume 76, No. 3 (July 2014), pp. 380-397. An appendix with supplementary information is available on the *Journal of Politics* website, as well as at dissertation.timothyjryan.com.

realignment (Adams 1997; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Layman and Carsey 2002). Perhaps moral issues are particularly salient, making the extent to which they are focal highly determinative of voter turnout (Grummel 2008; Haider-Markel 1998).

These hypotheses face an obstacle. As others have noted, typologizing issues is not as easy as it might seem at first blush (Greenberg et al. 1977), and deciding which issues are moral is no exception (Smith 2002). Is morality intrinsic to particular issues? Is it instead a function of the strategies that issue advocates use? Or are moral issues the ones that evoke certain characteristic responses from citizens? Each of these possibilities changes what counts as a moral issue and suggests different hypotheses when it comes to broader effects.

Recent work in psychology suggests there may be unrealized promise in understanding morality as a characteristic psychological response. As I review below, substantial work converges on the idea that moral conviction—perceiving a connection to one's sense of right and wrong—can be understood as a property attached to some attitudes, and not others. Morally convicted attitudes are special because they seem to engage a distinctive mode of processing: they powerfully arouse certain negative emotions, engender hostile opinions, and inspire punitive action. These patterns have clear political significance, but are little explored.

This chapter seeks to advance understanding of how moral conviction unfolds in citizen politics. Relying on a mixture of nationally representative and convenience samples, I uncover considerable evidence that moral conviction is indeed an important force that guides citizen behavior. Study 1, which relies on two convenience samples, measures moral conviction as it emerges on a number of contemporary political issues. I directly compare moral conviction to more familiar dimensions of attitudes strength (cf. Petty and Krosnick 1995) in terms of their relationship to specific emotions. Moral conviction appears powerfully to evoke certain negative emotions toward political disagreement, perhaps more powerfully than any other attitude characteristic. Furthermore, where past work mostly looks for moral conviction on issues that are putatively moral (e.g. abortion, capital punishment, drug decriminalization) (Skitka, Bauman and Sargis 2005), I test the idea that citizens might have morally convicted attitudes even concerning putatively nonmoral issues. Indeed, I find evidence that some citizens perceive even distinctly economic issues such as labor relations laws and Social Security reform in characteristically moral ways. In short, morality appears to be very much in the eye of the beholder, and a more far-reaching force than often assumed.

Study 2, which employs a nationally representative sample, replicates the main finding from Study 1, showing that moralization arises in some degree on an array of economic and noneconomic issues. This study also highlights broader consequences of a propensity to moralize political issues. Consistent with a link between moral conviction and punitive emotions, moralization appears to be an important force undergirding political activism, but also antagonism.

Moral Issues in Politics

In 1972, Theodore Lowi argued that the kind of politics that surrounds a public policy depends on the kind of coercion—all policies, he argued, are in some way coercive—it entails. Coercion can be applied either immediately or remotely, and either to individuals or to their environment. The result was an elegant and durable two-by-two classification scheme that generates novel predictions about how political players will act (Lowi 1972).

It was not long before other researchers objected that Lowi's scheme, tidy though it is, left something out. T. Alexander Smith, attempting to extend Lowi's framework outside the U.S. case, noted several instances of "emotive-symbolic" issues—ending the death penalty in Great Britain, deciding what symbols would be incorporated into the Canadian flag—that Lowi's scheme appeared not to account for. Emotive-symbolic issues tended to be intensely felt and evoke interest from wide swaths of the population, even though they did not distribute material goods (Smith 1975). Lowi subsequently acknowledged the need to adapt his framework to account for these issues (Lowi 2011). There is now a cottage industry of scholarly efforts suggesting that so-called moral issues merit particular attention (Mooney 2001a; Tatalovich and Daynes 2011b, for overviews). They have been argued to play a special role in candidate preference (Abramowitz 1995), turnout (Biggers 2011; Grummel 2008; Meier 1994), interest group mobilization (Haider-Markel and Meier 1996; Mooney and Lee 2000), emotional arousal (Abramowitz 1995; Biggers 2011; Layman 2001), the tendency to hold representatives accountable (Page and Shapiro 1983, 182; Tavits 2007), and realignment (Adams 1997; Carmines and Stimson 1980, 80).

Despite abundant attempts to employ a distinction between moral and nonmoral issues, there is not a settled understanding of what the distinction is, as various efforts have defined moral issues in very different ways. Mooney and Schuldt, for instance, emphasize the politics that surround an issue, writing that moral issues are ones where "at least one advocacy coalition involved in the debate defines the issue as threatening one of its core values, its first principles" (Mooney 2001a, 4; see also Mooney and Schuldt 2008, 201). Similarly, Haider-Markel and Meier (1996, 333) define morality policies as those where "at least one advocacy coalition . . . portray[s] the issue as one of morality or sin and use[s] moral arguments in its policy advocacy." A second approach defines the moral sphere not in terms of political strategy, but citizen psychology. Thus, for instance, Biggers suggests that moral issues elicit attitudes "based on core values rooted within an [sic] citizen's system of beliefs and primary identity, especially religion, which for many serves as the basis of their most fundamental values" (Biggers 2011, 8, citations omitted; see also Glick and Hutchinson 2001). A third approach suggests that morality is intrinsic to particular issues, defined by their essential characteristics. In this vein, Studlar argues that moral issues are nontechnical and easy to

understand (Studlar 2001, 39) while Engeli et al. write that "the defining aspect of morality issues. . . [is] being about fundamental decisions related to death, marriage and reproduction" (2012*a*, 24; see also Tavits 2007).

Despite the different approaches to definition, there is one clear point of convergence. There is a consensus, often made explicit, that economic issues are not moral (Abramowitz 1995; Engeli, Green-Pedersen and Larsen 2012*a*, 26; Frank 2005; Laver and Garry 2000; Layman 2001; Mooney and Lee 1995; Smith 1975, 90; Studlar 2001, 38; Tatalovich and Daynes 2011*a*, xxxiii; Tavits 2007, 153). Thus, it would not be controversial to suggest that, while abortion, the death penalty, physician-assisted suicide, and same-sex marriage are at least candidate moral issues, distributive issues like the budget, taxation, and Social Security reform are quintessential nonmoral issues.

This exclusion of economic issues is in a way puzzling. As noted above, one definitional approach asks whether issue advocates use moral frames in their appeals, and appeals on economic issues often do. For example, in February of 2011, the progressive Christian group Sojourners responded to congressional budget wrangling with an outreach campaign that had the slogan, "What would Jesus cut?" (Gilgoff 2011). Shortly thereafter, Arthur Brooks, President of the American Enterprise Institute, praised Representative Paul Ryan's budget plan by saying that budgets are "moral documents" (Keohane 2011). Then, in September of 2011, a video of Senate candidate Elizabeth Warren went viral on the Internet in which she excoriated opponents of progressive taxation for violating "the underlying social contract" (New York Times 2011). Laws regulating union activity have complex economic implications, but are often discussed with intuitive deontological[2] language, such as an asserted "right to collectively bargain" or "right to work."

The exclusion of economic issues is also puzzling under a definition of morality policy that emphasizes citizen psychology. The distinction between economic and noneconomic issues is socially constructed; it is not a "natural kind" with analogs in human evolutionary history. Thus, while it seems sensible (for example) to suggest that the brain would use a distinctive processing style in evaluating intentional, versus nonintentional actions (Petersen 2010; Petersen et al. 2012), a sharp psychological distinction between economic and noneconomic issues seems less likely.

That existing delineations of the moral domain are murky can be seen in how scholars have classified specific issues. Laver and Garry (2000) exclude both the environment and social welfare programs from their set of moral issues. Tavits (2007), by way of contrast, considers both welfare state expansion and environmental protection to be in the social, not the economic, domain. Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder (2008) exclude opinions about the environment from their set of moral issues, but include feelings toward the women's movement and questions about child-rearing values (which were developed to measure respondents'

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[2]"Deontology" refers to intrinsic, *prima facie*, notions of right and wrong.

authoritarian personality, see Stenner [2005]). Moral issues are supposed to be easy (Studlar 2001), but Carmines and Stimson (1989) point to the war in Vietnam as an exemplar hard issue, although it seems clear that some of the war's opponents saw their views as having a moral basis.

Moral Conviction

The idea that attitudes are multidimensional is intuitive and has long played a role in thinking about politics. In his *Preface to Democratic Theory*, for instance, Robert Dahl argues that political theorists need to consider two properties of an attitude separately: the attitude itself and the intensity with which it is held (Dahl 1956, ch. 4). In the intervening years, psychologists have pressed much farther, finding attitudes to vary in the extent to which they are extreme, important, elaborated, accessible, conscious, central, certain, crystallized, steadfast, emotionally laden, conscious, and several other properties (Abelson 1988; Petty and Krosnick 1995, for helpful overviews).

There is considerable evidence that attitudes meaningfully differ in terms of whether they are held with moral conviction (Atran, Axelrod and Davis 2007; Baron and Spranca 1997; Bennis, Medin and Bartels 2010; Ditto, Pizarro and Tannenbaum 2009; Skitka, Bauman and Sargis 2005; Tetlock 2003). Linda J. Skitka, developing propositions from Turiel (e.g. 1983), defines morally convicted attitudes according to three characteristics: First, they are perceived as universal—as "absolutes, or universal standards of truth that others should also share" (Skitka 2010, 269).[3] Second, they are experienced as objective—"as if they were readily observable, objective properties of situations, or as facts about the world" (2010, 269). Third, they are independent of external authority (2010, 269).

Taken together, these three characteristics identify a very distinctive set of attitudes. It becomes clear that moral convictions are not simply intense attitudes, since many intense attitudes are not perceived as universal. To see this, compare a nonmoral preference—"I don't like Brussels sprouts"—to one that, for many people, is held with moral conviction—"I don't like to clean my bathroom with an American flag." A dislike of Brussels sprouts can be arbitrarily intense, but unlike cleaning a bathroom with a patriotic symbol, it is strange to imagine someone *else's* eating Brussels sprouts inspiring anger or contempt. The external authority criterion ensures that moral convictions are not the same as norms or social conventions. Consider that a teacher can suspend a convention ("Don't wear pajamas to school"), but not a moral mandate ("Don't hit your classmate") (cf. Smetana 1983).

It might be objected that to claim that some attitudes are held with moral conviction is inconsistent with an estimable line of research extending back to Philip Converse's famous (1964) essay, which convincingly

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[3]Tetlock's definition of sacred values is very similar (2003, 320).

establishes that most citizens lack ideological sophistication. But moral conviction theory does not require citizens to derive attitudes through logical reasoning or from a guiding belief system. It sees such reasoning as possible but rare (Haidt 2003a). Where people articulate a systematic deduction of opinions from principles, moral conviction theory would be wary that they are rationalizing (cf. Nisbett and Wilson 1977), since moral conviction theory arose as a critique of earlier research (cf. Kohlberg, Levine and Hewer 1983) that held a rationalist/deductive view of moral psychology. Instead, the claim is only that the *perception* that an attitude has a moral basis, whether the perception comes from reasoning or (more likely) some aspect of socialization, matters. One of the research program's central objectives is to reconcile the apparent scarcity of deductive thinking with the powerful force that moral judgments seem to have in social life. As Jonathan Haidt states the idea, people can "know that something is wrong without knowing why" (Haidt 2001, 814).[4]

Psychologists have made progress outlining an evolutionary basis for moral conviction. There is reason to believe that an ability to internalize and enforce social rules would have increased the reproductive fitness of our evolutionary ancestors (Sinnott-Armstrong 2007a; Tooby and Cosmides 2010). Opinions differ on whether the tendency is best understood through the lens of individual-level (DeScioli and Kurzban 2013) or multi-level selection (Haidt 2012; Wilson and Wilson 2008), but in either case, deontological ethics seem to have a physiological basis in the brain (e.g. Berns et al. 2012; Greene 2007a).

The deontological rules that the brain encodes do not necessarily coincide with specific topics, such as harm, fairness, or religion. Consider taboos against eating certain kinds of meat, prohibitions against dancing, or rules against harmless sexual conduct that have existed in various places (DeScioli and Kurzban 2009, for an excellent discussion). Paul Rozin (1999) argues that cigarette smoking, once entirely mundane, has now become moralized in the United States, motivating visceral disgust and punitive sentiments. Returning to the discussion above, these realizations give additional reason to suspect that characteristically moral thinking could emerge even on economic issues.

The potential political significance of moral conviction comes from its ability to evoke "other-condemning" emotions and action tendencies that can drive citizens apart (Haidt 2003b, especially 855-859; see also DeScioli and Kurzban 2009). There are many striking examples. In a series of experiments, Tetlock and colleagues find violations of sacred values cause moral outrage, "harsh character attributions to those who endorse the proscribed thoughts and even to those who do not endorse, but do tolerate this way of thinking in others" (Tetlock et al. 2000, 853-854; see also Tetlock 2003). Similarly, Mullen and Skitka (2005) present subjects with vignettes about violations of morally convicted political opinions and find conviction to moderate the arousal of anger (see also Skitka and Wisneski 2011). Studying political conflicts, such as those in the Middle

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[4]An extensive and estimable vein of thought in ethical philosophy views morality or goodness as a conceptual primitive. It emerges particularly in the writings of Hume ([1739] 1888) and Moore ([1903] 1922).

East, Atran and colleagues find negotiations take on peculiar properties when they involve sacred values: monetary compensation (counterintuitively) *increases* violent opposition to compromise (Atran and Axelrod 2008; Ginges et al. 2007). Tetlock and colleagues (Tetlock et al. 2000) find that merely contemplating counterfactuals that present an affront to sacred values inspires a desire to engage in moral cleansing.

There are open questions concerning how moral conviction theory bears on mass politics. Is the citizenry consistent in terms of which issues it moralizes, or is there considerable variance even within particular issues? Is moral conviction limited to specific issues—such as noneconomic ones—or can it emerge on both economic and noneconomic issues? Does moral conviction enhance our understanding of political opinions above and beyond more familiar attitude characteristics, such as importance or personal relevance? Do citizens vary in terms of their propensity to moralize, and if so, with what effect? The studies below engage each of these questions.

Study 1: Moral Conviction and Emotions

Study 1 examines where moral conviction arises. It also directly compares moral conviction to other measures of attitude strength in terms of their ability to arouse specific emotions. Considerable work now highlights how specific emotions elicit politically relevant action patterns (e.g. Neuman et al. 2007), making them of interest in their own right. However, Study 2 moves to more direct measures of political involvement.

There are three hypotheses. The first two concern where moral conviction will be found and are meant to contrast with the idea that some issues are intrinsically moral.

H1: Moral conviction will vary not only across, but also within particular issues.

H2: Moral conviction will emerge in some considerable degree on both economic and noneconomic issues.

The third hypothesis is motivated by the finding (discussed above) that violations of morally convicted attitudes evoke other-condemning feelings.

H3: Moral conviction will be associated with the arousal of negative emotions, although the arousal might be limited to emotions with punitive overtones.

Data and measures   Data come from two complementary samples. First, a researcher visited discussion sections at a large research university and invited undergraduate participants in political science classes to complete a questionnaire as part of an in-class activity (N=217).[5]   Second, I recruited a larger sample

[5]The sample is not nationally representative, but its characteristics are, in a way, an asset: age, education, income, geography, and variables correlated with them are held constant by the design.

(N=472 Americans) using Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) crowdsourcing service. While also not representative of the general population, it is unrepresentative in different ways—see the Supplementary Information (§1)[6] for sample characteristics—and has other attractive properties.[7]

The questionnaire was designed to capture several dimensions of attitude strength with respect to several different political opinions. After questions on demographics and partisanship—all question wordings appear in the appendix at the end of the dissertation—subjects were asked questions about five political issues: collective bargaining rights, Social Security reform, same-sex marriage, stem cell research, and the deployment of American troops in Afghanistan. These issues were chosen to present a mixture of putatively moral and nonmoral issues and were presented in a random order.

For each issue, the questionnaire measured extremity, importance, and personal relevance of subjects' opinions. Extremity, "the extent to which an attitude deviates from neutrality" (Krosnick and Petty 1995, 6) was measured as follows. First, respondents were presented with policy options adapted from Gallup public opinion questions. Next, they were asked which policy course they preferred, and to what degree. For instance, for the Social Security topic, subjects were asked, "How about you? Would you prefer to see taxes raised to preserve benefits at the current level, or would you prefer to cut benefits so taxes don't have to go up?" Responses were placed on a seven-point scale that that included a neutral point. This scale was then folded to construct a four-point scale of issue extremity. Importance, "the extent to which an individual cares deeply about and is personally invested in an attitude" (Krosnick et al. 1993, 1132) was measured, as is standard, with the question, "How important is this issue to you personally?" Personal relevance, the extent to which an attitude is "closely connected to... important personal goals, desire, and wishes" (Krosnick and Petty 1995, 7) was measured with the question, "How much does the outcome of this issue directly affect you?" (cf. Wegener et al. 1995, 471)

Each issue also measured moral conviction using an approach that has been validated and used in many studies (Skitka 2010, for a review). The approach seeks to tap the visceral recognition that an attitude is, in the eye of its holder, a moral mandate. Thus, subjects in the student sample were asked to what extent their opinion is "a reflection of your core moral beliefs and convictions," "deeply connected to your fundamental beliefs about right and wrong," and "based on a moral principle."[8]

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[6]The Supplementary Information is available online at dissertation.timothyjryan.com.

[7]Evidence of Mechanical Turk's usefulness for research continues to mount (Berinsky, Huber and Lenz 2012; Buhrmeister, Kwang and Gosling 2011). Moreover, researchers continue to develop tools to address some of its liabilities (Pe'er et al. 2012). In the present study, I employ an attention check that ensure subjects are cognitively engaged in the study, as well as an html script that ensures any particular subject can only appear in the sample once.

[8]As noted above, much research suggests that moral conviction is intuitive and visceral, which precludes the use of open-ended responses or questions that ask respondents to identify specific reasons for an opinion (Skitka and Bauman 2008, 36, for a discussion).

Table 2.1: Moral Conviction Predicts Punitive Feelings Toward Issue Opponents

	Collective Bargaining		Social Security		Same-sex Marriage		Stem Cell		Afghanistan		Pooled	
	Students	*MTurk*	*Students*	*MTurk*	*Students*	*MTurk*	*Students*	*MTurk*	*Students*	*MTurk*	*Students*	*MTurk*
Neg. affect	0.283**[a]	0.251**[a]	0.169**[a]	0.183**[a]	0.317**[a]	0.191**[a]	0.209**[a]	0.094*[a]	0.190**[a]	0.125*	0.159**[a]	0.146**[a]
	(0.064)	(0.056)	(0.057)	(0.050)	(0.085)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.041)	(0.060)	(0.050)	(0.034)	(0.024)
Anger	0.237**[a]	0.286**[a]	0.170**[a]	0.227**[a]	0.302**[a]	0.166**	0.218**[a]	0.158**[a]	0.212**[a]	0.223**[a]	0.160**[a]	0.170**[a]
	(0.060)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.048)	(0.090)	(0.053)	(0.059)	(0.041)	(0.057)	(0.046)	(0.032)	(0.023)
Disgust	0.235**[a]	0.314**[a]	0.120*[a]	0.225**[a]	0.331**[a]	0.270**[a]	0.211**[a]	0.201**[a]	0.196**[a]	0.239**[a]	0.172**	0.209**[a]
	(0.058)	(0.051)	(0.050)	(0.048)	(0.094)	(0.062)	(0.061)	(0.045)	(0.053)	(0.049)	(0.035)	(0.025)
Fear	0.072[a]	0.076	0.069[a]	0.133**[a]	0.113*[a]	0.037	0.046	0.045	0.069	0.133**[a]	0.020[a]	0.059**[a]
	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.035)	(0.044)	(0.051)	(0.040)	(0.034)	(0.027)	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.017)	(0.018)
Respect	0.171*[a]	-0.041	0.039	0.010	-0.114	-0.112*	-0.040[a]	-0.025	0.014	0.029	-0.063**[a]	-0.107**[a]
	(0.081)	(0.060)	(0.077)	(0.059)	(0.070)	(0.051)	(0.067)	(0.045)	(0.074)	(0.059)	(0.031)	(0.020)
Appreciation	0.134	-0.071	0.030	-0.052	-0.074	-0.081	-0.016	-0.001	0.053	0.034	-0.046	-0.077**[a]
	(0.075)	(0.060)	(0.066)	(0.061)	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.060)	(0.042)	(0.070)	(0.057)	(0.028)	(0.018)

**p< .01 *p< .05, two-tailed test

Each cell entry is from a separate OLS model in which the dependent variable on the left (e.g anger) is regressed on issue-specific measures of opinion extremity, importance, personal relevance, and moral conviction. (For simplicity, coefficients from variables other than moral conviction are not shown, but full models are available in the Supplementary Information, §5.) For the pooled models, the attitude strength relationships are estimated simultaneously across all issues in a fixed effects model. (A fixed effect for each issue and for each respondent is included.) Heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors in parentheses. All variables coded 0–1. A superscript a indicates that the coefficient on the moral conviction measure is greater in magnitude than any other measure of attitude strength.

Figure 2.1: Distribution of Moral Conviction Variable on Five Issues
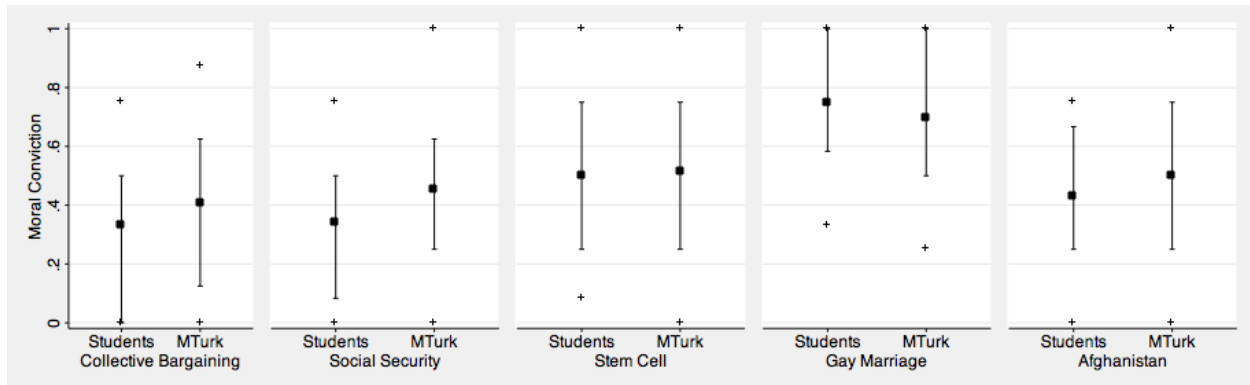
Distribution of moral conviction measure (scaled 0–1) for each issue presented to the student and MTurk samples. Squares indicate means. Bars span the middle 50% of responses. Plus signs span the middle 80% of responses.

Response options were on a five-point scale ranging from "not at all" to "very much." Given high reliability coefficients with just two items, the third question was dropped for the MTurk questionnaire.[9]

Later in the questionnaire, as dependent measures, subjects were asked to report how well each of the following phrases describe their feelings toward "people who disagree with you about this issue": I like them; I dislike them; Angry at them; Disgusted with them; Afraid of them; Respect for them; Frustration with them; Sad about them; Appreciative of them. The first two phrases were designed to capture general affect, while the rest were included to tap specific, discrete emotions.

Results   Figure 2.1 graphically shows the distribution of the moral conviction measure for both samples and across all five issues. To give a sense of dispersion, bars indicate the range of the middle 50% of responses, while plus signs span the middle 80%. It is immediately clear that, while some issues exhibit considerably more moral conviction than others—the means for the Same-sex marriage issue are .75 (students) and .70 (MTurk) compared to only .33 and .41 for collective bargaining—all issues exhibit a lot of moral conviction among at least some respondents. Indeed, as the figure shows, every issue evokes a response above .7 from at least 20% of respondents. At the same time, this is not mere acquiescence, since similar proportions expressly deny that their attitudes stem from moral conviction by placing themselves at the very bottom of the scale.

A separate question is whether reports of moral conviction are a mere proxy for other aspects of attitude strength. They appear not to be. Correlations with the other measures of attitude strength, all of which are reported in the Supplementary Information (§3), are only moderate: generally below .4 and rarely above .5.

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[9]Cronbach's α ranges from .90 to .93 in the student sample, .85 to .92 in the MTurk sample.

A principal factors analysis finds the moral conviction questions always to load heavily on the same factor (loadings always above .77) and barely at all on secondary factors (never above .10). Other measures of attitude strength do not load heavily on the moral conviction factor (loadings generally below .20 and never above .37).[10] Morally convicted attitudes are more likely to be important, relevant, and extreme, but moral conviction nonetheless seems to capture a distinct aspect of an attitude. These results amount to support for H1 and H2.

Moral conviction appears to emerge distinctly with respect to political issues, but does it moderate how citizens engage those issues? To answer this question, I compare, by OLS, the distinct contributions of each dimension of attitude strength to the arousal of emotions. Specifically, I estimate a series of models specified as

$$\texttt{Emotion} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\texttt{extremity} + \beta_2\texttt{importance} + \beta_3\texttt{relevance} + \beta_4\texttt{moral conviction} + \epsilon,$$

where all variables are scaled 0–1. Since there are nine emotions for each of five issues, I estimate forty-five models for each of the two samples. Full results appear in the Supplementary Information (§5). Table 2.1, however, summarizes the results as concern the moral conviction measure. It reports the coefficient on $\texttt{moral conviction}$ (β_4) for four negative emotions (general negative affect, anger, disgust, and fear) as well as two positive ones (respect and appreciation).

The results suggest that perceiving an issue to be moral powerfully and independently predicts specific feelings toward issue opponents. For general negative affect, anger, and disgust, the relationship is clearly significant and consistent across issues. Most striking, however, is how moral conviction compares to other indicators of attitude strength when it comes to predicting these three emotions. Superscript as indicate that, for the model in question, $|\beta_4| > |\beta_{k \in \{1,2,3\}}|$ (i.e., that the moral conviction relationship is estimated to be more powerful than any other). For these emotions, it is in every case except two, suggesting that the perception of morality is far more predictive than more familiar aspects of attitude strength, such as extremity.

And yet the consequences of moral conviction appear to be, in some respects, quite specific. It might have been the case that moral conviction arouses all negative emotions together. But the relationship with fear seems much weaker – perhaps one third the magnitude. This result is consistent with findings pointing to distinct antecedents and consequences of fear, as compared to other negative emotions (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000) as well as the notion that moral disagreement is tightly connected to negative feelings in general, but to approach-related, punitive feelings in particular. It might also have been the case that, just as moral conviction foments anger and disgust, it dampens positive emotions. Looking at individual

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[10]Full results of the factor analysis appear in the Supplementary Information (§4).

issues, the relationships here are, likewise, more tentative, only occasionally reaching statistical significance and sometimes having a sign contrary to the hypothesis.

The far-right section of Table 2.1 takes a step back to look at the big picture, combining results across issues. I partition out relationships specific to particular issues and individuals, estimating

$$
\begin{aligned}
\texttt{Emotion} \quad = \quad & \beta_0 + \beta_1\texttt{extremity} + \beta_2\texttt{importance} + \beta_3\texttt{relevance} + \beta_4\texttt{moral conviction} + \\
& \beta_{\{5,6,7,8\}}\texttt{issue fixed effects} + \beta_{k\in\{9,10,\dots,l\}}\texttt{respondent fixed effects} + \epsilon,
\end{aligned}
$$

where l is determined by the sample size. Looking across issues in this way, the moral conviction measure remains a potent explanator of negative affect, anger, and disgust, both statistically and substantively. The coefficient magnitudes are such that, when it comes to these emotions, the perception that an issue is moral corresponds to movement across perhaps 15% or 20% of the dependent variable's theoretical range—a larger difference than simply expressing an extreme attitude on the issue. The results of the pooled model also suggest moral conviction does in fact evoke fear toward issue opponents, although to a much smaller degree than the other negative emotions. Moreover, it seems to dampen positive emotions, although again the relationship is perhaps half the magnitude as for anger and disgust.[11]

To summarize, Study 1 uncovers strong evidence that it is fruitful to think about moral conviction as an aspect of attitude strength that varies across issues, but also within them. Moreover, moral conviction appears at least as central to arousing certain negative emotions as extremity, importance, and personal relevance. The findings shed light on who is likely to be motivated by particular issues, why people differ in how they process issues, and the conditions under which issues are likely to evoke animosity and hostility. Study 2 builds on these results by examining effects on the broader political system.

Study 2: Effects of Moral Conviction

Study 1 shows that moral conviction varies across attitudes. It could simultaneously be true that people vary in their *propensity* to moralize political attitudes. As Robert Abelson states the idea, perhaps "conviction has some degree of generality across issues; in other words, characteristic level of conviction on a large range of issues is an individual difference variable" (1988, 270).

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[11]Perhaps my approach unfairly advantages the moral conviction measure by using more questions to measure it than the other dimensions of attitude strength. Testing this possibility, I replicated Table 2.1, discarding all but one of the moral conviction questions. No substantive results change. The Supplementary Information (§6) also reports results from a test in which the moral conviction measure is compared to a summary measure of the other aspects of attitude strength. It continues to perform well.

I focus on two hypotheses concerning the propensity to moralize. The first stems from the idea that people with many convictions are likely to feel anger and disgust toward political opponents—as exhibited in Study 1—more often.

> H4: Individuals with many convictions will be more one-sided in their political assessments, pairing greater affinity for political allies with greater animosity for political foes.

An additional hypothesis has two motivations. First, recent work highlights the motivational force of emotions. This work initially focused on enthusiasm as inducing participation (e.g. Brader 2005), but recent work finds that anger also carries motivational force (Ryan 2012b; Valentino, Gregorowicz and Groenendyk 2009). Moreover, many studies identify punitive action tendencies as characteristic of moral appraisals (De-Scioli and Kurzban 2013, especially 477-478, for a review). To the extent citizens conceive political activities such as filling out a petition or attending a rally as a way to oppose moral violators, there is reason to believe that morally convicted people would be highly motivated to participate in politics. Thus,

> H5: Morally convicted individuals participate in politics more than non-morally convicted people.

I also contrast my attitude-focused view of moral conviction with other perspectives. It has been argued that, stemming from authoritarian predispositions (Altemeyer 1996), adherence to the Protestant Work Ethic (Furnham 1984), or a focus on cultural issues (Frank 2005; Westen 2008), citizens on the right are more likely to moralize politics than those on the left. On the other hand, if an important form of moral conviction arises from species-typical cognitive mechanisms, as I suggest, it would be surprising indeed if it emerged in one ideological coalition and not the other, although it might be expressed differently.[12]

Data and measures I draw data from three sources. The first two are the samples used in Study 1. Additionally, I use data from the 2012 American National Election Studies (ANES) Evaluations of Government and Society Study (EGSS), February, 2012 Survey. The latter was conducted over the Internet by Knowledge Networks (now GfK Research), which uses random-digit-dial and address-based sampling methods to construct a nationally representative sample. It has 1,314 respondents and includes a poststratification weight designed to generalize to overall population. All analyses below are weighted to reflect the national population.

The EGSS includes innovative instrumentation designed to measure the propensity moralize political issues. Respondents are shown a list of ten issues: the budget deficit, the war in Afghanistan, education, health care, illegal immigration, the economic recession, abortion, same-sex marriage, the environment, and unemployment. They are asked to identify which of these issues they think is the most important one facing

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[12]For a related discussion, see the "Equal Opportunity Motivator" hypothesis in Skitka and Bauman (2008).

the United States today. Then, they are asked which is the least important. Next, they are asked one of Skitka's moral conviction items (described above and used in Study 1) with respect to three of the ten issues: the issue identified as most important, the one identified as least important, and a randomly selected third issue. In this way, it is possible to sketch an individual's distribution of moral conviction across issues that she finds both important and unimportant.[13] I construct a summary measure of an individual's propensity to moralize simply by taking the average of the moral conviction responses across the three issues ($\alpha = .70$).

The student and MTurk samples described above permit construction of a similar propensity-to-moralize measure, since they measure moral conviction with respect to five heterogeneous issues that encompass putatively moral topics (stem cell research and same-sex marriage) as well as putatively nonmoral ones (Social Security reform, collective bargaining, and troops in Afghanistan). Again, I simply average the moral conviction responses across the five issues.[14]

Testing the hypotheses above also requires a measure of a "one-sided" view of politics. Thus, subjects in the student and MTurk instruments measured affect toward both the Republican and Democratic Parties on a seven-point scale. Using these questions and self-reports of partisanship, I construct a difference measure that is simply (`InParty liking`)−(`OutParty liking`). The EGSS does not include a measure of party affect, but it does gauge affect toward candidates who were prominent at the time: Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, and (since the GOP primary was not settled), Newt Gingrich. For the EGSS, I construct a comparable measure, which is |`ObamaLiking` − max(`RomneyLiking`, `GingrichLiking`)|. As an additional test, I leverage questions on the EGSS that ask how much Democrats and (separately) Republicans were to blame for poor economic conditions of the past few years. On the idea that responses to this question reflect feelings toward the parties more than a disinterested evaluation, I also use a measure of blame directed at the out-party as a dependent measure.

The student and MTurk samples included nine standard questions asking subjects what political activities they participated in during the recent campaign (e.g., wearing a campaign button). Using these, I construct a scale of political participation. The EGSS has five similar questions, although they are split into a group of three that focus on prospective ("In the future...") participation and two that focus on retrospective ("During the past 12 months").

Results   Before turning attention to the propensity-to-moralize measure, I consider issue-specific responses from the new data source: the EGSS. Figure 2.2 is similar to Figure 2.1 in that it shows the mean, middle 50%, and 80% of responses for each issue. Given the different structure of the EGSS question (see above),

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[13]See Wisneski et al. (2011) and Morgan et al. (2010) for validation information on this approach.
[14]In the student sample, $\alpha =.65$. In the MTurk sample, $\alpha =.68$.

I additionally break down responses based on whether respondents said the issue was most important, least important, or whether she was randomly assigned to it. Because some configurations have too few respondents to draw firm conclusions—e.g., not many people indicate that abortion is the most important issue facing America—I indicate bins with fewer than fifty respondents with a dagger (†) next to the words "most" or "least", as appropriate.

The EGSS lacks questions on emotions, so a full replication of Study 1 is not possible. Nevertheless, several substantive findings appear to replicate in this nationally representative sample. First, there is high variance in moral conviction even within particular issues. Quite often, the two plus signs land at opposite extremes of the scale, indicating that at least 20% of respondents picked the highest moral conviction response at the same time that 20% picked the lowest one. Second, it can be seen visually that moral conviction correlates only loosely with perceived importance. Within each issue, means generally descend as one reads from left to right, but only modestly and not consistently. (Across all issues, no correlation between dummies for saying an issue is either most or least important, and moral conviction is larger than $r = .28$.) Third, moral conviction is not limited to putatively moral issues. The figure arrays issues in descending order of moral conviction, based on the randomly assigned responses. As can be seen, by this standard, the quintessentially moral issues of same-sex marriage and abortion are high on the list, but education—not widely regarded as a moral issue—tops the list, and health care is perceived in more moral terms than abortion. Moreover, there is more variation within issues than between them; consider that, although the budget—the quintessential nonmoral issue—indeed ranks last in terms of moral conviction, its mean is only .17 different from the most moral issue, on a 0–1 scale.

Next, I consider properties of the propensity-to-moralize measure. A full examination of what determines moral conviction is beyond my scope here. Nevertheless, it is worth a moment to note considerable variance (scaled 0–1, $M = .47$; SD= .29) and a roughly normal distribution (see Supplementary Information, §7). Also, there are low correlations with being female (-.04), age (-.00), performance on a political knowledge battery (.00), and of education (-.10), confirming that moral conviction is not a mere proxy for these more familiar measures. There is a notable relationship with religiosity, as measured by frequency of church attendance, but it explains less than 3% of the variance of the moral conviction measure.[15]

There does appear to be a relationship with partisanship. Figure 2.3 shows the mean level of moral conviction for each level of partisanship, and for each of the three available samples. Even given different sample characteristics and slightly different instrumentation, a U-shaped pattern emerges in each case, with strong partisans exhibiting the highest levels of conviction, independents less so. I lack evidence speaking to whether the relationship is causal and, if so, which direction it runs, but firm evidence suggests that,

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[15]Regressing (weighted OLS) moral conviction on church attendance, $\beta_{\texttt{church}} = .14$; SE=.037; $p < .01$.

Figure 2.2: Moral Convictions Across Issues on the EGSS
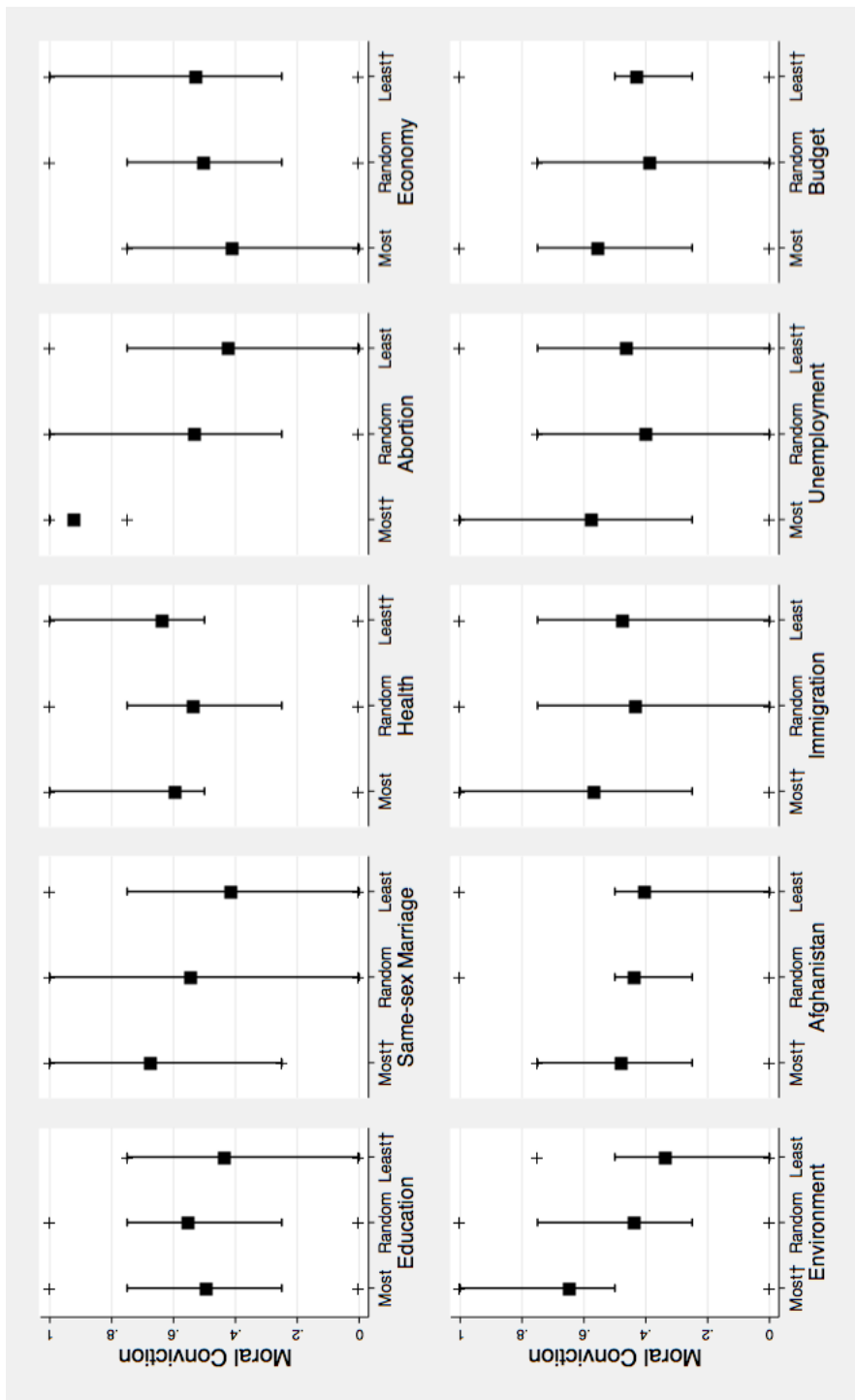
Distribution of the moral conviction measure for each issue, broken down by whether respondents said the issue was the most important, the least important, or whether they said it was neither most nor least important, but were randomly assigned to it. Squares indicate means. Bars span the middle 50% of responses. Plus signs span the middle 80% of responses. Issues are arrayed in descending order by the "Random" measure, giving a rough sense of which issues are most moralized. The number of respondents in a category ranges from 12 (Gay Marriage as most important) to 601 (Gay Marriage as least important). All randomly assigned measures have at least 82 responses. Daggers (†) appear next to categories that have fewer than fifty responses (e.g. the War in Afghanistan as the most important issue). There is no middle 50% bar for respondents who selected abortion as the most important issue because, of the 16 respondents who fit this description, 14 provided the highest possible response on the moral conviction measure.

Figure 2.3: Moral Conviction and Partisanship
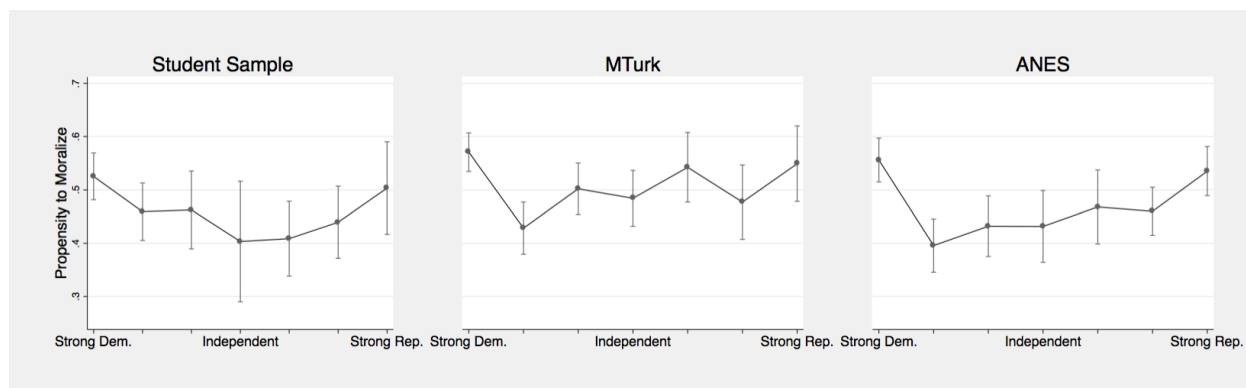
Mean level of moral conviction (scaled 0–1) by party identification for each of the three data sources. A U-shaped relationship emerges in each case. Bars indicated 95% confidence intervals.

whatever the effects of moral conviction, they will emerge mostly from partisan extremes.

The evidence in Figure 2.3 belies the notion, mentioned above, that moral feelings are the sole purview of the political right. Across all three samples, voters on both the left and right exhibit comparable levels of moral conviction. Indeed, strong Democrats are slightly higher than strong Republicans in all three samples. The right-centric traits mentioned above (e.g. authoritarianism) certainly carry their own significance, but whatever the effects of morality—as I define it here—are, they should come from both the left and the right.

Table 2.2 assesses the idea (H4) that morally convicted individuals are more one-sided in their view of politics. I examine how the propensity measure relates to what one might call a black-and-white or "Manichaean" view of politics, as captured by party and candidate "gap" measures. As described above, a high score on these measures reflects strong positive feelings toward one party (or candidate) paired with strong negative feelings toward its competitor. The EGSS analysis also examines determinants of blame directed at political opponents, as described above. Since partisanship is almost certainly related to both moral conviction and the dependent variables, I estimate relationships by OLS and include strength of Party ID as a control. On the idea that either liberals or conservatives might have a more one-sided view of politics, I also include ideology in the model, as well as available demographics.

As shown in Table 2.2, there is consistent evidence that the propensity to moralize engenders a one-sided view of politics. In the student sample, the relationship is directionally consistent with the hypothesis, but not significant ($p < .18$ by a two-tailed test).[16] It is highly significant in both other samples. Particularly striking is the magnitude of the relationship. Going by the nationally representative sample, the impact of

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[16]Additional analyses suggest that the insignificant result is more likely attributable to the smaller size of the student sample than to its special characteristics (e.g. very young): in the MTurk and EGSS samples, the moral conviction relationship does not significantly differ by age.

Table 2.2: Moral Conviction and Political Evaluations

	Student		MTurk		EGSS			
	Party Gap		Party Gap		Candidate Gap		Blame Attribution	
Propensity to Moralize	0.138	0.125	0.267**	0.269**	0.118**	0.152**	0.104**	0.113**
	(0.102)	(0.102)	(0.071)	(0.072)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.034)	(0.036)
PID Str.	0.703**	0.715**	0.647**	0.642**	0.238**	0.193**	0.112**	0.116**
	(0.071)	(0.069)	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.030)	(0.032)	(0.037)	(0.039)
Ideology (cons = 1)	-0.072	-0.029	-0.200**	-0.204**	-0.090*	-0.078	-0.049	-0.019
	(0.078)	(0.092)	(0.048)	(0.057)	(0.038)	(0.048)	(0.033)	(0.037)
Age	—	—	0.093	0.091	0.187**	0.177**	0.205**	0.215**
	—	—	(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.047)	(0.050)	(0.044)	(0.048)
Female	0.072	0.073	0.016	0.014	-0.032	-0.037	-0.057**	-0.060**
	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.019)	(0.020)
Church attendance	—	-0.110	—	0.054	—	0.062	—	-0.018
	—	(0.083)	—	(0.072)	—	(0.036)	—	(0.035)
Education dummies	—	—	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included
Constant	-0.105	-0.080	0.057	0.061	0.122**	0.118*	0.508**	0.517**
	(0.080)	(0.082)	(0.146)	(0.148)	(0.049)	(0.062)	(0.058)	(0.060)
R^2	0.377	0.385	0.402	0.402	0.157	0.148	0.079	0.085
N	199	199	352	346	1,233	1,055	1,092	945

**p$<$.01 *p$<$.05

All models are OLS. (For the EGSS, weighted OLS.) Heteroskedasticity-consistent (Student, MTurk) or design-appropriate (EGSS) standard errors in parentheses. All variables are coded 0–1. For the student sample, age and education are essentially held constant by the sample characteristics.

moral conviction seems to be at least half as strong as the impact of (notoriously dominant) PID strength. This evidence is highly consistent with H4.

Table 2.2 also assesses a possible competing hypothesis: that, especially given the instrumentation used to measure moral conviction (in particular, use of the word "moral"), the relationship between conviction and a one-sided view of politics arises spuriously out of religious commitment. If this were true, then controlling for religiosity should eliminate or at least attenuate the impact of moral conviction. As Table 2.2 shows, including the frequency of church attendance as a control, if anything, increases the impact of moral conviction. Moreover, religious commitment exhibits no relationship—except perhaps as mediated by moral conviction—to the dependent variables. This result is more evidence in favor of treating religiosity and moral conviction as separate constructs.

Table 2.3 turns attention to the conjecture (H5) that morally convicted individuals participate more in politics. Drawing from Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, ch. 12) I add the propensity measure to a standard model of political participation that accounts for participation-related resources (education, income, and feelings of efficacy) and interest in politics (self-reported following of politics and responses to political knowledge questions). I also include controls for age, gender, and given its putative relationship to morality, as well an established relationship to political participation (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995) frequency of church attendance as a measure of religiosity. I replicate the same model to the extent possible in the other two samples.[17]

Looking across samples, there is considerable evidence that moral conviction goes with campaign activity. The coefficient falls slightly short of standard significance thresholds in the model for retrospective participation ($p < .08$ by a two-tailed test), but it is highly significant in every other case. (For prospective participation in the EGSS, $p < .02$.) Once again, the magnitude of observed relationships is noteworthy. For the participation models, it is always larger than strength of party ID. This is strong evidence consistent with H5.

With cross-sectional data, one must take care not to overstate evidence for a causal relationship. The evidence above shows that moral conviction predicts participation above and beyond more familiar factors and is consistent with the notion that political involvement is one of its action tendencies. The converse possibility—that political involvement fosters moral conviction—has a weaker grounding in psychology, but would also be a noteworthy finding.

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[17]The student and MTurk samples do not contain income information, as I deemed the question too sensitive for my samples. (For students, it is not likely to vary much.) Length constraints prohibited administration of a political knowledge battery.

Table 2.3: Moral Conviction Motivates Participation

	Student	MTurk	EGSS	
	Part. Scale	Part. Scale	Part. Scale (Retrospective)	Part. Scale (Prospective)
Propensity to Moralize	0.432**	0.249**	0.068	0.058*
	(0.099)	(0.060)	(0.038)	(0.024)
PID Str.	0.244**	0.102**	0.050	0.027
	(0.060)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.024)
Age	—	-0.044	0.192**	-0.079**
	—	(0.052)	(0.048)	(0.039)
Female	0.017	-0.015	-0.037	-0.003
	(0.035)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.015)
Income	—	—	-0.031	-0.002
	—	—	(0.045)	(0.044)
Church attendance	-0.113*	0.044	0.078*	0.099**
	(0.055)	(0.038)	(0.035)	(0.026)
Follow politics	—	—	0.010**	0.238**
	—	—	(0.033)	(0.024)
Political Knowledge	—	—	0.028	-0.006
	—	—	(0.032)	(0.030)
Efficacy	—	—	0.094	0.185**
	—	—	(0.054)	(0.037)
Education dummies	—	Included	Included	Included
Constant	-0.038	-0.931**	-0.109	-0.041
	(0.058)	(0.126)	(0.043)	(0.033)
N	213	399	1,065	1,065

**p< .01 *p< .05

All variables coded 0–1. Models estimated by OLS. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity-consistent (Student sample and MTurk) or based on design-derived poststratification weights (EGSS). For the student sample, age and education are essentially held constant by the sample characteristics.

Discussion and Conclusion

I return to the question of which issues are moral. The results herein suggest that answering this question requires careful reflection on why it is being asked. For instance, Meier (2001) suggests that one reason moral issues are noteworthy is that they tend to be symbolic; politicians can take a stand without committing to spend money. This idea would seem to exclude (for instance) health care, environmental regulation, and slavery reparations as moral issues, since all of them typically require commitment of financial resources. Mooney (2001a, 11) suggests that, since moral issues tend to be salient, they neutralize the technical expertise that typically advantages specialized interest groups. This saliency criterion would seem to include some issues not typically considered to be moral, such as right-to-work laws, affirmative action policies, and perhaps some foreign policies, since, at least in some episodes and for some people, they become highly salient. I hasten to emphasize that these are potentially fruitful taxonomies. But they are not directly engaging a separate question, worthy in its own right, "Which issues evoke characteristic psychological responses from voters?"

As concerns this last question, the results herein affirm the intuition that morality matters in politics while suggesting different ways to think about its role. Characteristically moral responses are more likely on some issues than others, but there is considerable variability even within particular issues but across individuals. And some issues not widely regarded as moral are moralized for some people. These observations may explain why some ostensibly nonmoral issues, such as collective bargaining laws, American military involvement abroad, and redistributive taxation evoke a certain righteous fervor from at least some people, and what sorts of people will analyze issues through a consequentialist (cost/benefit) versus deontological (right/wrong) framework. Moreover, some individuals—strong partisans—seem more likely to moralize politics than others, which may, in part, explain why they have so much difficulty understanding or seeing anything positive about their opponents' views in some domains. Finally, there are issues that are moralized for many people, but seen as important by few—witness the results for abortion in Figure 2.2—inviting questions about which factors are more significant when it comes to realignment and the perception of political parties (cf. Adams 1997).

Where does moral conviction come from? Here, I must proceed cautiously, since the answer is undoubtedly complex and research can only be described as nascent. Still, there are some plausible sketches of an answer. Using an evolutionary framework and the game theoretic logic of correlated equilibrium, DeScioli and Kurzban (2013) posit the existence of a moral learning system. When conflicts arose in our evolutionary past, deontic rules—communicated within a small group *ex ante* and internalized by its members—helped bystanders choose sides in a way that lessened the likelihood of a costly conflict. In this perspective, the

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moralization of some actions (e.g. incest) is easy and noncontroversial, as separate evolutionary pressures make them viscerally aversive.[18] Other moral rules could emerge as a function of the power structure within a specific community. Somewhat like a parent can moralize the theft of cookies from a cookie jar in the eyes of a child, so might an powerful individual or sect actualize local rules conducive to its particular interests.[19] Thus, some content of morality will be general, even approaching the status of human universals. At the same time, since the moral learning system evolved to be "open input," other rules will be context-dependent, giving rise to the endless diversity we see in perceptions of right and wrong.[20] As concerns politics, this perspective suggests that some topics are *more likely* to become moralized, which explains why there is some topical commonality across contexts. But it also leaves plenty of room for moralization to manifest differently for different people.

These ideas are in their infancy and much of the future development will come from psychology. Here, however, I sketch some ways in which political science can contribute to the effort. First, survey measures could examine how specific facets of social and developmental milieu relate to moralization. Do individuals acquire more convictions as they listen to more partisan media? Deeper convictions as they discuss an issue with like-minded friends? Survey measures can help narrow the set of possibilities. Second, the perspectives above suggest a deep connection between morality and coalitional psychology: morality allows coordination and cooperation, even if it also stokes tribalism (see also Haidt 2012, Part III). There is a potentially rich opportunity for research on the historical and contemporary co-emergence of moral beliefs and political coalitions. Third, there is some evidence suggestive of the idea that different kinds of appeals can amplify the significance of moral considerations, or submerge it (Cairney, Studlar and Mamudu 2012; Clifford and Jerit 2013; Marietta 2012; Mucciaroni 2011; Ryan 2012*a*). Political scientists are well equipped to explore the political conditions that make such moralization more likely, and what its consequences are.

Although the study of morality politics draws most heavily on the U.S. case, morality politics is increasingly becoming a point of focus in comparative work (e.g. Engeli, Green-Pedersen and Larsen 2012*b*; Smith and Tatalovich 2003 and a special issue of the *Journal of European Public Policy*[21]), so it is worth a moment to consider how the findings here might transfer outside the United States. At a theoretical level, I have

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[18]Wisneski and Skitka (2013) find that activating disgust with disturbing images increases perceptions of moral conviction, but only when the images are supraliminal, not when they are subliminal (viewed for 14ms). They interpret this as evidence that emotions are an important antecedent to moralization, but that conscious processing is also required. See also Skitka (in press).

[19]See also Tooby and Cosmides (2010), especially pp. 213-230 and Robinson, Kurzban and Jones (2007).

[20]DeScioli and Kurzban's account seems quite consistent with that of Mikhail (2011), who likens moral learning to the acquisition of language. For both mental competencies, the human mind seems to be prepared in advance with models for basic concepts (e.g. "noun" vs. "verb" or "permissible" vs. "forbidden"), but the content (e.g. English vs. Zapotec) will vary.

[21]See Volume 20, Issue 3 (June 2013).

argued that the perception of moral considerations arises from mental programs that are species-typical in humans, even if the content—what is moralized?—varies. As such, it seems reasonable to expect the same basic links between moral conviction, emotional arousal, and political motivations, but the ways they affect politics will depend on aspects institutional structure, such as the extent to which federalism allows policy variation, the expressive opportunities available to interest groups, and other factors (Studlar [2012], for a provocative discussion of how comparative institutions affect morality politics). Institutional features could also modify how attractive a strategy moralization is for elites. Perhaps an effort to moralize an issue would be self-defeating in multi-party parliamentary systems, where electoral competition among parties and interest groups is followed swiftly by a need to coalesce and resolve differences. Testing such hypotheses could be instructive both with respect to institutional politics and the underlying psychology.

To close, I note that the results here continue to develop a set of difficult normative questions that other scholars have begun to ask. Participatory zeal and political engagement are often taken to be desirable in a democracy. Likewise, many hope that citizens have firm beliefs and the will to stand by them. Moral conviction seems to contribute to these things. At the same time, it seems to have a divisive side, leading to a more cynical view of political opponents and perhaps an excess of confidence when it comes to the value of one's own opinions, relative to others. When all is said and done, to understand the underpinnings of our feelings about right and wrong might contribute appreciation and humility in equal measure. As Robert Abelson argued (1988, 274), "Conviction can give deep meaning to life, but it is also one of the surest ways to make a fool of yourself."

Chapter 3:

No Compromise: Political Consequences of Moralized Attitudes[1]

Abstract

Evolutionary, neuroscientific, and cognitive perspectives in psychology have converged on the idea that some attitudes are moralized—a distinctive characteristic. Moralized attitudes reorient behavior from maximizing gains to adhering to rules. Here, I examine a political consequence of this tendency. In four studies drawing data from a variety of sources, I measure attitude moralization and examine how it relates to approval of political compromise. I find that moralized attitudes lead citizens to oppose compromises, punish compromising politicians, and even pay a monetary cost to obstruct political opponents' gains. These patterns emerge on economic and noneconomic issues alike and shed light on the mechanisms by which popular pressures hinder elite bargaining.

"To the man of rigid morality . . . it is better not to agree at all than to agree to an imperfect bargain" (Dahl 1967, 53).

In August of 2011, President Obama signed legislation providing for cuts to discretionary spending to go into effect in 2013. The reductions were to affect a host of popular programs: Medicare, scientific research, the military, education, housing assistance, and food and drug safety would all have to show significant reductions. Moreover, the cuts were to be indiscriminate; administrators would have almost no discretion with which to prioritize crucial programs over dispensable ones.

Initially, the rash nature of the cuts was thought to be a virtue: they were so clearly suboptimal and so unpalatable to Democrats and Republicans alike that they would never take effect. Instead, they were a specter designed to give the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction the cover and impetus to craft a meaningful compromise that would address looming fiscal problems. The Committee's mandate was unprecedented: its proposal would be guaranteed an up-or-down vote in both houses of Congress, immune from amendment, filibuster, and party gatekeeping obstacles. But incredibly, the Committee never offered a proposal, unable to bridge internal divisions. As the budget sequestration took effect, Peter Welch, the

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[1]An appendix with supplementary information is available at dissertation.timothyjryan.com.

representative from Vermont, remarked, "[o]ne hundred percent of Congress opposed it, and we're doing it. That's a sign of a dysfunctional institution" (quoted in Weisman 2013, A3).

This chapter examines pressures that come to bear on political compromises through the "electoral connection" (Mayhew 1974). I entertain the idea that, separate from policy preferences, citizens have meaningful opinions about the style in which their representatives should act: whether they should cooperate with opponents, bargain over policy, and, in a word, compromise. Understanding the citizen-level substrates of elites' approaches toward political compromise is important because elite behavior exhibits some novel—and potentially problematic—characteristics. As the episode above highlights, stalemates are sometimes resolved by postponing the underlying issues, rather than through bargaining. Other impasses, such as the 2013 shutdown of the federal government, evoke brinksmanship, even though this strategy's strongest advocates arguably injured their own policy objectives (Ball 2013). These occurrences are less puzzling if there are citizens who, at least on some topics, have a reflexive aversion to compromise—one that plays out in their evaluations of candidates and policy proposals.

The possibility that citizens approach the idea of political compromise in characteristic ways is certainly not preordained, as existing studies find citizens' opinions about procedural matters to be relatively undeveloped. For instance, citizens do not seem to exhibit firm opinions on the desirability of divided government (Geer et al. 2004; Nicholson 2005). Teaching constitutional principles such as due process and freedom of expression does little to increase support for civil liberties (Green et al. 2011). More broadly, it is easy to imagine opinions about compromise being epiphenomenal—emerging backwards out of partisan or other attachments (Harbridge, Malhotra and Harrison 2012; Sniderman et al. 1986). Then again, the idea of political compromise has certain characteristic features. It implies the possibility of material gain, if one allows a rival also to gain. It implies that each of two parties will make a concession about something they care about. The word often has a positive connotation, as it is associated with progress, although it can also be a synonym for 'selling out,' as when one compromises a worthy principle (cf. Margalit 2009).

To the extent the idea of political compromise has regularity, we are invited to inquire how citizens' judgments about compromise are shaped by the psychological processes such judgments routinely invoke. One mental phenomenon in particular might be valuable in this respect: intuitions about right and wrong. Moral intuitions are quite distinctive in character. They engage mental systems that regulate adherence to perceived duties and prohibitions (Baron and Spranca 1997; Haidt, Koller and Dias 1993; Skitka 2010; Tetlock 2003). They orient evaluative processes away from maximizing gains and toward adherence to rules of conduct (e.g. Bennis, Medin and Bartels 2010). They evoke powerful emotions, especially toward divergent opinions (Haidt 2003b). And scholars argue that they have an evolutionary (DeScioli and Kurzban 2013; Sinnott-Armstrong 2007a; Tooby and Cosmides 2010) and neural (e.g. Berns et al. 2012; Greene et al. 2001;

Moll and de Oliveira-Souza 2007; Sinnott-Armstrong 2007*b*) basis.

This chapter leverages improvements in the conception and measurement of moral attitudes to assess the idea that they are an important input into the process by which citizens evaluate political compromises. Citizens might *typically* approach compromise in a consequentialist framework (cf. Downs 1957) in which costs and benefits of given proposals are weighed against each other. This mindset is conducive to compromise because losses in one area can be offset by gains in another. However, a subset of attitudes felt as a matter of right and wrong might be, in an important sense, beyond compromise.

I test these ideas in four studies that draw from a mixture of nationally representative and convenience samples. In Study 1, I measure the propensity to hold moralized political attitudes and find a relationship with opposition to the abstract notion compromise that is distinct from partisan and other familiar attachments. Study 2 then looks at specific compromises, comparing moralization to several other attitude characteristics in terms of how they precipitate resistance to bargains on specific issues. Study 3 examines the relationship between attitude moralization and vote choice, finding that moral conviction predicts opposition to a candidate who is expected to negotiate with political opponents. Study 4 provides subjects a benefit if they allow a political opponent also to benefit—a dynamic that captures the essence of compromise. Here, individuals with moralized political attitudes pay an actual monetary cost just to obstruct opponents' gain. Thus, I find considerable evidence that moral intuitions influence how citizens respond to compromise in real and consequential ways.

In addition to elucidating which factors undergird popular responses to political compromise, this research points to three broader takeaways. First, the study of public opinion focuses primarily on the *substantive content* of attitudes—e.g., whether citizens favor or oppose a policy proposal. However, as I review below, there are many indications that attitude intensity is a multidimensional construct. I find that different aspects of attitude intensity guide behavior in different ways, and that some of them tell us almost as much about how citizens approach politics as the substantive position a person takes. Second, political scientists have long reflected on the bounds of citizen rationality (Simon 1985). This research shows that it is constructive to restructure this question: rather than ask whether or not citizens are rational, scholars might instead examine how stimuli in the political world activate specialized, domain-specific psychological processes (cf. Cosmides and Tooby 1994). Third, this research offers a pessimistic counterpoint concerning the systemic implications of blossoming research on moral psychology. Although it has been argued that moral intuitions evolved because they are socially functional, I find reason to believe that democratic institutions are poorly suited to accommodate them, a point to which I return in the conclusion.

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The Psychology of Moral Attitudes

The idea that attitudes are multidimensional has long played a role in the study of politics. Robert Dahl's perspicuous study of democratic theory, for instance, argues that analysts need to consider two properties of an attitude separately: its content and the intensity with which it is held (1956, ch. 4). In the intervening years, psychologists enriched this perspective considerably. Attitudes differ in the extent to which they are extreme, important, elaborated, accessible, certain, conscious, and several other properties (Abelson 1988; Petty and Krosnick 1995, for helpful overviews).

A subset of attitudes engage a suite of mental processes that we experience as morality (e.g. Baron and Spranca 1997; Ditto, Pizarro and Tannenbaum 2009; Fiske and Tetlock 1997; Haidt and Kesebir 2010; Mikhail 2007; Skitka, Bauman and Sargis 2005).[2] These attitudes are perceived as objective and universally true—standards that others should share (Skitka 2010). They evoke moral emotions, such as guilt, disgust, and contempt (Haidt 2003b; Tangney, Stuewig and Mashek 2007). They elicit the monitoring and judgment of others' actions (Kurzban 2011, ch 9). These attitudes are likely to be extreme, but they are more than that, for only a small number of extreme attitudes are moralized. To see the difference, compare a nonmoral preference—"I don't like Brussels sprouts"—to one that, for many people, is moralized—"I don't like to clean my bathroom with an American flag." A dislike of Brussels sprouts can be arbitrarily extreme, but unlike cleaning a bathroom with a patriotic symbol, it is easier to imagine reasonable disagreement and harder to imagine someone *else's* violation inspiring anger or contempt.[3]

A distinctive characteristic of moralized attitudes is that, pitted against other attitudes, they resist processing through a cost/benefit framework (Baron and Spranca 1997; Bennis, Medin and Bartels 2010; Fiske and Tetlock 1997; Tetlock 2000; Tetlock et al. 2000). There are several vivid illustrations. For instance, dozens of studies on so-called "runaway trolley problems" present subjects with hypothetical dilemmas in which they can sacrifice one life to save several. Subjects overwhelmingly endorse doing so when it involves a non-moralized action (e.g. flipping a switch to make the trolley run on a different track) but not when it involves a moral prohibition (e.g. pushing someone off a bridge onto the train tracks) (Greene 2007a, for a review). Subjects asked whether they would open a river dam to save twenty species of fish from extinction if doing so would cause the extinction of two other species said they would not, since they would not want to "cause" the death of any species (Ritov and Baron 1999). Asked whether it would be permissible to eat a

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[2] For recent views on the evolutionary origins of moralized attitudes, see Boehm (2012); DeScioli and Kurzban (2009, 2013); Wilson and Wilson (2008). For studies that find moralized attitudes to elicit distinctive neural patterns, see Berns et al. (2012); Greene et al. (2001); Greene (2007b); Moll et al. (2002); Moll and de Oliveira-Souza (2007); Moll et al. (2005).

[3] Moralized attitudes are also distinguishable from social norms. An authority figure can lift a social norm (e.g. "Don't wear pajamas to school"), but not not a moral mandate ("Don't hit your classmate") (Smetana 1983; more broadly, see Fiddick 2004 and Turiel 1998).

family dog who died after being hit by a car, subjects express shocked revulsion, even if it is stipulated that dog meat might be delicious (Haidt, Koller and Dias 1993). Atran and colleagues find that, when it comes to negotiating over a "sacred" issue (land division between Israelis and Palestinians), incorporating material incentives into a concession backfires, *increasing* support for violent opposition (Atran, Axelrod and Davis 2007; Ginges et al. 2007).

These empirical demonstrations coincide with more commonplace observations. Barring pathological thinking, consider what benefits a genuine patriot would accept to defile his country's flag? A scientist to forge data? A law-abiding citizen to lie in court or accept an expensive gift she knew to be stolen? A religious person to vandalize her place of worship? A parent to harm his children? The obstacle to these tradeoffs is not that they are costly; it is that they *preclude considering* cost. To seriously contemplate them is, in Tetlock's (2003, 320) words, to "think the unthinkable."

Moral Attitudes in Politics

In two important ways, the new psychological synthesis concerning morality revises the political science assumptions about where moral thinking will arise. First, Converse (1964) convincingly demonstrated that most citizens do not approach the political world with developed ideological frameworks, a finding that could be taken to preclude the notion that they really think about morality. This framework, however, assumes moral convictions to be rational, deductive, and internally consistent. In contrast, recent psychological work finds moral convictions to be primarily intuitive and emotional (Haidt 2001, 2012). For instance, many subjects cannot explain *why* they believe it would be wrong to consume a family pet after it died of natural causes—they cannot articulate what principle this view derives from—but they exhibit strong negative emotional reactions to the proposition nonetheless (Haidt, Koller and Dias 1993). Thus, citizens might have moralized attitudes even if they cannot explain—or wrongly explain[4]—the basis of the moralization. In addition, moral convictions might be surprisingly detached from things often assumed to be precursors of a moral disposition, such as endorsement of certain values (e.g. egalitarianism, individualism) or religious devotion.

Second, but related, where political scientists have sought to identify a role for moral thinking in politics, they often assume that moral processing naturally coincides with specific topics, such as abortion, the death penalty, capital punishment, school prayer, or same-sex marriage (e.g. Engeli, Green-Pedersen and Larsen 2012*a*; Studlar 2001; Tavits 2007). Economic issues are assumed to evoke fundamentally different patterns

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[4]Abundant work in psychology finds people to be adept at rationalizing their intuitions on the fly (e.g. Nisbett and Wilson 1977; Uhlmann et al. 2009).

of thought, and thus to be intrinsically nonmoral (e.g. Tatalovich and Daynes 2011*a*, xxxiii). But the distinction between social and economic issues is socially constructed, not a natural kind, so there is little reason to expect it to coincide neatly with innate brain processes. Motivated by this observation, Ryan (2014), using the same measurement paradigm as described below, directly measures moral conviction on an array of both economic and noneconomic issues. In both domains, he finds tremendous individual variation in how people view any given issue on the moral dimension. In short, where political science scholarship has long considered moral attitudes to be deductive, constrained, and consistent across individuals, there is good reason to consider them as intuitive, atomized, and variable across individuals—a "fairly loose collection of intuitions, rules of thumb, and emotional responses" (Pizarro 2007, 63).

How does a particular attitude become moralized for a particular person? Although findings on this point are less certain (Skitka in press, for a discussion), there is reason to believe that social milieu can do much to inculcate convictions on specific topics (e.g. Shweder, Mahapatra and Miller 1990), an idea that, on reflection, seems to echo throughout political life. Some topics, such as collective bargaining rights, can easily be construed as a simple clash of economic interests, but seem to be moralized for some individuals (e.g. labor union members and some sympathizers). Others, such as same-sex marriage, are often cited as inherently moral, but are actually discussed in terms of expected consequences (rather than first principles) surprisingly often (Mucciaroni 2011). Additionally, there appears to be substantial variation in how topics are moralized across time and place. Smoking in public was once entirely mundane, but now inspires disgust from many Americans (Rozin 1999). Across cultures, various local taboos cause certain sexual acts, the consumption of particular foods, or the charging of interest on loans to evoke contempt and punitive sentiments in some places, but not others (e.g. Fessler and Navarrete 2003, 2004; Shweder 1994).

Political Consequences of Moralization

Moralized attitudes lead people to make surprising choices when it comes to hypotheticals such as the above-mentioned trolley, fish, and deceased pet problems, but the artificial nature of these dilemmas makes their political implications difficult to divine. It might be that intuitions about morality impose on decision making only under narrow circumstances, such as when a researcher contrives a scenario to put a desire to adhere to rules and a desire to maximize gains on a collision course. Then again, it also seems plausible that as citizens experience the everyday give and take of politics, they encounter conceptual analogs to the fish, trolley, and deceased pet problems that evoke a similar style of thinking. The idea here is that, at least for some people, there is a kind of comparability between the psychological processes invoked when one considers pushing a bystander onto hypothetical trolley tracks and certain moralized political symbols.

Exactly how moralized processing might unfold in politics is a matter ripe for investigation, and there are a number of plausible hypotheses. Perhaps political candidates who hold certain policy positions on moralized topics are especially likely to evoke disgust and contempt. Perhaps one's level of moral conviction makes the difference between the sort of citizen who cares about the political opinions of others and strives to police them, and a citizen who cares about politics, but instead adopts a "live and let live" mentality. Political scientists have long puzzled over what motivates citizens to vote despite the unlikelihood of any one ballot being pivotal (e.g. Riker and Ordeshook 1968). Perhaps the moralized flavor of certain attitudes is helpful in surmounting this apparent cost/benefit obstacle (cf. Ryan 2014).

The present work focuses on one overarching hypothesis: that moralized attitudes orient citizens to oppose political compromises. An important part of this idea is that, given how detached citizens' judgments about compromise are from tangible consequences—one vote is seldom pivotal and effects of one policy versus another are difficult to discern—compromises are frequently evaluated as symbols. They are processed as much in terms of what they stand for—gains in some areas, concessions in others—as their expected effects. I present more specific hypotheses as they relate to each empirical investigation below.

Measuring Moral Attitudes

Measuring whether an attitude is moralized presents some challenges. The problem is hard because, as I discuss above, moralization probably does not arise from any deductive belief system.[5] Moreover, given that humans have limited introspective powers and are adept at manufacturing false rationales on the fly (Nisbett and Wilson 1977), asking them to elaborate on the reasons that underlie a particular opinion is likely to generate both false positives and false negatives (Skitka and Bauman 2008, 36, for a discussion).

Linda Skitka and colleagues have developed a measurement approach that takes advantage of the fact that, although individuals lack introspective access to *reasons* for their opinions, they do seem consciously and reliably to have a visceral perception that certain attitudes have a moral basis. Their Moral Conviction measure asks subjects to report, typically on a five-point scale, "to what extent is your position on [attitude object] a reflection of your core moral beliefs and convictions" and "... connected to your beliefs about fundamental right and wrong?" This measurement approach has been validated across many studies, and been found to have discriminant validity with respect to other attitude characteristics, as well as political orientation, political extremity, and cognitive rigidity (Skitka 2010; Skitka, Bauman and Sargis 2005; Wisneski, Skitka and Morgan 2011, for discussions). Applied to an array of political attitudes, it is correlated with,

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[5]Haidt (2003a) suggests that people can develop moral attitudes through reasoning, but that it will be rare.

but distinct from, other attitude characteristics (extremity, importance, personal relevance). It distinctly predicts negative emotions—especially punitive sentiments—toward political opposition (Ryan (2012*b*)).

One question that comes up in studying how moral conviction arises in politics is the granularity with which it should be measured. On one hand, the atomized nature of moral conviction suggests that it be measured with reference to specific attitude objects, since even very similar objects seem to differ in terms of whether they are perceived as morally relevant (e.g. Haidt 2007, 999). But as Robert Abelson (1988, 270) notes, it could simultaneously be true that "[the] characteristic level of conviction on a large range of issues is an individual difference variable." Consistent with this idea, Ryan (2014) finds that individuals vary in their overall propensity to moralize political issues and that the variance predicts a "one-sided" view of politics.

For present purposes, I conceive of moral conviction much like physical fitness: a property that has some aspects that are specific (as in arm versus leg strength) and others that are general (as in people who are more or less fit). I shall measure it as a general propensity where the dependent measure is general in nature (Study 1), but with reference to specific issues where the dependent measure concerns specific issues (Studies 2–4).

Study 1 – Compromise in the Abstract

Study 1 examines compromise as a symbol, detached from particular issues. Conceived this way, Americans feel conflicted about compromise. In 2010, when the Pew Research Center asked them if they more admire "political leaders who make compromises with people they disagree with" or "political leaders who stick to their positions without compromising," 42% preferred the former and 49% preferred the latter (Pew 2010).[6] The hypothesis is that part of citizens' orientation toward political compromise comes from their propensity to develop moralized views of political issues. For individuals with a high proportion of moralized attitudes, considering compromises will habitually recruit mental systems—negative emotions and appraisals—oriented to reject compromise. Of course, one must be cognizant of the fact that opinion about the abstract notion of compromise might look markedly different from how citizens respond to specific compromises, but I postpone the latter question for studies 2–4.

Data and measures Data come from the 2012 American National Election Study (ANES) Evaluations of Government and Society Study (EGSS) February, 2012 Survey. The EGSS was administered online by Knowledge Networks (now GfK Research), which uses random-digit-dial and address-based sampling methods to construct a nationally representative panel from which samples are drawn. It has 1,314 respondents

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[6]Just a few years earlier, the split was 51% in favor of compromise, compared to 40% in favor of sticking to positions (Pew 2007), suggesting a notable increase in resistance to compromise over time.

and includes a poststratification weight designed to generalize to overall population. The analyses below are weighted to reflect the national population.

The EGSS included innovative instrumentation designed to measure individuals' propensity to moralize political issues, and to do so in a way that distinguishes moralization from a propensity to see many issues as important. Respondents were presented a list of ten political issues: the budget deficit, the war in Afghanistan, education, health care, illegal immigration, the economic recession, abortion, same-sex marriage, the environment, and unemployment. They were asked to choose which of the issues is the most important one facing the United States. Then, they were asked which issue is the least important. Finally, using one of the moral conviction questions described above, subjects' moral conviction was gauged with respect to three issues: the one deemed most important, the one deemed least important, and a randomly selected third issue. In this way, it is possible to sketch the distribution of moralization over attitudes that an individuals deems both important and unimportant. The `Propensity to moralize` measure is simply an average of the three responses ($\alpha = .70$). Wisneski et al. (2011) and Morgan et al. (2010) present validation information on this approach.

The EGSS also measured, in a style similar to the Pew surveys referenced above, attitudes about compromise. Respondents were asked, "would you prefer a U.S. president who compromises to get things done, or who sticks to his or her principles no matter what?"[7] (The two alternatives mentioned in the question were the only response options.) Then, after several intervening questions, they were asked the identical question, but with reference to "a representative in the U.S. Congress." The EGSS dataset also includes a political knowledge battery, a series of questions on religious affiliation, and standard information on respondents' partisanship, ideology, gender, age, and education. The appendix contain coding information on all measures used for analysis, as does the online Supplementary Information.[8]

There is no established understanding of what preferences and traits underlie attitudes toward political compromise. As such, Table 3.1 presents a fairly rich model that allows relationships with several familiar measures to emerge.[9] It examines whether the strength of partisan or ideological attachments lead individuals

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[7]One might worry that respondents had in mind a *specific* president (i.e. Barack Obama) as they contemplated this question. However, the question was asked in the heat of the 2012 presidential campaign, making this reading less likely. Moreover, the results in Table 3.1 find little evidence of it. (Strength of Republican identification predicts support for a compromising representative almost exactly the same as a compromising president.)

[8]The Supplementary Information is available at dissertation.timothyjryan.com.

[9]I report a multivariate model in the interest of comparing attitude moralization to other factors, as determinants of attitudes about compromise. It is worth noting, however, that the association between the `Propensity to moralize` measure and the dependent variables is not reliant on the model. In simple bivariate probit models, in which the compromise measures are regressed on the moralization measure, `Propensity to moralize` is a significant explanator of opposition to a compromising representative ($\beta = -0.396$; SE $= .169$; $p < .02$) and a marginally significant explanator of opposition to a compromising president ($\beta = -0.261$; SE $= .167$; $p < .12$).

to oppose concession. I estimate the relationship for strength of Democratic identification and strength of Republican identification separately, since these symbolic traits might have distinguishable effects. Similarly, when it comes to ideology, I allow `Liberalism` and `Conservatism` to have different slopes. On the idea that politically engaged people might be more worried about gridlock and therefore more likely to endorse compromise, I include a scale of `Political knowledge` and a self-report of how often the respondent follows whats going on in politics. On the idea that religious organizations might inculcate both moral conviction and an orientation toward political compromise, I include a self-report of whether the respondent is `Religious`. I also include gender (`Female`) and `Age` as demographic controls. All variables are scaled to run 0–1 and, as the dependent variable is binary, the model is estimated by probit.

Results Table 3.1 uncovers considerable evidence, consistent with the hypothesis, that the propensity to hold moralized political attitudes plays a role in citizens' orientation toward political compromise. Moralized attitudes significantly predict opposition a compromising president ($p<.06$) as well as a compromising representative ($p<.03$). Remarkably, the relationship between moralization and the dependent variables is larger and more consistent than the relationship for (notoriously dominant) strength of partisanship, suggesting that endorsement of political compromise might indeed be moored more strongly in visceral affective responses than these social identities.

The results point to a few other relationships worthy of note. `Political knowledge` predicts support for compromise in the expected way. `Conservatism` strongly predicts opposition to compromise, likely reflective of the fact that the survey took place against a backdrop of firm Republican opposition to policies that Democratic politicians attempted to frame as centrist. `Age` predicts support for compromise, perhaps reflective of a preference for conciliatory politics as one gets older.

I test the robustness of results in Table 3.1 in a number of ways. To examine whether the moralization relationship is specific to one partisan or ideological stripe, I estimate models in which the moralization variable is interacted with dummy variables for being a Republican and being conservative. The results are suggestive of the idea that the relationship is strongest among citizens on the right side of the political spectrum, but none of the interactions is significant (all $p > .18$). I also estimate a model that excludes the political engagement measures (`Political Knowledge` and `Follow Politics`). Confidence that the coefficient on the moralization variable is nonzero increases slightly in each case. The Supplementary Information (§1.2) reports all of these results.

Table 3.1: Propensity to Moralize Lessens Support for Compromise

	President	*Representative*
Propensity to moralize	-0.350*	-0.429**
	(0.184)	(0.189)
Dem. PID Strength	0.244	0.309
	(0.210)	(0.215)
Rep. PID Strength	-0.009	0.040
	(0.208)	(0.202)
Liberalism	-0.189	0.249
	(0.240)	(0.268)
Conservatism	-0.782***	-0.709***
	(0.217)	(0.198)
Pol. Knowledge	0.420**	0.333*
	(0.199)	(0.198)
Follow Politics	-0.151	0.026
	(0.187)	(0.189)
Religious	0.051	-0.130
	(0.132)	(0.136)
Female	-0.100	-0.042
	(0.110)	(0.112)
Age	0.964***	0.860***
	(0.266)	(0.269)
Education Strata	Included	Included
Constant	0.179	0.015
	(0.297)	(0.296)
Observations	1,045	1,045

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<.10

Weighted probit models. All variables coded 0–1. The dependent variable takes a value of 1 if the respondent prefers a politician who "compromises to get things done" and 0 if he or she prefers a politician who "sticks to his or her principles no matter what."

Study 2 – Responses to Specific Compromises

Political ideals are easier to endorse than to apply. Americans preach tolerance, but have rather more difficulty tolerating groups they dislike (Nelson, Clawson and Oxley 1997; Sullivan, Pierson and Marcus 1979). They demand general budget cuts, but balk at cuts to specific programs (Jacoby 2000). It appears to be much the same with compromise. Asked whether Republicans and Democrats should compromise on the environment, illegal immigration, federal taxes, and abortion, support never surpasses 54%, and is as low as 25%—a far cry from the 75% who say they admire political leaders who are willing to compromise (Pew 2007).

Study 2 examines what leads people not simply to endorse the idea of compromise, but to accept actual compromises. To test the distinctiveness of moral conviction, I compare it to three core aspects of attitude intensity: extremity, importance, and personal relevance. Extremity is "the degree to which the favorability of an individual's attitude diverges from neutral" (Wegener et al. 1995, 465). Importance is "a person's perception of the amount of personal importance he or she attaches to an attitude" (467) or, stated more intuitively, caring about something (Visser, Bizer and Krosnick 2006, 3). Personal relevance is "the extent to which people believe that a topic or attitude object holds significant consequences for some aspects of their lives" (470). The conceptual distinctions between these concepts is sometimes subtle, but real. We can all think of issues where the outcome little affects us, but which we care about quite deeply, or ones where we would report strongly favoring or opposing a policy alternative, without caring about it very much. Empirically the properties are correlated, but separable (Krosnick et al. 1993; Visser, Bizer and Krosnick 2006). They also have distinct consequences (e.g. Krosnick 1988b). The studies below measure them using standard approaches reviewed by Wegener et al. (1995).

Ex ante, it is not clear how different attitude characteristics should influence a person's orientation toward compromise. Pew (2007) suggests that "openness to compromise is inversely linked to the importance people place on the issue," an idea with some plausibility, although it is not clear if "importance" refers to caring about an issue, or instead having a stake in its outcome. Moreover, one can also imagine the reverse possibility: perhaps issues that are in some sense important are exactly where compromise will be *most* valued, since compromise can resolve a crippling impasse. (A senior citizen worried that political brinksmanship might forestall her Social Security benefits, or a devout student concerned that a school's policy will prevent her from praying during the day, might highly value compromise.)

The hypothesis is that different attitude characteristics relate to compromise in different ways, with moral conviction being a particularly potent obstacle to compromise.

Data and measures   I draw data from two complementary convenience samples.[10] First, a researcher visited political science course sections at a large research university and administered a questionnaire to undergraduates as part of an in-class activity (N=217). Second, a nearly identical questionnaire was administered to a somewhat larger sample (N=472) of American workers on Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk crowdsourcing service.[11] The questionnaires were administered in November and December of 2012.[12]

The questionnaires measured attitudes with respect to five political issues, which were presented in a random order: Social Security reform, collective bargaining rights, stem cell research, same-sex marriage, and the presence of American troops in Afghanistan. These issues were chosen to examine an array of topics that are both putatively moral and nonmoral.

For each issue, subjects were asked to consider two possible approaches—one identifiably liberal in character, and one conservative. For instance, the Social Security topic asked:

> *As you may know, the Social Security program in the United States is projected to run out of funds in 2033 if changes are not made. One idea that has been proposed to address the problem is to raise taxes on people currently in the work force. Alternatively, some people have proposed cutting back on the benefits the government provides future retirees. How about you? Would you prefer to see taxes raised to preserve benefits at the current level, or would you prefer to cut benefits so taxes don't have to go up?*

Preferences for one option over the other were recorded on a seven-point scale with a neutral point. To construct a measure of attitude `Extremity`, these responses were folded at the midpoint. `Importance` is measured by the follow-up question, "how important is this issue to you personally?" `Relevance` is measured by another follow-up: "how much does the outcome of this issue directly affect you?" `Moral Conviction` was measured using Skitka's moral conviction battery as applied to each issue (so five times in total).[13] The Supplementary Information reports all correlations between these measures (§2.3 and §2.4) as well as

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[10]A distinct advantage of convenience samples described here is that they permit administration of a rather long questionnaire, as is required for the within-subjects analysis below. (A within-subjects analysis means the relationships that I identify for various attitude characteristics cannot be attributed to omitted factors that vary at the individual level, such as ideology or partisanship.) Studies 3 and 4 find consistent patterns among a nationally representative sample.

[11]Evidence of Mechanical Turk's usefulness for research continues to mount (Berinsky, Huber and Lenz 2012; Buhrmeister, Kwang and Gosling 2011). Moreover, researchers continue to develop tools to address some of its liabilities (Pe'er et al. 2012). In the present study, I employ an attention check that ensures subjects are cognitively engaged in the study, as well as an html script that ensures any particular subject can only appear in the sample once.

[12]The Supplementary Information reports sample demographics (§2.1).

[13]It was measured using three questions in the student sample. For the MTurk sample, the third question was dropped to shorten the questionnaire. (Results from the student sample suggested the construct could be measured satisfactorily with two items.) Across the five issues, Cronbach's α ranges from .90 to .93 in the student sample and .85 to .92 in the MTurk sample.

a principal factor analysis finding `Moral Conviction` to be distinguishable from the other characteristics (§2.5 and §2.6). It also reports all question wordings (§2.2).

After attitudes about all five issues were recorded, subjects moved on to a new section of the survey. They were asked, without prior warning, to evaluate a plausible compromise concerning each of the already-considered issues. For instance, the Social Security prompt read

> *Please think once more about the Social Security shortfall mentioned in the previous section. As you recall, the Social Security fund will not be able to meet its obligations in the future if changes are not made. Some people propose raising taxes on people currently in the work force. Others propose cutting back on benefits the government provides to future retirees. Suppose there were a proposal in Congress to address the Social Security shortfall with a mixture of the two approaches. Some tax deductions would end and, as a result, most people would pay more. But benefits scheduled for people more than five years away from retirement would decrease, also serving to bridge the shortfall. Would you favor such a proposal, oppose it, or neither favor nor oppose it?*

Responses to these prompts were recorded on a seven-point scale that ranged from "strongly favor" to "strongly oppose."

For the primary analysis, all variables were scaled to run 0–1. To estimate the relationship for `Moral Conviction` as separated from the idiosyncrasies of a particular issue, I pool all responses and estimate (OLS):

$$\texttt{Compromise} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\texttt{Extremity} + \beta_2\texttt{Importance} + \beta_3\texttt{Relevance} + \beta_4\texttt{Moral Conviction} +$$

$$\beta_{\{5,6,7,8\}}\texttt{issue fixed effects} + \beta_{k\in\{9,10,\dots,l\}}\texttt{respondent fixed effects} + \epsilon,$$

where l is determined by the sample size.[14,15]

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[14]As in Study 1, there is a strong bivariate association between `Moral Conviction` and `Compromise`. In the student sample, simple bivariate regressions (for each issue) of `Compromise` on `Moral Conviction` find negative coefficients and p-values less than .02 (four issues) or .10 (one issue: Social Security reform). In the larger MTurk sample, all coefficients are negative and all $p<.001$.

[15]One concern with this model might be that β_4 would vary markedly if estimated separately for each issue. If this were true, a significant effect in the pooled sample could be attributable to a powerful effect within one issue that is absent in other issues. To test this possibility, I estimate a system of seemingly unrelated regressions (Greene 2008, 254) in which slopes are constrained to be equal, but also one in which slopes can vary by issue. In both datasets, the variable-slope system offers no significant improvement of fit. Moreover, when relationships are estimated separately for each issue, the coefficient on `Moral Conviction` is never positive.

Table 3.2: Moral Conviction Lessens Support for Specific Compromises

	Students	*MTurk*
Extremity	-0.187***	-0.198***
	(0.036)	(0.024)
Importance	-0.170***	-0.059*
	(0.045)	(0.033)
Relevance	-0.004	0.009
	(0.042)	(0.030)
Moral Conviction	-0.145***	-0.123***
	(0.045)	(0.029)
Issue Fixed Effects	Included	Included
Respondent Fixed Effects	Included	Included
Constant	0.646***	0.531***
	(0.032)	(0.021)
Observations (People)	1,063 (214)	2,063 (413)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<.10

OLS models. Robust standard errors, clustered at the individual level. All variables coded 0–1. The dependent variable is approval of compromise.

Results   The results, presented in Table 3.2, suggest that attitude characteristics relate to compromise in a textured way. An extreme attitude significantly predicts opposition to compromise ($p < .001$ in both samples), as does an important attitude, although the relationship is a bit more tentative ($p < .001$ for Students; $p < .08$ for MTurkers). `Relevance` exhibits no appreciable relationship to the dependent variable in either sample.

The results also support the hypothesis that moral conviction evokes opposition to compromise above and beyond other attitude characteristics, as the coefficients are highly significant in both samples. Indeed, the relationship appears to be only a bit less prominent than that between attitude `Extremity` and compromise. It is possibly *more* prominent than the relationship between attitude `Importance` and compromise, although standard errors of the estimates makes it difficult to be certain.[16]

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[16] I have conducted a number of checks on the results of Study 2. On the idea that the relationship for `Moral Conviction` is unfairly advantaged by being measured with more items, I repeat the analyses above using only one of the Moral Conviction items. The results do not change (Supplementary Information, §2.7). I also test a possible theoretical concern: that `Moral Conviction` is merely a proxy for general attitude intensity, rather than a distinct attitude characteristic. I do this in two ways. First, I estimate models in which

Thus, Study 2 finds that aspects of attitude intensity relate to compromise in different ways. Caring about an issue predicts opposition to compromise, as does the perception that one's preference is moral. On the other hand, having a personal stake in the issue has no significant relationship to judgments about compromise, a finding consistent with the apparently minor role self-interest has been found to play in political opinions (see Kinder 1998, 801, for a discussion). Whether or not an attitude is moralized seems to tell us almost as much about whether a compromise will be acceptable as knowing how extreme the attitude is.[17]

Study 3 – Compromising Politicians

Politicians' ideological reputations are quite separable from their reputations as compromisers. Of course, some politicians who are widely regarded as being ideologically extreme tout uncompromising stances. Senator Ted Cruz exhibited this approach when he told Texans, "if you're looking for an established moderate who will go to Washington and work across the aisle and compromise, and continue this spending and building the debt deeper . . . I'm not the guy" (quoted in Longview News Journal 2012). At the same time, there are many examples of ideologically committed individuals who cultivate a reputation as compromisers. Ted Kennedy was the so-called "Liberal Lion" of the Senate, but well known for a willingness to hash out bipartisan agreements, such as the No Child Left Behind Act and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. John McCain, for his part, is regarded as one of the more conservative Republican senators, regularly earning abysmal scores from Americans for Democratic Action (a liberal rating organization). But he too has earned a reputation as a compromiser, championing bipartisan legislation on campaign finance

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`Extremity` and `Importance` are combined into a summary measure of attitude intensity. `Moral Conviction` remains a highly significant explanator above and beyond this intensity measure (Supplementary Information, §2.8). I also estimate models in which `Extremity` and `Importance` are interacted, on the idea that the simultaneous combination of these two measures will identify especially intense attitudes (Supplementary Information, §2.9). For both samples, including this interaction term changes the estimated relationship and significance of `Moral Conviction` hardly at all, which is consistent with the notion that is a distinct attitude characteristic with distinct antecedents and consequences.

[17]One concern with the key result in Study 2 might be that once subjects report that they see an issue as a matter of right and wrong, their evaluations of political compromises become anchored in this *ad hoc* response—essentially that the *measurement* elicits differences in the dependent variable, rather than the underlying construct. If the key result were epiphenomenal in this way, one would expect the association between reported moral conviction and evaluations of compromise to decay over time, as subjects forget their (posited to be) offhanded and arbitrary responses on the moral conviction items. But there is evidence that the key result from Study 2 is persistent over time. Several weeks after Study 2, some of its participants were invited to meet a researcher in a lab to participate in a separate study on political conversations. That study included measures of attitudes toward compromise on some of the same issues presented in Study 2. Several weeks later, moral conviction (as measured in the earlier profile survey) remained a significant explanator of opposition to compromise (as measured weeks later) ($p < .02$). None of the other attitude strength measures were significant (all $p > .48$). The Supplementary Information (§2.10) contains details on this replication.

and immigration.

The hypothesis of Study 3 is that moralized attitudes weigh on the approach citizens like their representatives to adopt. As in Study 2, I shall be comparing moral conviction to other aspects of attitude intensity.

Data and measures Data were collected by GfK Research which, as noted in Study 1, uses random-digit-dial and address-based sampling methods to construct a nationally representative sample. The study was funded by the National Science Foundation (SES-0818839). The study was in the field from May 30 to June 10, 2013 and has 1,345 respondents. All analyses below are weighted to be reflective of the national population.

The study focused on opinions about Social Security reform. This issue was selected because it is putatively an economic issue and thus tests the idea that attitudes can become moralized on topics not typically regarded as moral. The outset of the study measured the extremity, importance, personal relevance, and moral conviction of attitudes concerning Social Security reform.[18]

After registering their opinion about Social Security reform, subjects were asked to evaluate two congressional candidates who agreed with their Social Security views. Figure 3.1 shows the question seen by respondents who opposed Social Security cuts. Respondents who supported Social Security cuts saw an alternative version that described two "fairly conservative Republicans" and listed four different policies.[19] Respondents who selected the neutral point on the stem Social Security question were randomly assigned to one of the two question versions. Additionally, for balance, the slate of positions associated with Candidate A and B was randomly assigned (such that "negotiable" was associated with Candidate A in half the cases, but always attached to the same policy). Respondents were asked how likely they would be to support each Candidate A and B in the election on a five-point scale ranging from "not at all" to "very." I subtracted one candidate's support from the other's to construct a measure of preference for the compromising politician.

Results Table 3.3 shows the results of a model (OLS) in which support for the compromising politician is regressed on measures of Social Security attitude `Extremity`, `Importance`, `Relevance`, and `Moral`

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[18]The question wordings were similar to those used in Study 2 with one improvement. In Study 2, the stem question was, in a sense, "double barreled." (This was intentional, to mimic media frames often attached to issue discussions and to prepare respondents to evaluate a compromise between dueling proposals to come later in that instrument.) In Study 3, the stem question focuses on just one proposal: decreasing Social Security benefits. All question wordings appear in the Supplementary Information (§3.1).

[19]The policies were: 1) decrease monthly payments to beneficiaries (both support); 2) increase the retirement age (both support); 3) raise taxes on the middle class (both reject); 4) raise taxes on businesses (one reject, one negotiable). Full question wordings are available in the Supplementary Information (§3.1)

Figure 3.1: Politicians Who Differ on Compromise

Next we would like your opinion on two possible candidates who might compete for their party's nomination to run for Congress. These candidates are both fairly liberal Democrats and have similar visions when it comes to Social Security, but they differ in terms of how they plan to negotiate with Republicans. Their approaches are described below. **Rejects** means this candidate will vote against *any* proposal that includes this element. **Negotiable** means the candidate dislikes this policy, but is willing to make concessions in this area if it leads to gains in others.

Policy	Candidate A	Candidate B
Increase taxes on large inheritances	Supports	Supports
Increase taxes on the wealthy	Supports	Supports
Raise the retirement age	Rejects	Rejects
Significantly decrease monthly payments	Negotiable	Rejects

Question seen by respondents who opposed Social Security cuts in Study 3. Respondents who favored cuts saw an alternative version. The slate of issue positions was randomly swapped between Candidates A and B.

Conviction.[20] Here, there is little support for the conjecture that the importance people attach to a particular issue underlies support for compromise, as Importance has no significant bearing on candidate preference. Similarly, and as before, perceived Relevance exhibits a relationship that is attributable to chance. The subjective perceptions captured by survey measures are likely the best way to measure personal relevance, but as an additional check, model (2) also examines an objective factor that is likely to bear on Social Security preferences: Income. As can be seen, this measure also does little to predict support for a compromising candidate.[21] Moralized attitudes, in contrast, seem important here—almost as important as having an extreme attitude. The relationship does not appear to vary by which side of the Social Security issue the respondent took.[22]

Study 2 examined within-subject variation of the moral conviction measure across issues. Study 3, in contrast, only examines one issue per subject. It is thus prudent to confirm that the measures of attitude

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[20]The simple bivariate relationship between preference for the compromising politician and attitude moralization is negative ($\beta = -0.219$; SE $= .024$; $p{<}.001$).

[21]Controlling for age yields similar results: Age is not significant ($p{=}.42$), and the coefficient for Moral Conviction is hardly affected.

[22]Among individuals who saw the version with liberal candidates (N=1,052), $\beta_{\text{Moral Conviction}} = -.108$; SE $= .047$; $p < .01$. Among individuals who saw the alternative version (N=293), $\beta_{\text{Moral Conviction}} = -.073$; SE $= .060$; $p < .23$.

intensity are not simply standing in for a more familiar individual-level characteristic: partisanship. Thus, model (3) controls for strength of partisanship (estimated separately for Republicans and Democrats). It also controls for frequency of church attendance, addressing a concern that moral conviction might simply be a proxy for religiosity. Including these measures barely changes the estimate of the relationship for moral conviction. The results thus strongly support the notion that different attitude characteristics weigh on support for compromise in different ways, and that moralized attitudes evoke resistance to compromise.

Study 4 – Paying to Oppose Compromise

Study 3 finds a link between moralized attitudes and opposition to a compromising politician. One reason the possibility of such a link is noteworthy is that to oppose a compromising politician can be self-defeating. Recall, for instance, Indiana's 2012 Republican senatorial primary election, where voters selected Richard Mourdock, who was sharply critical of bipartisanship and compromise (e.g. Pegram 2012; Weinger 2012), over incumbent Richard Lugar. Where the centrist Lugar was widely regarded as unbeatable in a general election—he won his 2006 race with 87% of the vote—Mourdock would lose to Democrat Joe Donnelly, generating a result presumably even more undesirable to Mourdock's supporters.[23] More recently, many see the hard line that the Republican Party took during the 2013 fiscal crisis as having damaged its standing with several constituencies, and for little by way of policy concessions (Ball 2013). Study 4 provides a direct test of the idea that moral conviction leads citizens to forsake even concrete benefits. It does so by presenting subjects with an opportunity to receive a payment, but only if they allow an issue opponent also to gain.

The test has broader significance. Researchers have noted that turnout among moderate voters has declined in recent years (Abramowitz 2011; Prior 2007). This phenomenon is not sufficient to explain outcomes such as Richard Lugar's defeat, since even extreme voters, to the extent they have foresight, should be able to anticipate the self-defeating consequences of their actions.[24] Against the backdrop of moral psychology, however, the phenomenon makes more sense, as moralized attitudes orient behavior toward adhering to rules, rather than maximizing gains.[25]

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[23]This result is not a one-off case attributable to inept campaigning by Mourdock. Using a regression discontinuity design focused on close U.S. House nomination races, Hall (2013) finds that when an extremist wins his or her party's nomination, the likelihood that the party will win the seat decreases by 38-46 percentage points.

[24]Cox (1997) argues that voters have the capacity for such strategic foresight although, consistent with the argument here, they apply it unevenly.

[25]Or, to state the proposition in the parlance of utility theory, agents' revealed preferences reflect very high utility for rule-adherence—to an extent difficult to outpace with material gains.

Table 3.3: Moralized Attitudes Predict Opposition to Compromising Politicians

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Extremity	-0.130***	-0.130***	-0.127***
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Importance	-0.032	-0.032	-0.031
	(0.049)	(0.048)	(0.048)
Relevance	-0.024	-0.024	-0.026
	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.040)
Moral Conviction	-0.108***	-0.109***	-0.103***
	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.032)
Income	–	-0.001	–
	–	(0.034)	–
Dem PID Str.	–	–	-0.047
	–	–	(0.029)
Rep PID Str.	–	–	-0.059**
	–	–	(0.028)
Church attendance	–	–	0.038
	–	–	(0.024)
Constant	0.587***	0.588***	0.601***
	(0.018)	(0.028)	(0.025)
Observations	1,306	1,306	1,306

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<.10

Weighted Least Squares models. All variables coded 0–1. The dependent variable is support for a compromising congressional candidate minus support for a candidate who opposes compromise.

Figure 3.2: Measuring Willingness to Accept Benefits

Next, we would like to offer you the possibility of receiving a payment of bonus points. (This payment is above and beyond the baseline amount you are receiving to complete this survey.) You can choose an amount to receive from the list below and GfK will credit your KnowledgePanel account with points worth the amount you choose. The catch is that, for whatever amount you choose, a donation will also be made to the Tea Party Patriots, an organization whose supporters strongly support cuts to Social Security benefits.

Select one answer only

Choice	You receive		Tea Party Patriots receives
A	$0	☐	$0.00
B	$1	☐	$0.50
C	$2	☐	$2.00
D	$3	☐	$3.50
E	$4	☐	$5.00

Willingness to Accept (WTA) measure posed to individuals who oppose cuts to Social Security. Individuals who favor cuts saw an alternative formulation in which "Progressive Change Campaign Committee" is substituted for Tea Party Patriots.

Data and measures   Data come from the same instrument described in Study 3. After registering their Social Security attitudes, subjects were invited to receive a monetary benefit, but with a tradeoff. Figure 3.2 shows the dilemma posed to individuals who oppose cuts to Social Security benefits (as well as a random half of individuals who chose the neutral point on the stem question). All other respondents saw an alternative formulation in which a donation would be made to "the Progressive Change Campaign Committee (PCCC), an organization whose supporters strongly oppose changes to Social Security benefits."[26] The effort is to construct a measure of subjects' Willingness to Accept (WTA) benefits.[27]

As can be seen in the figure, the response options in the WTA measure were chosen with attention to their symbolic meaning. Option E provides maximum benefit to the subject and is thus the alternative that would be expected under at least some formulations of a Downsian / *homo economicus* perspective. Option C would be chosen by individuals who are willing to accept benefits as long as they are not exceeded by the

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[26]The Supplementary Information (§4.1) shows the PCCC version of the WTA measure.

[27]Baron and Spranca (1997) note that WTA is similar to the more commonly used Willingness to Pay (WTP), but has some advantages for studies of moralized attitudes. WTP is constrained by one's resources, but individuals can *decline* an arbitrarily large sum of money. Moreover, because WTA frames "no moral violation" as the status-quo, it more clearly characterizes the acceptance of benefits as a kind of complicity.

Table 3.4: Responses to WTA Measure

	Tea Party Version	PCCC Version
$0.00 / $0.00	65.4%	44.0%
$1.00 / $0.50	5.1	9.8
$2.00 / $2.00	6.6	10.6
$3.00 / $3.50	1.9	3.3
$4.00 / $5.00	21.0	32.2
Total	100.0	100.0

Survey-weighted proportions choosing each response option for the WTA measure, depending on the disliked group. (Individuals opposing Social Security cuts gave benefits to the Tea Party. Individuals supporting cuts gave benefits to the PCCC. Individuals with a neutral preference regarding cuts were randomly assigned to either formulation.)

disliked group. Option B would be attractive to individuals who are willing to gain as long as their gains outpace those given to the disliked group. Option A would be attractive to individuals who would accept no benefit whatsoever, if it implies that a disliked group will gain.

Results   Table 3.4 shows the distribution of responses to the WTA measure, depending on whether the disliked group was the Tea Party or the PCCC. As can be seen, the vast majority of respondents choose one of the extreme options, either maximizing their benefits, or accepting no benefits at all. Eschewing all benefits is clearly the most popular response.

Table 3.5 examines what predicts responses to the WTA measure. Because each response option has its own symbolic meaning, I estimate relationships by ordered probit.[28] Exactly parallel to Study 3, I estimate three models. Model (1) examines subjective perceptions alone. Model (2) includes an objective measure of personal relevance: respondents' income. Model (3) accounts for partisanship and frequency of church attendance.[29]

The pattern of results follows that seen in previous studies. The relationship for Extremity is large in each

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[28]I have also examined how attitude characteristics bear on WTA responses by a multinomial logit model, which does not presume a particular order among the response options. With acceptance of benefits as the excluded category, Moral Conviction significantly predicts rejection of all benefits ($\beta = .763$; SE=.382, p<.05), as does Extremity ($\beta = .905$; SE=.316; p<.01). No other measures are significant. The only measure that significantly (p<.05) predicts another choice is Importance as a predictor of accepting $1.00 ($\beta = -1.981$; SE=.987; p<.05).

[29]The simple bivariate relationship (estimated by ordered probit) between acceptance of monetary benefits and Moral Conviction is negative ($\beta = -0.718$; SE $= 0.138$; p<.001).

Table 3.5: Who Pays to Oppose Compromise?

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Extremity	-0.525***	-0.525***	-0.504***
	(0.149)	(0.148)	(0.151)
Importance	0.115	0.105	0.098
	(0.259)	(0.257)	(0.262)
Relevance	-0.227	-0.231	-0.235
	(0.201)	(0.202)	(0.203)
Moral Conviction	-0.342*	-0.345*	-0.386**
	(0.193)	(0.192)	(0.194)
Income	–	-0.254	–
	–	(0.184)	–
Dem PID Str.	–	–	-0.155
	–	–	(0.158)
Rep PID Str.	–	–	0.270*
	–	–	(0.160)
Church attendance	–	–	0.159
	–	–	(0.124)
Observations	1,284	1,284	1,284

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<.10

Weighted ordered probit models. The dependent variable is acceptance of benefits. Coefficients for ordered probit cut points are not displayed (but see Supplementary Information, §4.2).

specification. The relationships for Importance and Relevance are smaller and attributable to chance. As above, there is considerable evidence that moralized attitudes are inimical to compromise.[30] The relationship appears more potent than that for Importance or Relevance, and controlling for partisanship confirms that taking account of moral conviction explains something new about which citizens accept economic benefits.

The possibility of mutual gain is the very essence of compromise. That some individuals forego benefits simply to deprive a disliked group from benefiting represents a meaningful obstacle to the way pluralistic government is hoped to resolve conflicts.

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[30]The p values for Moral Conviction in each of the three models are .08, .07, and .05, respectively.

Discussion and Conclusion

It has been argued that political compromise is hard because so many pressures of winning and holding office collide with the imperative to govern (Gutmann and Thompson 2012). If a politician exhibits nuance on the issues, she risks failing to distinguish herself from the opposition. If she revises her views, she is branded a "flip-flopper." If she admits a reasonable basis to her opponent's perspective, she can be accused of equivocation. If she too early signals a willingness to bargain, she weakens her negotiating position.

This chapter lends credence to the idea that campaign pressures work against compromise while showing that opposition comes from specific quarters. There is no obvious explanation for some acts of political intransigence: why citizens would eschew even the abstract idea of compromise, why they would reject proposals from which they could benefit, and why some would rather, in Morris Fiorina's phrasing, "lose with their candidate than win with a moderate" (quoted in Roberts 2013).[31] I find evidence consistent with the idea that these strange patterns have a basis in people's moral psychology, which has the potential to baffle cost/benefit calculus and render concession unthinkable. At the same time, I find that attitudes can be intense in ways that nonetheless do permit concession and tradeoff. (Witness the results for `Relevance` and, with one exception in Study 2, `Importance`.)

Is moral conviction the sort of miraculous missing variable that crops up from time to time, with implications asserted to be sweeping and profound? Social scientists are rightly skeptical of such arguments, but that is expressly not that case I advance here. Instead, I have argued that by measuring moral conviction, it is possible to identify attitudes controlled by specialized, species-typical mental programs that regulate adherence to social rules (cf. DeScioli and Kurzban 2013). Such programs are hypothesized to have some outputs, but not others. They precipitate adherence to perceived rules, even in the face of gains—a common element of the tests above. But other investigations have called attention to important texture in the outputs of moral conviction. It is associated with punitive negative emotions (e.g. anger), but much less so with non-punitive negative emotions (e.g. fear) and positive emotions (e.g. respect) (Ryan 2014).

As the epigraph at the outset is intended to remind, I am not the first to sense a connection between a moral mindset and acceptance of political compromise, but the argument here is new nonetheless.[32] Past work suggests that moral thinking is particular to certain issues, stemming from either the issue's essential characteristics (e.g. Engeli, Green-Pedersen and Larsen 2012a) or perhaps the frames issue advocates use (e.g. Mooney 2001a). I suggest, in contrast, that attitudes differ in terms of whether they are imbued with moral significance, and that moral significance in turn is an input into revealed preferences. As a

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[31]For a fuller discussion of such puzzling behavior from political extremists, see Fiorina (1999).

[32]See also Ellis and Kasniunas (2011, 86); Lowi (2011, xiii); Mooney and Schuldt (2008, 199); Mucciaroni (2011, 192); Smith (2002, 387).

corollary, I argue (and find) that its implications are more far-reaching than previously realized. Economic and noneconomic issues alike are vulnerable to moralization, along with the difficult politics that accompany it.

The studies above have an additional, broader takeaway that concerns the utility for public opinion research of disassembling attitudes into their constitutive elements. As I note above, this approach is relatively uncontroversial within psychology circles. Political scientists, though, are less prone to think beyond the substantive content of an attitude.[33] This might be because measuring other aspects of attitudes is expensive in terms of questionnaire length. In other cases, reducing the underlying psychological dynamics into a single issue-level or even person-level (i.e. ideological) ideal point might be a workable simplification for questions at hand (e.g. Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2013). But psychologists increasingly recognize cognition as a collection of domain-specific computational programs (Pinker 1999), an insight that has already helped enrich understanding of public opinion (Petersen 2012; Petersen and Aarøe 2013).[34] Paying separate attention to different features of attitude strength is a potential bridge between these new approaches and existing literatures.

Is there a link between moral conviction and the acrimonious state of American politics? The recent development of survey measures of moral conviction make it difficult to examine dynamics over time, but there is reason to think so. As others have argued, compared to past years, elections now see more participation from strong partisans, less from moderates (Abramowitz 2011; Prior 2007). This shift does not, in itself, explain opposition to compromise, since partisans can benefit from compromises just as much as nonpartisans. But if partisanship correlates with attitudes that are more extreme and moralized—and as Ryan (2014) notes, it does—then candidates' fates increasingly depend on citizens who have a mindset hostile to bipartisanship, negotiation, and compromise. Even for politicians who have policy objectives and want to forge pragmatic bargains across the aisle, the temptation to adopt a black and white or "Manichaean" view on politics may be greater than it once was.

Fully understanding the systemic implications of moral conviction requires answers to two additional questions. First, what factors cause moral conviction to develop and change? Unfortunately, this question probably does not have a succinct answer (as in, "it comes from media exposure"). For instance, investigations into the origins of attitude importance, which have a longer history, point to a complex interaction of other subtly different psychological processes, such as social identification, value relevance, and attitude

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[33]But for some exceptions, see Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus (2013, 73); Krosnick (1988a); McGraw, Lodge and Stroh (1990).

[34]Here, "cognition" refers to all information processing performed by the human nervous system, not, as is sometimes the case, the subset of slow mental processes that contrast with emotional or affective processes (cf. Greene et al. 2004, 389).

accessibility (Visser, Bizer and Krosnick 2006). Moral conviction likely has a similarly complex web of antecedents. Nevertheless, it is possible to describe some of its features in broad strokes. Infants as young as three months old exhibit an ability to distinguish prosocial and antisocial behavior, and a distaste for the latter (Hamlin, Wynn and Bloom 2010). By the age of eight months, they have a rudimentary sense of justice and retribution, liking puppets who punish antisocial (but not prosocial) puppets (Hamlin et al. 2011). This is almost certainly too early in development for the preference to have been socialized, so *some* aspects of moral psychology—both content (what counts as wrong?) and responses (wrongdoers get punished)—are intuitive and innate. And yet not all are. That (as I and others note) the sense of which actions are prohibited and required varies within and across communities demonstrates as much. As Paul Bloom (2013) notes, so do instances of moral persuasion, as when someone changes views on animal rights, and moral sea-changes, such as the perception that slavery is wrong or that democratic government is a right. Even if the first draft of morality is hard-wired, the system appears to be "open input" and subject to revision.

Where research in psychology has focused on micro-level processes that undergird the acquisition of moral conviction,[35] there is room for complementary studies that focus more on sociological factors. It has been conjectured, for instance, that an important antecedent of moral attitudes is association with communities that share common goals (Bloom 2013; Haidt 2012). The idea is testable with existing survey methods, and such an investigation could provide evidence about *which* communities and why.

The second question—subtly but importantly distinct from the matter of origins—is what factors might activate, versus stifle, the effects of moral conviction? Investigations into the political consequences of racial attitudes have derived at least as much purchase from examining how cues activate and deactivate racial attitudes, as they have from identifying the antecedents of racial attitudes (e.g. Valentino, Hutchings and White 2002). As concerns moral psychology, there is evidence that subtle changes to ethical dilemmas have a large effect on which mental systems process them (i.e., systems more or less associated with moral responses) (Greene 2007a). There is also evidence that political rhetoric varies in the extent to which it taps moral values, with important effects (Clifford and Jerit 2013; Marietta 2012). The relative difficulty of activating, versus changing, moral conviction bears on how it will play out in politics. If activation is relatively easier than change, for instance, it suggests a different kind of constraint on elite behavior: elites would be able to stoke moral conviction where it already exists, but would be bound by the broader sociological forces (e.g. population replacement) that cause moral convictions to evolve over time.

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[35]For instance, Wisneski and Skitka (2013) induce disgust with either conscious or subconscious images and examine effects on moral conviction. They find that emotions are an important antecedent to moralization, but that conscious processing is also required.

Finally, it is worth a moment to reflect on the functionality of moral intuitions. Scholars focused on the evolutionary origins of morality suggest that it is an important glue that makes human social life possible (e.g. Ridley 1996; Wright 1994). Moral intuitions can evoke altruism and make humans sensitive to fairness considerations. Morality's basis in rules sets clear expectations for how others will behave, and thereby makes it possible for humans to coordinate and cooperate in ways that other species cannot.[36] As Haidt and Kesebir put it (2010, 808), "[m]oral thinking is for social doing." In this perspective, moral intuitions might *increase* the likelihood of compromise, since compromise is crucial to social cooperation. That the evidence suggests quite the opposite highlights the importance of paying attention to how psychological processes scale and interact with political institutions. Moral intuitions are believed to have evolved in small homogeneous groups, where candidate rules could be subject to negotiation and debate, and where they would constitute public knowledge (DeScioli and Kurzban 2013, 485). Shifting focus from small groups to whole societies, there is reason to believe some moral intuitions (e.g. a general disapproval of lying) indeed generalize (Shweder 2012), but others are exposed as local norms specific to individual communities. When norms of the latter type differ and clash, they are a potent force undergirding political intransigence.

Is compromise good? Not necessarily. Not always. The argument for compromise rests on its instrumental, not its moral, value. Compromises can be bad or good, and we need not stipulate which ones are which to see that if a political order systematically resists compromise, if its leaders insist that only one outcome can be consistent with ideals, if every disagreement amounts to an impasse, it is sure to incubate bitterness and resentment. It is part of wisdom to recognize that pluralistic society asks its citizens to put certain political values—tolerance, mutual respect, stability—before commitment to any more provincial view. In this, one finds new prescience in James Q. Wilson's (1967, 45) fear for "the time when politics is seized with the issue [of morality]. Our system of government cannot handle matters of that sort (can any democratic system?) and it may be torn apart by the effort."

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[36]As Tomasello et al. note, although chimpanzees have complex social structures and an ability to develop tools, "it is almost unimaginable that two chimpanzees might spontaneously do something as simple as carry something together" (2005, 685).

Chapter 4:

Unthinkable! How Citizens with Moralized Attitudes Process Political Arguments[1]

Abstract

Recent work in psychology demonstrates 1) that moral conviction is a dimension of attitude intensity distinct from others and 2) that the mind has a mode of processing that downweights considerations of costs and benefits, in favor of a focus on rules. Across three studies, I show that these two findings are linked, and in ways that bear on mass politics. Moral conviction reflects a style of processing that is unresponsive to costs and benefits. As such, when citizens have morally convicted attitudes, they reject arguments that emphasize costs and benefits of particular policies, and they do not shift their opinions in response to disconfirming information. These patterns elucidate mechanisms and conditionality involved in phenomena discussed under the rubric of "motivated reasoning."

Death penalty opponents draw on more than one kind of argument to support their views. For some, the issue is a matter of the policy's effects. The American Civil Liberties Union engages the issue in these terms in one of its publications: "The death penalty has no deterrent effect. Former claims that each execution deters a certain number of murders have been thoroughly discredited by social science research" (American Civil Liberties Union 2007, 2). Because of the nature of the argument, if credible new research came to light showing that the death *does* deter crime, the ACLU might be compelled to revisit its stance. Other death penalty opponents put effects of the policy in the background and base their opposition on the intrinsic characteristics of the issue. One commentator in an online forum explained his opposition this way: "[The death penalty] is just another word for revenge, and the desire for revenge is one of the lowest human emotions" (Schroth 2008). This individual likely would not feel obliged to lessen his opposition, even if it were to become clear that the death penalty is an effective deterrent.

Philosophers have a word for the second kind of argument: it is *deontological.*[2] Where some ethical theories focus on the consequences of actions, deontological ethics revolves around rules that are indifferent

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[1] An appendix with supplementary information is available on at dissertation.timothyjryan.com.

[2] To steer clear of jargon, I might have said that it is 'principled' or 'based on values.' But there are consequential differences between deontology and these substitutes, and going forward, precision requires 'deontological.'

to consequences. Lying, a strict deontologist might argue, is wrong by its very nature, with the results it brings about—did the lie save a life?—being quite beside the point (Kant [1785] 1964). Of course, very few citizens know what deontology means. Their understanding of even the broad terms liberal and conservative is crude at best (Converse 1964), and deontology is an even more sophisticated concept.

This chapter argues that despite citizens' general ignorance of deontology as a grand ethical theory, they are, under predictable circumstances, intuitive deontologists. They exhibit the behaviors characteristic of a deontological mindset: a preference for arguments cast in terms of rules and obligations, a resistance to considering the costs and benefits of specific policies, and an unwillingness to modify their opinions in the face of disconfirming evidence.

It might seem strange to suggest that deontology is not only an ethical theory, but also a natural mode of psychological processing. In fact, as I review below, the proposition has strong grounding in neuroscience and evolutionary theory. Numerous studies in psychology vividly illustrate a deontological style of thinking in humans. Thus, the advance I offer here is not to show its existence. Rather, the contributions are 1) to show how deontological processing is identifiable as a function of aspects of attitude strength, and 2) to test the extent to which deontological processing bears on citizens' everyday interactions with the political world. I find that it bears powerfully, leading to a wholly different approach to thinking about persuasive arguments. Deontological processing makes the difference between a citizen who yields to disconfirming facts, and one who persists in his or her views despite disconfirmation.

Developing this argument requires a careful review of evidence that deontological processing is a real psychological mode, and attention to what its characteristics might be. I provide this below before turning to empirical work that examines how deontological processing works in politics. Studies 1 and 2 validate the concept and show how it relates to the consciously accessible perception that a given political issue is a matter of right and wrong. Then, study 3 turns to attention to how citizens assimilate political information. I find that citizens who are processing deontologically hold firm in their opinions, even when undermined by clear evidence. I close by noting the limitations of inferences that can be drawn from this set of studies, and provide an agenda for additional testing of this theory.

What Is Deontological Processing?

It is well known that human cost/benefit calculations embody a multitude of inconsistencies, deficiencies, and biases. Cost/benefit judgments depend on the words used to describe a tradeoff, even if the words present a logically equivalent choice (Kahneman and Tversky 2000). Individuals are likely to settle for a choice that satisfies some minimum criterion, rather than the one that maximizes benefits (Krosnick 2000;

Simon 1956). They are more likely to assent to a moderate proposal when it is preceded by an outlandish proposal (Cialdini et al. 1975). The list of peculiarities is so large that it has spurred the development of an entire subfield at the intersection of psychology and economics (Diamond and Vartianinen 2007).

One class of departures from straightforward cost/benefit analysis is characterized by a focus on obligations and prohibitions (Bennis, Medin and Bartels 2010). People perceive certain actions as obligatory or impermissible, even when adhering to the rule comes at a steep cost. The most ubiquitous demonstration of this dynamic comes from a cottage industry of studies on so-called 'trolley problems,' which present subjects with dilemmas in which they must decide whether it is permissible to sacrifice one (or some other small number) of lives to save a larger number. Holding the number of lives constant, choices are shown to vary hugely depending on secondary features of the scenario, such as whether the utility-maximizing choice requires pushing a large person, versus flipping a switch (Mikhail 2009, 32-35, for an overview). The inference is that some actions (such as pushing a person) trigger a deontological mode of processing that is blind to consequences.[3]

There are numerous vivid demonstrations of a deontological mode of processing. Ask subjects how much money they would accept to violate certain taboos, such as to "slap your father in the face (with his permission) as part of a comedy skit" or "get a blood transfusion of 1 pint of disease-free, compatible blood from a convicted child molester," and many say there is no amount of money they would accept (Graham, Haidt and Nosek 2009). Ask them if they would open up a river dam to save twenty species of fish, if it meant killing two species of fish, and many say they would not, since they would not want to 'cause' the death of any species (Ritov and Baron 1999). Ask them to contemplate a (fictitious) bill that would legalize the buying and selling of adoption rights for children in need of parents, and they exhibit outrage and seek moral cleansing (Tetlock et al. 2000). Ask Israelis and Palestinians to contemplate hypothetical peace settlements for the Middle East conflict, and adding a monetary enticement to otherwise equivalent proposals *increases* support for political violence (Ginges et al. 2007).

The case for thinking of deontological processing as a distinctive type is bolstered by convergent evidence from outside of social psychology. Evolutionary psychologists argue that having mental programs to encode rules for social conduct would solve small group coordination problems that existed in our evolutionary past, and that these programs would have many of the properties associated with deontological processing

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[3]It is possible to take the 'blind to consequences' proposition too far. Parallel mental processes can generate contradictory outputs, as when a person's long-run desire to lose weight clashes with the short-run desire to eat cake (Kurzban 2011). The brain has superordinate programs that resolve such conflicting representations (Cosmides and Tooby 2000). To be more precise about my proposition, it is not that deontological processing leads to preferences that are completely blind, such that they would not respond at all to any amount of costs (cf. Tetlock et al. 2000, Experiment 2), but rather that the mind has a mode of processing in which the focus on cost/benefit calculations is downweighted substantially.

(e.g. impartiality and motivations to police the rule-relevant behavior of others) (DeScioli and Kurzban 2009, 2013). Cognitive scientists argue that mental systems for processing deontological rules use much of the same computational mental architecture as the systems that process language (Mikhail 2007). Neuroscientists find that contemplating 'sacred values' does not activate the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, a brain region associated with utility calculations. Instead, it activates the temporoparietal junction, a region associated with the processing of semantic rules (Berns et al. 2012). Reviewing cross-disciplinary evidence, neuroscientist Joshua Greene writes that, "consequentialist and deontological views of philosophy are not so much philosophical inventions as they are philosophical manifestations of two dissociable psychological patterns, two different ways of moral thinking, that have been part of the human repertoire for thousands of years" (Greene 2007a, 37–38).

A clarification is in order. To argue that rule-based (deontological) processing is a natural kind is not to argue that every person's brain has encoded the same rules. Instead, most researchers expect the relevant mental programs to be 'open-input.' As with the mental programs that process language, there is innate structure—slots for nouns and verbs, or obligations and prohibitions—but the content will vary by context (Pinker 2000). Thus, just as different groups have different languages, their brains encode different actions as obligatory or prohibited. Consistent with this notion, anthropologists looking cross-culturally find some points of convergence in terms of which actions are processed deontologically, but also tremendous variety (Bloom 2013, 14–18; Shweder 1994, 2012).

Why Deontological Processing Matters in Mass Politics

One of the core justifications for democratic politics is that citizens can change government's course in response to new information as it becomes available. This is not to say that citizens attend to politics in an especially sophisticated or impressive way. We know they do not (Converse 1964; Delli-Carpini and Keeter 1997), but also that a small amount of information can suffice to keep leaders in check and rein in government's excesses (Fiorina 1981; Lupia 1994; MacKuen, Erikson and Stimson 1989). Conceptually, deontological processing represents a stark departure from the ideal of a responsive citizen. If a person has a deontological commitment to a particular policy, it would not matter if the policy were revealed to produce an undesired effect, or to come at a steep cost; deontology is, by definition, indifferent to consequences. To paint a stylized picture, the deontologically committed citizen is the one willing to 'stay the course' on a given policy well after it has failed.

Deontological processing might relate to biases discussed under the heading of 'motivated reasoning' (Lodge and Taber 2000). The idea underpinning motivated reasoning is that people are motivated to man-

ufacture counterarguments that nullify or countervail unwelcome facts. They accept attitudinally congruent information readily, but think hard about weaknesses in uncongenial revelations (Redlawsk 2002) and actively seek out information with which to refute them (Taber and Lodge 2006). The impetus to engage in motivated reasoning is thought to arise from a person's position on an issue and the intensity with which that position is held (Taber and Lodge 2006). The research reviewed above hints at a possible connection between deontological processing and variance in the extent of motivated reasoning: people might be especially resistant to information that pushes against rule-based attitudes. But a focus on deontological processing also advises investigating the relationship in a particular way. Where the motivated reasoning scholarship suggests attention to generalized attitude intensity, there might need to be attention to more finely-grained aspects of attitudes. After all, matters of taste can be intense, but are still processed through a cost/benefit framework. (A person might intensely dislike Brussels sprouts, but still be willing to eat some in exchange for a moderate sum of money.) The next section proposes an intimate link between deontological processing and the human psychological experience of morality.

Deontology and Morality

Public opinion scholars tend to think of (and measure) attitudes as a unidimensional construct. An attitude, in this approach, is a person's general valence toward some object—a political candidate, a policy proposal, or something else. The emphasis is on *position* or *substantive content*. Occasionally, public opinion researchers go one step further and examine secondary attitude attributes, such as (holding substantive content constant) the extent to which a person cares about the attitude object in question (e.g. Dahl 1956, ch. 4; Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus 2013, 73; Krosnick 1988*a*; McGraw, Lodge and Stroh 1990).

The study of public opinion has benefited from the simplified conception of an attitude, as it allows general aggregate trends to emerge more clearly (e.g. Carmines and Stimson 1989)—but it is a simplification. Psychology has accumulated ample evidence that attitude intensity comes in many different flavors, each with distinct antecedents and consequences (Krosnick et al. 1993; Petty and Krosnick 1995; Visser, Bizer and Krosnick 2006, for overviews). Attitudes differ in the extent to which they are extreme, personally relevant, accessible, elaborated, and many other characteristics.

One aspect of attitude intensity, it is now clear, is moral conviction. This insight comes from the work of Linda Skitka and colleagues who, through an extensive research program, developed and validated instrumentation to measure moral conviction (Skitka, Bauman and Sargis 2005; Skitka 2010, for overviews of this work). The approach—common in the attitude intensity literature (e.g. Wegener et al. 1995)—is to administer questions that follow up an initial question about a person's position on some topic. For the

Moral Conviction battery, the two follow up questions posed to a respondent are to what extent his or her position on [attitude object] is "a reflection of your core moral beliefs and convictions?" and "connected to your beliefs about fundamental right and wrong?"[4] Measured this way, moral conviction is a *sui generis* attitude characteristic. It is correlated with other aspects of attitude intensity, but the correlations are moderate, and attitudes that are intense in other ways meaningfully vary in terms of whether or not they are held with moral conviction (2014).

One appealing aspect of the Moral Conviction battery, as compared to other measurement efforts in moral psychology, is how finely it parses moral cognition. It looks for the face valid perception that something is a matter of right and wrong—and nothing more. This is for the best. Other work stipulates properties that certain moralized attitudes would have. For instance, Turiel (1998) suggests that they would be perceived as objectively true, universal, and not susceptible to being suspended by an authority figure. Graham and colleagues suggest that moral intuitions emerge because of conceptual linkages to a small number of 'foundations,' such as harm and purity considerations (Graham, Haidt and Nosek 2009; see also Haidt 2012). The Moral Conviction battery has more modest ambitions. It suggests only that the perception of a tie to right and wrong is distinct and can be measured. It then entertains implications of this perception as hypotheses to be tested.[5]

The conjecture that guides the present chapter is that attitudes perceived as a matter of right and wrong are processed deontologically. The relationship is not foreordained. Consequentialism (deontology's foil) is an equally proud tradition in the philosophical study of morality (e.g. Bentham [1776] 1988; Mill [1863] 1906). There is no logical error in supposing that citizens develop moral convictions in favor of or against some policies because they perceive the policies to have liked or disliked effects. Indeed, it would be in keeping with substantial research finding consciously accessible opinions, and the justifications offered for them, to follow reflexively from affect toward outcomes (Bargh and Chartrand 1999; Nisbett and Wilson 1977). I take no issue with psychological models of automaticity, but suggest that, with respect to morality, they work in a different way: attitude objects tagged for deontological processing will be perceived as a matter of right and wrong.[6]

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[4]As applied, these two items are so highly correlated as to be almost indistinguishable from each other. Cronbach's α statistics are generally above .9 (e.g. Skitka and Morgan 2014).

[5]One potential measurement approach that would be especially inappropriate for assessing the connection, proposed here, between moral conviction and deontology is Tetlock and colleagues' measure of "sacred values" (e.g. Tetlock 2003; Tetlock et al. 2000). The Sacred Value Protection Model is a pioneering and invaluable contribution. But sacred values are defined as those "that a moral community treats as possessing transcendental significance that precludes comparisons [and] tradeoffs" (Tetlock 2003, 320). The very definition thus *encompasses* the idea of deontology. Further, when it comes to measurement, sacred values are often operationalized as those that subjects will not accept money to violate (e.g. Berns et al. 2012, 755), which again is circular for the hypothesis here.

[6]This is simply a statement that two distinct phenomena—deontological processing and the perception

This theoretical proposition has a number of testable implications. Here, I focus on four that bear on how citizens' moral psychology plays out in political contexts. The first two concern how citizens will process political arguments and, if borne out by evidence, would serve to verify the hypothesized linkage between moral conviction and deontological processing. First,

> H1: Citizens with morally convicted attitudes concerning a particular policy should reject messages that suggest a need to weigh costs and benefits of a given policy

and similarly,

> H2: Citizens with morally convicted attitudes will prefer deontological arguments to cost/benefit arguments when it comes to explaining and justifying their own opinions.

H1 and H2 follow from one of the defining characteristics of deontological processing: it rejects assessments of costs and benefits in favor of a focus on rules. To admit of any benefit that might come from violating a deontological commitment might be, in Tetlock's words, to "think the unthinkable" (2003, 320).

I also examine how moral conviction bears on citizens' ability to communicate with others. The ability to temporarily adopt another person's mindset (an ability discussed as "perspective taking" or "theory of mind" in the psychological literature) is thought to be socially functional. For instance, it helps individuals overcome barriers to negotiation (Trötschel et al. 2011), identify subtle points of agreement (Galinsky et al. 2008) and is thought to reflect a more effective orientation toward persuasion (Bartsch, Wade and Estes 2011). In some ways, however, perspective taking might be incompatible with deontological processing. To genuinely adopt another person's point of view, one needs to admit some value or grain of truth to their mindset, and this might be very hard in instances where issues are processed deontologically (i.e. as rules), rather than as a matter of balancing costs and benefits. Thus,

> H3: People whose attitudes lack moral conviction will adjust their evaluations of political arguments, depending on whether or not the goal is to engage in persuasion. People with morally convicted attitudes, however, will not.

Finally, if citizens approach some aspects of politics in a deontological mindset, it would have implications not only for how they process arguments, but also how they respond to revelations that are uncongenial to their attitude. Specifically,

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of right and wrong—should be associated with each other. It is worth a moment to elaborate on the causal model that would underlie this association. It is that a mental representation's being tagged for deontological processing would cause it to be perceived as a matter of right and wrong, and not vice-versa. After all, deontological processing is thought to be an adaptation with functional properties (see above). Moral conviction, in contrast, is merely a perceptual experience. To see the distinction and why it makes sense, consider that sexual intercourse is pleasurable because it is adaptive; it is not adaptive because it is pleasurable.

H4: Upon acquiring information about policy effects that is uncongenial to their policy prefer-
ences, citizens with morally convicted attitudes should shift their policy stances less than citizens
whose attitudes are not morally convicted.

Like the other hypotheses, H4 follows from a defining characteristic of deontological processing: an indiffer-
ence to consequences.

Study 1: Argument Reception

As politicians craft their appeals, they need to consider how individual-level characteristics lead recipients to
accept or reject certain messages. The most successful efforts to identify individual-level moderators of frame
acceptance have focused on aspects of knowledge and expertise, on the idea that knowledgeable individuals
can draw on more resources to counteract a frame's nudge (e.g. Druckman 2004; Zaller 1992, 1997). Study
1 tests the idea (H1) that a person's viewing a political issue as a matter of right and wrong reflects a
deontological style of processing for that issue, and will thus lead to the rejection of consequentialist frames
concerning that issue.

Design Data come from a survey experiment conducted by GfK research (formerly Knowledge Networks)
from May 30 to June 10, 2013. GfK Research uses random-digit-dial and address-based sampling methods
to construct a diverse national panel that matches well to Census benchmarks. The study was funded by the
National Science Foundation via Timesharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS; SES-0818839).
There were 1,195 respondents who, in the analyses below, are weighted to be reflective of the national
population.

The experiment focused on opinions about Social Security. This topic was chosen for particular reasons.
Some perspectives expect citizens to have moral intuitions only on non-economic issues such as abortion
and same-sex marriage (e.g. Engeli, Green-Pedersen and Larsen 2012*a*; Tatalovich and Daynes 2011*b*). The
theoretical perspective described above, in contrast, depicts deontological processing as an innate competency
with a basis in humans' evolutionary past. Because the distinction between economic and noneconomic issues
is not a 'natural kind,' there is no reason to expect deontological processing to be limited only to economic
issues. Other work finds that a substantial number of people perceive Social Security policy to be a matter of
right and wrong (Ryan 2014). The present study tests the idea that a substantial number of people process
it deontologically, despite its economic character.

The study started by measuring subjects' opinions about Social Security reform. They were asked,

As you may know, the Social Security Program in the United States is projected to run out of

funds in 2033 if changes are not made. Some people think that, to address this problem, we should decrease the benefits that the government pays out, such as by raising the retirement age or lowering monthly payments. How about you? How much do you support cuts to Social Security benefits?

Responses were on a 7-point scale ranging from "strongly oppose" to "strongly support decreasing Social Security benefits." This entirely common survey metric—the extent to which an attitude differs from neutral—is defined as `Extremity` in the psychometric literature (Wegener et al. 1995, 465). For the analyses below, it will be folded at its midpoint, creating a measure of `Extremity` that does not distinguish opinions that are extreme in the liberal direction from ones that are extreme in the conservative direction.

After the `Extremity` measure, subjects were asked a set of standard questions gauging various aspects of attitude intensity. `Importance`, "a person's perception of the amount of personal importance he or she attaches to an attitude" (Wegener et al. 1995, 467) or, stated more intuitively, caring about something, was measured with the question "How important is this issue to you personally?" `Personal relevance`, "the extent to which people believe that a topic or attitude object holds significant consequences for some aspects of their lives" (Wegener et al. 1995, 470) was measured with the question, "How much does the outcome of this issue directly affect you?" `Moral Conviction` was measured with Skitka's two-item battery, described above.[7] In keeping with past work, these aspects of attitude intensity were correlated, but distinct. (The correlations between `Moral Conviction` and `Extremity`, `Importance`, and `Relevance` are .53, .63, and .51, respectively.) In short, many subjects had attitudes that were intense in various ways, but not moralized.

After attitude characteristics were recorded, each subject read a short news clipping that presented an argument on his or her own side of the Social Security issue.[8] Figure 4.1 shows the clippings presented to subjects who opposed Social Security cuts. The Supplementary Information (§1.1)[9] shows the clippings presented to subjects who favored them.[10] As can be seen, the deontological version of the article casts the

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[7]Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$

[8]Subjects who had a neutral opinion on the `Extremity` measure were randomly assigned to one side of the issue or the other.

[9]The Supplementary Information is available at dissertation.timothyjryan.com.

[10]Why not also present some subjects with articles opposed to their Social Security opinion? The reason is that this study focuses on how citizens process their own opinions—not how they respond to efforts to persuade. If citizens with morally convicted attitudes reject a message that suggests a need to weigh costs and benefits *even when that message is directionally in sync with their own attitudes*, it will make for a strong demonstration that they are employing a deontological mindset. In contrast, when messages oppose a person's prior point of view, the dynamics become more complex. A person with a morally convicted attitude might reject a deontological message that implies a deontological rule different from his own. (Indeed, the rejection might be especially powerful. For an illustration, one example would be a person who supports same-sex marriage and sees the issue as a matter of right and wrong receiving an appeal that says 'same-sex marriage is wrong.') To examine the effects of counter attitudinal messages would be a worthy study, but is simply beyond my scope here.

Figure 4.1: Stimuli for Argument Reception Experiment

Deontological

Politicians Say Social Security Changes Are a Matter of Right and Wrong

It announced they would not.
  One of the congressmen who opposes adjusting Social Security payments recently explained his view at a meeting of supporters: "Social Security and the budget deficit are issues that engage fundamental matters of right and wrong. That's why we need to think carefully about what our first principles are. I ardently believe that, when we think about our core moral responsibilities, it's clear that decreasing Social Security benefits would be wrong."
  Most legislative battles are fought with

Costs/Benefits

Politicians Say Social Security Changes Are a Matter of Costs and Benefits

It announced they would not.
  One of the congressmen who opposes adjusting Social Security payments recently explained his view at a meeting of supporters: "Social Security and the budget deficit are issues where every proposal is going to have some upsides and downsides. That's why we need to carefully weigh the pros and cons that come with different alternatives. I ardently believe that, when we add everything up, it's clear that decreasing Social Security benefits would have more downsides than upsides."
  Most legislative battles are fought with

News articles presented to subjects who oppose Social Security decreases. Articles shown to subjects who favor Social Security decreases can be found in the Supplementary Information (§1.1).

issue—as is so common in political rhetoric—as a matter of right and wrong. The Costs/Benefits version, in contrast, changes a small number of words to ground the issue in consequentialist thinking. For instance, it says that Social Security policy is a matter of weighing "pros and cons" and "costs and benefits." Every effort was made to hold the strength of the argument constant across conditions. For instance, both versions present the congressman's view as "ardent" and "clear."[11]

The dependent variable for the study was evaluations of the congressman's message. Subjects were asked, "How would you rate the quality of the ideas raised in the news clipping? Do they seem high in quality, or do they not seem that way?" Responses were placed on a 5-point scale ranging from "very low in quality" to "extremely high in quality."

Results   Table 4.1 presents results from the experiment. The first model shows the simple main effect of the random assignment by regressing evaluations of the news article on an indicator for the random assignment. As shown, the main effect is not significant (p<.29). As documented in funding materials written before data collection began, however, the *ex ante* expectation was that the treatment effect would be moderated

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[11]If the articles seem different in terms of their strength, consider that the factors that make a frame strong are themselves poorly understood (Druckman 2010, especially 294–295, for a discussion). As such, this study could help identify a concrete, well-defined attribute (i.e. deontological language) that contributes to the (more vague, less well-defined) attribute of strength.

by moral conviction. Model (2) regresses evaluations of the news article on the moral conviction variable and its interaction with the treatment indicator. The interaction is large and significant. Substantively, it implies that, whereas people whose Social Security attitudes lack moral conviction prefer the cost/benefits frame to the deontological one (the significant main effect in the top row), people with moralized attitudes reject the cost/benefits frame relative to the deontological one.[12] Model (3) examines whether `Moral Conviction`—as opposed to other aspects of attitude intensity, which as I note are correlated—really moderates responses to the treatment. I estimate the interactive model

$$
\begin{aligned}
\texttt{Evaluation} \quad = \quad & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \texttt{Treatment} + \beta_2 \texttt{Extremity} + \beta_3 \texttt{Importance} + \beta_4 \texttt{Relevance} + \\
& \beta_5 \texttt{Moral Conviction} + \beta_6 \texttt{Extremity} \times \texttt{Treatment} + \beta_7 \texttt{Importance} \times \texttt{Treatment} + \\
& \beta_8 \texttt{Relevance} \times \texttt{Treatment} + \beta_9 \texttt{Moral Conviction} \times \texttt{Treatment} + \epsilon.
\end{aligned}
$$

As can be seen, the interaction with `Moral Conviction` is significant, but no others are.[13] Particularly noteworthy is the null interaction with `Extremity`, the most often measured attitude characteristic. This null result highlights that attitudes can be intense in ways that do not bear on deontological processing. Figure 4.2 shows the estimated marginal effect (extrapolated from Model 3) of the cost/benefit frame at extreme values of each aspect of attitude intensity. It is easy to see how markedly evaluations pivot around the `Moral Conviction` measure. The cost/benefit frame attracts people whose attitudes are not moralized, but pushes those with moralized attitudes away.

Study 2: Argument Choice

Study 1 focuses on how citizens respond to a deontological, versus a cost/benefit rhetorical frame on one political issue. It argues that the less positive evaluations that people with morally convicted Social Security attitudes give to the cost/benefit frame reflect the fact that these people think about Social Security deontologically. A potential liability of this line of reasoning is that people with morally convicted attitudes could exhibit this pattern for different reasons. They might, for instance, infer that the congressman speaking of costs and benefits is less religious, less assertive, or less likely to make Social Security an issue priority.

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[12]The marginal effect of the cost/benefits frame among people high in moral conviction, as estimated from model (2), is significant (Marginal effect = -0.101; Delta-method SE = 0.029; p<.01). Moreover, the significant effect is not driven by linear extrapolations. Estimating the effect of the cost/benefits frame among the subsample of respondents at the maximum value of the `Moral Conviction` scale (N=337) reveals a significant effect ($\beta = -0.106$; SE = 0.038; p<.01).

[13]Is `Moral Conviction` unfairly advantaged by being measured with two items, where the other attitude characteristics are measured by only one? No. When the same models are estimated using only one of the `Moral Conviction` items (either one), the same results hold.

Table 4.1: Moral Conviction Moderates Responses to Cost/benefits Frame

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Cost/benefits Frame	-0.020	0.093**	0.063
	(0.019)	(0.041)	(0.043)
Extremity (folded)	–	–	0.047
	–	–	(0.039)
Importance	–	–	-0.018
	–	–	(0.077)
Personal Relevance	–	–	0.098
	–	–	(0.074)
Moral Conviction	–	0.335***	0.270***
	–	(0.037)	(0.048)
Cost/benefits Frame . . .			
× Extremity	–	–	-0.039
	–	–	(0.053)
× Importance	–	–	0.162
	–	–	(0.119)
× Relevance	–	–	-0.051
	–	–	(0.101)
× Moral Conviction	–	-0.194***	-0.230***
	–	(0.060)	(0.083)
Constant	0.507***	0.308***	0.261***
	(0.013)	(0.025)	(0.031)
N	1,183	1,181	1,173

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<.10

Weighted OLS models. All variables coded to run 0–1. The dependent variable is evaluation of the quality of the argument in the news clipping.

Figure 4.2: Moral Conviction Determines Argument Evaluation
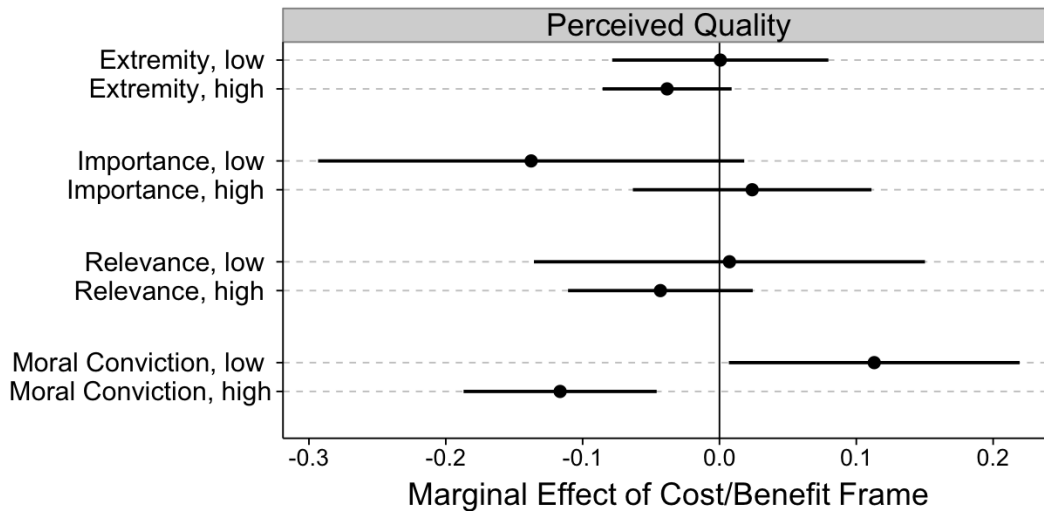
Marginal effect of cost/benefit frame, depending on attitude characteristics. For each estimate, other characteristics are held at their means. Bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Positive values indicate higher perceived quality.

Study 2 bolsters the inference that morally convicted attitudes reflect deontological processing with a separate, complementary test. Rather than focusing on how citizens respond to arguments, it focuses on the arguments they make themselves. Furthermore, it expands the scope of the investigation beyond the single issue of Social Security reform, examining how moral conviction and deontological processing relate to each other across several issue domains. I uncover further evidence of a strong link between moral conviction and deontological processing.

Finally, Study 2 includes a randomized experiment that tests how evaluations of arguments depend on whether individuals are reflecting on the reasons they have an attitude, or (instead) evaluating whether arguments will be effective at persuading other people (see H3). Can people with moralized attitudes turn off their deontological processing, and see beyond it, when it behooves them to do so? I find that people with non-moralized attitudes can look beyond their own mindset. They evaluate arguments differently depending on whether the arguments are to be used for persuasion or not. In contrast, people with moralized attitudes select deontological arguments irrespective of whether the arguments are to be used for persuasion or not.

Design   Data come from a convenience sample of undergraduates at the University of Michigan collected in the Fall of 2013. A researcher visited course sections for an introductory political science class and invited students to complete a questionnaire as part of an in-class activity. There were 171 respondents.

The less-strict length constraints afforded by a convenience sample allowed focus on multiple issues.

There were two economic issues (collective bargaining rights and Social Security reform), two social issues (gun control and the use of nuclear power), and one foreign policy issue (U.S. intervention into Syria—a topic of intense media focus at the time). For each issue, the questionnaire measured `Extremity` using questions adapted from Gallup public opinion surveys. Also for each issue, it measured `Importance`, `Personal Relevance`, and `Moral Conviction` using the same approach as in Study 1 (full question wordings in the appendix, as well as the online Supplementary Information).

For each issue, after measuring aspects of attitude intensity, the questionnaire asked subjects to evaluate (on a 5-point scale) four arguments on their own side of the issue. Two of the arguments were deontological in nature, and the other two were focused on costs and benefits.[14] Table 4.2 shows the arguments for the Social Security issue. For each person on each issue, a preference for deontological arguments on that issue was constructed, defined as

$$\texttt{Deontological Preference}_{issue} = (\texttt{Eval}_{deont1} + \texttt{Eval}_{deont2}) - (\texttt{Eval}_{cons1} + \texttt{Eval}_{cons2}).$$

An experiment was embedded in the argument evaluation, with the random assignment occurring at the subject (not the issue) level.[15] For half of subjects, the instructions prefacing the argument evaluations read, "Please read each of them and evaluate its quality. How STRONG of an argument does each seem to be to you?" For the other half, they read, "Please read each of them and evaluate its quality. How EFFECTIVE would each be at persuading someone on the other side of this issue?" Response options were tuned to match the instructions. (I.e., they were either "not very strong; somewhat strong; . . .; extremely strong," or "not very effective; somewhat effective; . . .; extremely effective.") Thus, respondents were pushed to think about either what appealed to them, or what would appeal to others, as they considered each argument. I label the two conditions the "Strong" Condition and the "Effective" Condition below.

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[14]The arguments were written to be of similar length. The deontological arguments made explicit reference to rights, duties, obligations, and prohibitions. The consequentialist arguments made reference to countervailing costs and benefits, and expected effects of different policy alternatives. To validate the arguments, the distinction between consequentialism and deontology was explained to a research assistant (blind to hypotheses). The assistant was then presented the arguments in a random order, and was instructed to classify each as being deontological or consequentialist in nature. The assistant classified all but one argument as expected, and the one problematic argument was revised. All arguments can be found in the Supplementary Information (§2.2).

[15]If the randomization were done at the issue level, subjects would become more conscious of it, since any given subject would (with high probability) see both conditions. Conducting the randomization at the subject level results in less statistical power, but keeps each subject naive about the alternative condition.

Table 4.2: Sample Arguments Evaluated in Argument Choice Study

	Liberal	Conservative
Deontological	- Society has a core obligation to provide everyone with a safety net. - It is wrong to cut back on benefits for future retirees when they have already been paying into the system.	- It is wrong to give away (through taxing and spending) money that people have worked hard to earn. - People have a fundamental obligation and responsibility to make provisions for their own retirement.
Consequential	- Having an assured income in retirement makes people happier and more productive workers earlier in life, which is good for everyone. - Many people don't have enough information or experience to handle the private investing that would be necessary if Social Security were to be scaled back.	- Cutting back on Social Security has some costs, but also benefits: it will free up some money for people to invest and create jobs. - Many Social Security benefits go to people in the middle or upper class who can get by without, and could be spent elsewhere.

All arguments can be found in the Supplementary Information (§2.2).

Results H2 proposes that, because feelings of moral conviction reflect deontological processing, morally convicted citizens will prefer deontological arguments to ones that focus on costs and benefits. To evaluate whether this is the case, and to compare the contribution of moral conviction to other aspects of attitude intensity, I estimate (by OLS) the model

$$\texttt{Deontological Preference}_{i,k} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\texttt{Extremity} + \beta_2\texttt{Importance} + \beta_3\texttt{Relevance} +$$
$$\beta_4\texttt{Moral Conviction} + \beta_{5-8}\texttt{issue fixed effects} + \nu_i + \epsilon_{i,k},$$

where i indexes subjects, k indexes issues, ν_i represents a random effect for subjects, and standard errors are clustered by subject.[16]

The left side of Table 4.3 presents the results. In column 1, the full sample is pooled together. (That is, the experimental manipulation, and the possibility that observational relationships depend on it, is ignored.) Columns 2 and 3 present the same observational relationships, but estimated within each of the

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[16]It would also be possible to estimate a model in which each subject is modeled with a fixed, rather than random effect. Such a model (available on request) arrives at nearly identical conclusions. I present the random effects model for reasons of parallelism with the experimental results to come below. Because the random assignment occurred at the subject level, not the issue level, the experimental results do not allow a fixed effects model. (The treatment would be perfectly collinear with the subject-level fixed effect.)

two experimental conditions.

The left side of Table 4.3 uncovers evidence in favor of H2, as moral conviction consistently explains a preference for deontological arguments over cost/benefit arguments.[17] Equally important, comparing the relationship for `Moral Conviction` to the other variables highlights real texture in how different flavors of attitude intensity bear on the processing of arguments. For `Extremity`, which is often presented as a comprehensive summary of attitude intensity, there is no significant relationship at all. For `Importance`, there is a consistently negative relationship—results that underline that citizens can have attitudes that are intense in ways that do not dispose them to a deontological style of thinking. These results support H2.

The right side of Table 4.3 presents results from the Strong/Effective Experiment. In column 4, the measure of preference for deontological arguments is regressed on `Moral Conviction`, an indicator for the "Effective" Condition, and their interaction. Column 5 adds the other aspects of attitude intensity to the picture in a style similar to Study 1: the treatment is interacted with each of them. In both columns, the interaction term for `Moral Conviction` is significant—and no other interaction terms are. How citizens respond to the switch from a reflective from a persuasive orientation depends on whether their attitudes are morally convicted or not.

Since multiple simultaneous interaction terms are difficult to interpret, Figure 4.3 shows the marginal effect of the "Effective" Condition at low and high levels of `Moral Conviction`, with other measures held at their means. The key result is that the two point estimates are of comparable magnitude and have opposite signs. Where people with non-morally convicted attitudes emphasize costs and benefits when they are thinking about persuading others, people with morally convicted attitudes, if anything, 'dig in their heels,' and are *more* likely to prefer deontological arguments.[18]

Study 2 thus continues to accumulate evidence in favor of a link between moral conviction and deontological processing, while also expounding on the implications of this link. Many citizens can shift the mindset by which they approach political issues, recognizing that the arguments they themselves find compelling will not resonate with others. Morally convicted attitudes make this shift in perspective more difficult. In the discussion, I return to the idea that moral conviction makes it more difficult for citizens to engage each other in reasonable disagreement.

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[17]In column 2, the two-tailed p-value for `Moral Conviction` is .17.

[18]It is worth noting that the disjuncture is not driven by the linearity of the model. Estimated among the subset of attitudes that are are in the bottom quartile in terms of Moral Conviction, the treatment effect is significantly negative ($\beta = -0.080$; SE=0.038; p<.04). Among the top quartile in terms of Moral Conviction, the effect is positive and not significant ($\beta = 0.016$; SE=0.042; p<.71).

Table 4.3: Results for Argument Choice Study

	Observational			Experimental	
	Pooled	"Strong"	"Effective"		
Extremity (folded)	0.008	0.052	-0.024	–	-0.043
	(0.039)	(0.050)	(0.060)	–	(0.043)
Importance	-0.122**	-0.133*	-0.138**	–	-0.141**
	(0.049)	(0.069)	(0.067)	–	(0.068)
Personal Relevance	0.041	0.065	0.031	–	0.090
	(0.045)	(0.063)	(0.063)	–	(0.059)
Moral Conviction	0.155***	0.079	0.242***	0.040	0.065
	(0.044)	(0.058)	(0.067)	(0.047)	(0.055)
"Effective" Condition	–	–	–	-0.074**	-0.043
	–	–	–	(0.035)	(0.043)
× Extremity	–	–	–	–	-0.057
	–	–	–	–	(0.079)
× Importance	–	–	–	–	0.013
	–	–	–	–	(0.095)
× Relevance	–	–	–	–	-0.076
	–	–	–	–	(0.080)
× Moral Conviction	–	–	–	0.128*	0.188**
	–	–	–	(0.069)	(0.084)
Issue fixed effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Respondent random effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.043	0.060	0.023	0.068**	0.066*
	(0.030)	(0.040)	(0.044)	(0.031)	(0.035)
N (Subjects)	779 (171)	368 (81)	411 (90)	780 (171)	779 (171)

Clustered standard errors in parentheses
*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<.10$

OLS models. All independent variables coded to run 0–1. The dependent variable is preference for deontological arguments and runs -1–1, with 0 representing a perfect balance between deontological, and cost/benefit arguments.

Figure 4.3: Marginal Effect of "Effective" Frame, by Moral Conviction
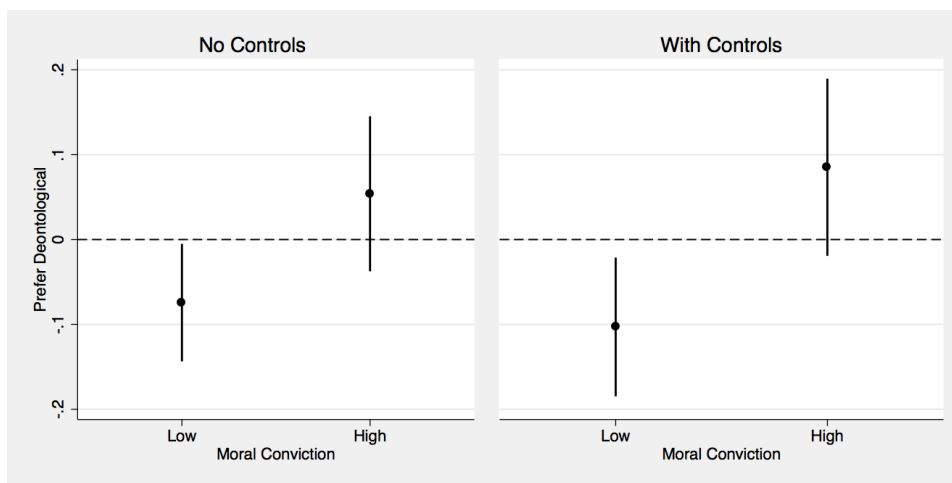
Marginal effects are calculated from the results in Table 4.3. The left panel corresponds to column 4, while the right panel corresponds to column 5. Bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Measures not shown are held at their mean levels.

Study 3: Deontological Processing of Damaging Revelations

As I discuss above, one defining characteristic of a deontological mindset should be an unresponsiveness to disconfirming information. This is because deontological rules are conceptual primitives, not dependent on justifications. Study 3 puts a spotlight on this difference, examining how opinions change when some of the most prominent reasons to maintain them are removed. Do morally convicted attitudes hold steady, even as potential justifications for them vanish (H4)?

Design Data come from a convenience sample of undergraduates at the University of Michigan collected in the Winter of 2013 (a separate data source from Study 2). As in Study 2, a researcher visited course sections for one introductory and one upper-level class and invited students to complete a questionnaire as part of an in-class activity. There were 235 respondents.

As with Study 2, Study 3 engaged five separate issues, and an effort was made to present both economic and noneconomic issues. The issues used were Social Security reform, taxes for wealthy Americans, gun control, the use of nuclear power, and U.S. intervention in Iran.[19] Similar to the past studies, each issue measured attitude `Extremity`, `Importance`, `Personal Relevance`, and `Moral Conviction`. (Full question wording is available in the Supplementary Information, §3.1.)

After aspects of attitude intensity were recorded, subjects were asked to consider new information that

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[19]Where Study 2 was administered by paper, Study 3 was administered on computers. Thus, unlike Study 2, issues were presented in a random order.

Table 4.4: Sample Hypothetical Revelations Used in Argument Choice Study

Presented to Nuclear Energy Proponents	*Presented to Nuclear Energy Opponents*
Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that the International Atomic Energy Administration, in cooperation with a well-regarded team of international researchers, determined that the likelihood of even newly constructed nuclear reactors experiencing a serious incident in a given year is surprisingly high – on the order of one in one thousand. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where would you place yourself on the scale?	Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that the International Atomic Energy Administration, in cooperation with a well-regarded team of international researchers, determined that the likelihood of newly constructed nuclear reactors experiencing a serious incident in a given year is extremely low – on the order of one in ten million. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where would you place yourself on the scale?

All hypothetical revelations are available in the Supplementary Information (§3.2).

worked against their opinion on a given issue.[20] Each revelation was explicitly hypothetical; subjects were asked to "Suppose, just for the sake of argument," that new information came to light. Then, subjects were once again presented the 7-point `Extremity` scale and asked where they would place themselves, if the hypothetical information were true. Table 4.4 presents sample hypothetical revelations for the nuclear power issue.

The use of hypothetical revelations has some advantages over other potential approaches to push subjects off their original opinion (cf. Taber and Lodge 2006). For one, hypotheticals are not constrained by reality. It is possible to entertain—and the study did—imaginary worlds where the most central arguments for or against various policies were starkly undermined. Second, hypotheticals allow no counterargument. If disconfirming information is bound by reality, citizens can question the reliability of the information they are receiving or the credibility of the sender. But by making no pretense of being true, hypotheticals force subjects to behave in a manner that reveals that they are responsive to consequences—or not.

The key dependent variable for Study 3 is opinion `Change` in response to the hypothetical revelations, which is defined as movement (from the first administration of the `Extremity` question to the second administration) in the direction of the nudge. Thus, subjects on the liberal side of an issue receive positive scores for `Change` when their opinion become more conservative, and subjects on the conservative side receive

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[20]How to deal with subjects with a neutral opinion on a particular issue? Since they are equally eligible to see either set of revelations, one approach would be to randomly assign them to one set or the other. (Study 1 handled neutral responses in this way.) With five issues, I deemed this approach to be one step too complicated, and decided respondents who were neutral on a particular issue would all see the same (arbitrarily chosen) set of revelations, although I made sure neither liberal-pushing nor conservative-pushing revelations predominated across issues. When perfectly neutral initial attitudes are excluded from the analysis below, no substantive results change.

positive scores when their opinions become more liberal.[21]

Results   Table 4.5 presents results from Study 3 in a now-familiar style. (The data and dependent variable are new, but the structure is identical to the left side of Table 4.3.) Where an experiment that was randomized at the individual-level precluded the use of fixed effects in Study 2, I present a model with fixed effects here.

As can be seen, `Extremity` strongly predicts `Change` following a revelation. This might be surprising, but consider that subjects whose attitudes are extreme can `Change` more than subjects with moderate attitudes can. (A subject with a perfectly neutral attitude can only `Change` three points on the scale, while a subject with an extreme attitude can swing the full 7-point range of the scale.)[22]

Overall, Table 4.5 provides still more evidence that aspects of attitude intensity bear on the way citizens process information in a textured way. Aside from `Extremity`, all the relationships are negative, but the `Moral Conviction` relationship is clearly larger that those for `Importance` or `Relevance`. Attitudes can be intense in ways that permit revision when disconfirming information comes, but morally convicted attitudes resist this change—evidence that they are processed deontologically.[23]

Discussion and Conclusion

How do citizens process moral considerations in politics? The question is central to understanding their capacity to participate in governance, but the scholarly answers to it are disappointing. It might have been that they approach political matters with some logically constrained ideology, but it turned out they do not (Converse 1964). Citizens might have been driven purely by self interest, but there are many instances in which they seem to put self interest aside (Hochschild 1986; Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Mansbridge 1990). They might have taken their moral views from group cues (Campbell et al. 1960), but opinions about specific issues sometimes drive people to change their group affiliations (Stimson 2004). Citizens might be guided by general values, such as for equality or liberty (Feldman 2003), but values suppose much the same kind of deductive capabilities that ideology does, and the values literature has difficulty explaining why issues that pertain to the same value—e.g., both abortion and the death penalty evoke harm considerations—often generate different impulses in the same person.

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[21]It is logically possible to receive a negative score for `Change`. It happens if (for example) a moderately liberal opinion becomes *more* liberal following the hypothetical revelation. In practice, some `Change` scores exhibit this property, but not many (4.6%).

[22]A different approach would be to model levels of `Extremity` as a series of dummy variables, rather than a continuous scale. Doing this does not change any substantive conclusions about the other attitude intensity measures.

[23]Of the 126 attitudes that had the highest level of moral conviction, 54% of them had a `Change` score that was either zero or negative. 87% of them moved two scale points or less.

Table 4.5: Results for Damaging Revelations Study

	Change	
Extremity (folded)	0.168***	0.168***
	(0.029)	(0.032)
Importance	-0.036	-0.034
	(0.039)	(0.041)
Relevance	-0.040	-0.080**
	(0.032)	(0.036)
Moral Conviction	-0.115***	-0.168***
	(0.034)	(0.041)
Issue fixed effects?	Yes	Yes
Respondent controls	Random effects	Fixed effects
Constant	0.179***	0.230***
	(0.029)	(0.030)
N (Subjects)	1,138 (232)	1,137 (232)

Clustered standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<.10

OLS models. All independent variables coded to run 0–1. The dependent variable is movement in the direction of a hypothetical revelation designed to pull subjects away from their *ex ante* opinion. It ranges from -.5–1. (A value of -.5 represent a subject who had an initially neutral opinion that became extreme. A value of zero represents no change. A value of 1 represents an opinion that was extreme in one direction, and became extreme in the opposite direction.) All independent variables range 0–1.

Here, I have argued that morality can be thought of as a way of thinking—a deontological one. The perception that a political topic is a matter of right and wrong, and a deontological style for thinking about it, go hand in hand. It might have been otherwise. Citizens might have rationalized their moral viewpoints backwards out of the expected effects of different policies, for instance (cf. Sniderman et al. 1986). In short, they might have been intuitive consequentialists. I do not mean to argue that citizens' evaluations of expected effects are unimportant. On the contrary, the results above suggest that, where attitudes lack moral conviction, expected consequences matter a lot. Instead, I argue that an identifiable subset of attitudes exhibit characteristically deontological processing.

By asking, "What are the characteristics of attitudes that people feel are moral?" rather than "Does citizens' way of thinking about the world coincide with a scholarly view of morality?" I have made morality a starting point, rather than an ending point. The result is to paint moral intuitions as much less coherent and more atomized than has previously been suggested. After all, I have not presumed that a person's moral conviction about (say) tax policy has any relationship to his or her moral conviction about Social Security reform, although the two issues are logically related. This is important, for moral convictions about even conceptually related issues are notably uncorrelated. This suggests that fully understanding how citizens process moral considerations in politics will require attention to *how* specific attitudes become imbued with moral conviction (a matter beyond my scope here, but see Ryan [2014] for more discussion on this point).

Others have suggested that research into moral psychology has illuminated a dark side to moral thinking. In Jonathan Haidt's view, morality "binds and blinds" (2012, 217) in the sense that people have difficulty comprehending moral intuitions that are different from their own. The present research coincides with this idea, but builds on it in important ways. First, rather than just showing an intuitive basis for moral psychology, I present evidence that moral conviction relates to deontological processing, a characteristic that makes more specific predictions. Second, I unpack the import of deontological processing for aspects of mass politics. I show that the deontological nature of morally convicted attitudes makes citizens who hold them adopt a political style that is rigid and unwavering.

I wish to note some limitations of the present set of studies, and how future work could address them. One limitation is that I rely on closed-ended measures to capture aspects of deontological processing. These measures come with some advantages: it is easy to construct stylized arguments that set up sharp contrasts between deontological and cost/benefit reasoning. On the other hand, they leave open the concern that, while subjects with morally convicted attitudes prefer deontological arguments when the arguments are laid out in front of them like choices on a menu, they would not think of them unprompted. A study that invited subjects to elaborate extemporaneously on how they think about various political issues could paint a more naturalistic picture of how deontological processing bears on the everyday give and take of politics. If the

theory laid out above is right, it would imply that subjects with morally convicted attitudes on a particular topic will offer simpler, more intuition-based explanations for their opinions (e.g., "Nuclear power is just wrong").

A second limitation is that, while studies 1 and 2 lay some important groundwork, only in Study 3 do the implications for citizen persuasion begin to become clear. Even there, the dependent measure is one step removed from politics as it unfolds on the ground: what does deontological processing mean for how citizens vote? For their proclivity to participate in politics? For how they respond to real (not hypothetical) pieces of incongruent information? An important next step is to focus more directly on questions like these. (A potential addition to a future version of this chapter is a study designed more closely to mimic analyses studies of motivated reasoning, such as Taber and Lodge [2006], and examine what moral conviction can tell us about how citizens process more realistic revelations.)

To this point, in the spirit of detached, agnostic, positivism, I have refrained from commenting directly on the normative implications of deontological processing in politics. They are not obvious. After all, if only we could agree, through reasoning, suasion, and enlightenment, which deontological commitments are the right ones, it would be for the best that these commitments become deep-seated in our psychology. Then again, diversity in moral views is a starting axiom for many of the best reflections on government—an insight that moral psychology has only served to confirm. As long as people with very different hopes, dreams, and beliefs need to live together under one roof, we should reflect on our own moral beliefs with a large dose of humility, and think hard about how to keep a mindset so conducive to dogmatism, absolutism, and rigidity in check.

Chapter 5:

Moral Thinking in Politics

Each of the above chapters concludes with its own internal summary, so I will not try the reader's patience by recapitulating all of their points yet again. Here, I aim my summary at a different level, highlighting three takeaways that can be seen looking across, rather than within, chapters. I also comment on a limitation of this dissertation: that it does not identify the psychological antecedents of moral conviction. I describe what the data I collected can say about where moral conviction comes from, and outline an agenda for future studies. In the final section, I comment on the countervailing roles that morality plays in politics.

One major takeaway from the chapters above is to demonstrate that attitude intensity comes in several different flavors. Favoring an extreme policy is different than caring about an issue, which in turn is different than seeing it as personally relevant, which in turn is different than seeing it as a matter of right and wrong. The analyses above show that attitude characteristics bear on political judgments and actions in a textured way. There are times when each of the attitude characteristics is important relative to the others. There are times when each fades into the background. Given my substantive interests, I have focused on moral conviction throughout, designing tests where I hypothesized that it might play a prominent role. But the data collected for this project also show (for instance) that caring about an issue matters more in some circumstances than others.

Second, perceiving a political issue to be a matter of right and wrong reflects a distinctive mode of psychological processing with profound political implications. Attitudes that are intense in other ways (e.g. personally important, but not morally convicted) can be the topic of reasonable disagreement and can be traded for gains. Morally convicted attitudes, in contrast, are rigid, entrenched, and strongly associated with punitive emotions. I show that moral conviction has clear ramifications for several different aspects of politics: it increases political engagement, aggravates rifts caused by political disagreement, hardens resistance to political compromise, and makes uncongenial information almost unthinkable.

Third, my theorizing about moral conviction illustrates a conceptual approach. I explicitly meld together (most clearly in the "Unthinkable" chapter) three components that should be part of almost any theoretical narrative pertaining to psychology: evolutionary origins, phenomenology (that is, conscious experiences, which can be measured with survey methods), and behavioral tendencies. I sketch plausible reasons why

a capacity to encode deontological rules would be adaptive, why that capacity would lead to the conscious perception of right and wrong, and what effects it would have on behavior. This theoretically "thick" treatment sets moral conviction apart from literatures on other attitude characteristics I discuss (e.g. personal importance); past treatments of those attitude characteristics seldom link all three elements so explicitly. It remains to be seen whether the story I tell about moral conviction will withstand the test of time. Whether it does or not, I am rather more confident that the general approach—explicitly linking evolutionary structure, phenomenology, and behavior—is the most rewarding way to proceed.

Antecedents of Moral Conviction

There is still much work to be done to elucidate the ways moral conviction bears on politics. The most formidable task, as I see it, is identifying the antecedents of moral conviction. As various footnotes and secondary analyses in the chapters above hint, I have examined a number of ideas on this matter, but have not identified any relationships clear enough to be the focus of a stand-alone chapter. Here, I concentrate the evidence mentioned above, plus some additional results not yet reported, to help others build on what has been done so far.

First, consider possible antecedents of a general propensity to moralize (as opposed to the moralization of particular attitudes). Turning to the datasets used for "Reconsidering," there are strikingly few plausibly exogenous correlates of moral conviction. The EGSS includes information on subjects' age and gender, but the pairwise correlations between the propensity to moralize and these measures is tiny. (For both, Pearson's $r<.02$.) The EGSS also included a battery of political knowledge questions, but the propensity to moralize measure does not correlate with performance on it ($r<.02$). There might have been a relationship with the Big Five personality traits (Mondak 2010), but none of these significantly explains the propensity to moralize. The EGSS also asked respondents about their attention to political news, but correlations are low both for the measure of attention to TV news ($r<.06$) and all news (i.e. TV, radio, Internet, and newspapers combined, $r<.06$). Some might conjecture that there would be a relationship between moralization and attention to conservative firebrands such as Rush Limbaugh or Laura Ingraham. The EGSS asked about attention to specific shows, such as these, but the correlations are similarly small, and quite comparable to correlations for attending to shows on NPR.

One finding is worthy of particular note: a small relationship between propensity to moralize and religiosity. As reported in "Reconsidering," there is a significant relationship between church attendance and propensity to moralize, but church attendance explains less than 3% of the variance in the moralization measure. In both the convenience samples reported in "Reconsidering," the relationship between propensity to

moralize and church attendenance is not significant (and in the student sample, it is negative). It is common, including in scholarly treatments, to equate some notion of moral psychology with religiosity (e.g. Frank 2005). The results herein suggest something different: religiosity matters in politics, and moral psychology matters in politics, but the two are distinct phenomena.

A separate way to examine antecedents of moral conviction is to look issue-by-issue. This appears to be a more promising approach, as my data point to several notable relationships, though I have not yet developed a theory that binds them together. Based on the convenience samples used in "Reconsidering" and "No Compromise," conservatives have significantly more moral conviction as concerns collective bargaining, same-sex marriage, and stem cell research. Liberals have significantly more moral conviction for the Afghanistan issue, and both sides of the ideological spectrum are comparable in their moralization of Social Security. There is a positive relationship between religiosity and moralization of collective bargaining, same-sex marriage, and stem cell research, but a negative relationship between religiosity and moralization of the Afghanistan issue and Social Security. The across-issue variation that can be seen here highlights a distinction between my results and work that characterizes aspects of dogmatism as being particular to one side of the political spectrum (e.g. Jost et al. 2003). Where Jost and colleagues' work characterizes facets of dogmatism as an individual-level trait, the work herein shows that individuals vary in terms of how dogmatically they approach specific issues. Moreover, I show that both sides of the political spectrum are comparably moralistic overall, but they differ in terms of which issues they are likely to moralize.

I see four promising avenues for further research on the antecedents of moral conviction. First, researchers should identify a way to experimentally manipulate it. Doing so might elucidate some real-world antecedents, and would also allow examination of its downstream consequences without some of the extra inferential difficulties that arise in observational studies. As I note toward the end of "Reconsidering" and "No Compromise," the existing efforts to manipulate moral conviction have had mixed success. Viewed in one light, this is encouraging, since if moral conviction *were* easy to manipulate, it might cast doubt on the validity of the construct. Instead, moral conviction seems to be mostly stable in the short term.[1] One approach I would recommend is more heavy-handed manipulations than have previously been tested. For one example, my sense is that political documentaries such as Citizens United *Hillary: The Movie* and Michael Moore's *Sicko* seem geared not to convert skeptics, but to galvanize allies. Often packed with riveting anecdotes and other emotional content, they might be an effective way to engage the mental systems that develop moral fervor.

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[1]Short-term stability would be predicted by DeScioli and Kurzban's (2013) evolutionary perspective. According to them, the adaptive purpose of deontological rules is to provide a publicly known coordination strategy for side-taking in disputes. Deontological rules could not play such a role if they were unstable.

A second approach would be to focus on the history of specific issues. As I have written above, specific topics seem to have changed over time in the extent to which they are moralized. For example, as Rozin (1999) argues, public smoking was once mundane, but now evokes punitive sentiments from many people. Looking for commonalities across a number of similar sea changes might highlight regularity in what causes moral conviction to emerge and fade within specific communities.[2] One difficulty in conducting such studies retrospectively is that the measurement approach I use throughout this dissertation is relatively new. Accumulating repeated cross sections, or even longitudinal datasets, focused on a common set of issues might prove invaluable in understanding what causes moral conviction increase and decrease within specific domains.

Third, as concerns hypotheses about the origins of moral conviction, I recommend a focus on its social aspects. As I have argued above, there is reason to believe that human moral capacities evolved because they improved cohesion in small groups.[3] There are many open questions about how the "groupish" aspects of morality might manifest today. Which groups impart moral conviction, and how do they do it? I have conducted some research along these lines, although it is still in the early stages. Some of the instruments I analyze in "Unthinkable" measured issue-specific attitude convergence with subjects' close family and close friends. There is some evidence that moral conviction is lower in cases where a person's opinion diverges from his or her immediate family, but not when it diverges from close friends. I interpret this as early evidence that early childhood socialization plays an important role in imbuing moral conviction.

Fourth, there is much to be learned about the interplay between moral psychology and political communication. Can political messages activate (or stifle) the effects of moral conviction? There is some early evidence that they can. In work still in development (Ryan 2012a), I presented subjects with a news article that discussed a nonpartisan issue (eminent domain) in either deontological or consequentialist terms. Results from a convenience sample suggest that the deontological frame increased partisan cue taking and out-partisan animosity. This is further evidence in favor of a reciprocal relationship between moral and group psychology.

Even once the studies I propose here are done, will we have finished the study of moral psychology in politics? I doubt it. A burgeoning field, the boundaries of what counts as moral psychology, versus not,

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[2]I have some ideas about which episodes to include. Baumgartner and colleagues (2008) vividly recount a transformation of public opinion about the death penalty, and suggest that innocence projects that successfully called media attention to wrongful executions were largely responsible for it. Adams (1997) examines the emergence of abortion policy as a national issue and suggests that mass opinions responded to increasingly clear elite cues.

[3]The existing theoretical perspectives differ in terms of whether they posit group selection—a controversial idea in anthropology (Wilson and Wilson 2008)—to be the mechanism. Haidt (2012) does. DeScioli and Kurzban (2013) do not.

are still murky. My work here, starting with the questions I pose in the first chapter, reflects an instinct to equate moral psychology with a suite of distinctively human mental systems that acquire rules for social conduct, and monitor and police the attitudes of other people. But there are other ways one might partition the realm of moral psychology. Graham and Haidt, for instance, stipulate certain "foundations," (speaking roughly, values) such as fairness, loyalty, purity, and liberty to be moral, and find that they correspond with measures of ideology (e.g. Graham et al. 2009). One could also imagine defining the moral sphere in terms of citizens' ability to learn well-structured philosophical frameworks (e.g. Kohlberg et al, 1983). Because these approaches, and perhaps others, are so different, I hope that future work carefully parses what claims are being made about moral psychology, and how they relate to each other.

Morality: The Good and the Bad

Does human moral psychology do more harm or good in politics? Revisit the last paragraph of each empirical chapter above and one will find a somber tone as concerns its effects. Here, I wish to both temper and elaborate on that sense.

First the tempering. Because I think they have the greatest potential to elucidate aspects of mass politics, I have focused on the ugly features of moral psychology: its link to closed-mindedness, rigidity, and punitive emotions. This focus elides several positive features. Aspects of moral psychology, it has been argued, lead humans to admire selfless acts, to feel grateful for generosity, and to feel 'elevation' upon acting selflessly themselves (Algoe and Haidt 2009). Humans are often biased judges of others' behavior, but they might be even more biased if moral psychology did not push them to be impartial (DeScioli and Kurzban 2009). Clinical psychologists deem a diminished capacity for compassion and guilt—moral emotions both—to be characteristic of personality disorders, since the diminishment leads to antisocial and even criminal behavior (American Psychiatric Association 2013).

Even the so-called 'ugly' features are not inherently bad. Words like contempt and disgust carry a negative connotation. There is sometimes an assumption—and I play off it in the pages above—that politics would be better if we could purge it of these feelings. But the plain truth is that some features of politics *are* disgusting. Some people and policies *merit* contempt. As a positivist by habit and training, I avoid the question of which ones, but these capacities might well be crucial to a well-functioning political system.[4]

Where my tone is negative, it stems from a belief that understanding moral psychology identifies obstacles that are among the most difficult for a democratic political system to navigate. Democracy aspires to nurture

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[4]I often think of the American Civil Rights Movement as an effort that was carried by moral emotions, whose positive legacy is no longer controversial.

an environment where citizens can entreaty, disabuse, and persuade, but moral processing pushes against these things. Democracy requires tolerance between people with deep disagreements, but moral feelings make disagreements intolerable. Democracy requires acquiescence between communities that hold conflicting visions, but moral rules make us loathe to acquiesce.

Those, then, are the broad contours of morality—the human experience of it, anyway. It is a source of social harmony, but also conflict; unity, but also strife. I hope the reader has acquired an appreciation for how much our moral capacities allow us to accomplish, but also a sense that we often would be well served to cool their divisive effects. Perhaps the time will come when reason makes the latter task less urgent.

But that will have to be a different book.

Instrumentation for "Reconsidering"

Question Wordings – Evaluations of Government and Society Study

Full documentation is available online at http://www.electionstudies.org/. The variables used in this study are all from EGSS Wave 4. The measures are as follows.

Follow politics   Coded 0 [low attention to politics] to 1 [high attention to politics].

- Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all? [Hardly at all; Only now and then; Some of the time; Most of the time]

Prospective Participation   Derived from three questions and coded 0 [low participation] to 1 [high participation]. As described in the text, subjects were randomly assigned to versions that did or did not emphasize imagination (shown in italics). The random assignment does not appear to affect the inferences in focus in the chapter, so responses to the two versions are pooled together.

- In the future, how likely are you to attend a meeting to talk about political or social concerns? *As you answer, imagine what doing this would involve – spending a couple of hours talking about a topic where people are likely to disagree.* [Not at all likely; A little likely; Moderately likely; Very likely; Extremely likely]

- In the future, how likely are you to give money to an organization concerned with a political or social issue? *As you answer, imagine what doing this would involve – spending some money that you would not have available to spend on something else.* [Not at all likely; A little likely; Moderately likely; Very likely; Extremely likely]

- In the future, how likely are you to distribute information or advertisements supporting a political or social interest group? *As you answer, imagine what doing so would involve – spending a couple of hours talking to people you do not know about important political or social issues.* [Not at all likely; A little likely; Moderately likely; Very likely; Extremely likely]

Retrospective Participation   Derived from two questions and coded 0 [performed neither action] to 1 [performed both actions].

- During the past 12 months, have you worn a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or placed a sign in your window or in front of your house, or have you not done this in the past 12 months? [Have done this in the past 12 months; Have not done this in the past 12 months]

- During the past 12 months, have you given money to any candidate running for public office, any political party, or any other group that supported or opposed candidates, or have you not done this in the past 12 months? [Have done this in the past 12 months; Have not done this in the past 12 months]

Candidate Feeling Thermometers   Coded 0 [low warmth] to 1 [high warmth].

- Please look at the graphic below. We'd like to get your feelings toward some of our political leaders and other people who are in the news these days. We'll show the name of a person and we'd like you to rate that person using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the person and that you don't care too much for that person. You would rate the person at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the person. If we come to a person whose name you don't recognize, you don't need to rate that person. Just click Next and we'll move on to the next one.

Political Efficacy   Derived from two questions. Coded 0 [low efficacy] to 1 [high efficacy].

- How much do government officials care what people like you think? [A great deal; A lot; A moderate amount; A little; Not at all]

- How much can people like you affect what the government does? [A great deal; A lot; A moderate amount; A little; Not at all]

Propensity to Moralize   As described in the text, this measure is the average moral conviction across the issues that the respondent says are most important, least important, and a randomly assigned third issue. Coded 0 [low propensity to moralize] to 1 [high propensity to moralize].

- Which of these do you think is the most important issue facing the United States today? [The budget deficit; the war in Afghanistan; Education; Health care; Illegal immigration; The economic recession; Abortion; Same-sex marriage; The environment; Unemployment]

- Whether you are for or against any particular policy, which of these do you think is the least important issue facing the United States today?

- How much are your opinions about [most important issue] based on your moral values? [Not at all; A little; A moderate amount; A lot; A great deal]

- How much are your opinions about [least important issue] based on your moral values? [Not at all; A little; A moderate amount; A lot; A great deal]

- How much are your opinions about [random issue] based on your moral values? [Not at all; A little; A moderate amount; A lot; A great deal]

Strength of Party Identification   Coded 0 [Pure independents] to 1 [Strong partisans].

- Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or what? [Republican; Democrat; Independent; Something else]

- Would you call yourself a strong [Democrat/Republican] or a not very strong [Democrat/Republican]? [Strong; Not very strong]

- Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?

Respondent ideology   Coded 0 [very liberal] to 1 [very conservative].

- When it comes to politics, would you describe yourself, and these groups, as liberal, conservative, or neither liberal nor conservative? [You] [Very liberal; Somewhat liberal; Closer to liberals; Neither liberal nor conservative; Closer to conservatives; Somewhat conservative; Very conservative]

Blame for Economy   Derived by using information on the respondent's partisanship to identify the difference in blame toward the out-partisan, versus the in-partisan. Coded 0 [blame the in-partisan] to 1 [blame to out-partisan].

- How much is each of the following people or groups to blame for the poor economic conditions of the past few years? [Democrats in U.S. Congress; Republicans in U.S. Congress] [A great deal; A lot; A moderate amount; A little; Not at all]

Church Attendance   From profile questionnaire. Coded 0 [never attend] to 1 [attend more than once a week].

- How often do you attend religious services? [More than once a week; Once a week; Once or twice a month; A few times a year; Once a year or less; Never]

Question Wordings – Student and MTurk Samples

Party ID   Seven-point scale, scaled to run from 0 [Strong Democrat] to 1 [Strong Republican]. Derived from three questions:

- Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what? [Democrat; Republican; Independent; Other/ Don't know]

- Would you call yourself a STRONG [Democrat/Republican], or a NOT VERY STRONG [Democrat/Republican]? [Strong; Not very strong]

- [Asked of non-identifiers] Do you think of yourself as close to the Republican Party, or to the Democratic Party? [Closer to the Democratic Party; Closer to the Republican Party; Neither]

Party ID Strength   Derived by folding the Party ID measure at its midpoint, so that it runs from 0 [Pure independent] to 1 [Strong partisan].

Ideology   Runs from 0 [Extremely liberal] to 1 [Extremely conservative]. Measured by the question:

- We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this? [Extremely liberal; Liberal; Slightly liberal; Moderate/middle of the road; Slightly conservative; Conservative; Extremely conservative; I haven't thought much about this]

Church attendance   Runs from 0 [Never attend church] to 1 [Attend more than once per week]. Measured by the question:

- People practice their religion in different ways, and of course some people are not religious. How often do you attend religious services? [More than once a week; Once a week; Once or twice a month; A few times a year; Once a year or less; Never]

Extremity of Opinions on Political Issues   For each issue, runs from 0 [Neutral opinion] to 1 [Extreme opinion, either liberal or conservative] First, subjects saw the introductory text:

> The next section concerns five big problems facing the country today. Of course, for each of these problems, there are many possible solutions and mixtures of solutions. But when we listen to what leaders and the political parties have to say about them, we can often narrow the approaches down to two broad alternatives. We'd like to know how you feel about these alternatives.

Then, each subject saw the following questions in a randomized order:

- As you may know, many states are now facing large shortfalls in their annual budgets. One idea that has been proposed to help balance these budgets is to limit the collective bargaining power of state employee unions, which include teachers, police officers, and firefighters. A separate idea that has been proposed is to raise state taxes on businesses. Which of these two options do you prefer? [Strongly prefer to limit the bargaining power of unions; Somewhat prefer to limit the bargaining power of unions; Slightly prefer to limit the bargaining power of unions; I don't have an opinion one way or the other on this issue; Slightly prefer to raise taxes on business; Somewhat prefer to raise taxes on business Strongly prefer to raise taxes on business]

- As you may know, the Social Security program in the United States is projected to run out of funds in 2033 if changes are not made. One idea that has been proposed to address the problem is to raise taxes on people currently in the work force. Alternatively, some people have proposed cutting back on the benefits the government provides future retirees. [Strongly prefer to raise taxes; Somewhat prefer to raise taxes; Slightly prefer to raise taxes; I don't have an opinion one way or the other on this issue; Slightly prefer to cut benefits; Somewhat prefer to cut benefits; Strongly prefer to cut benefits]

- As you may know, the federal government currently provides funding for medical research that involves embryonic stem cells. Some people favor this research because it has the potential to lead to important scientific advances, such as cures for diseases. Others oppose the research because it can involve destroying human embryos, which can develop into a fetus. [Strongly favor federal funding for stem cell research; Somewhat favor federal funding for stem cell research; Slightly favor federal funding for stem cell research; Neither favor nor oppose federal funding for stem cell research; Slightly oppose federal funding for stem cell research; Somewhat oppose federal funding for stem cell research; Strongly oppose federal funding for stem cell research]

- As you likely know, many people disagree about whether same-sex couples should be able to get married and have the law recognize the marriage as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages. How about you? [Strongly believe that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry and have the same rights as traditional couples Somewhat believe that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry and have the same rights as traditional couples; Slightly believe that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry and have the same rights as traditional couples; I don't have an opinion one way or the other on this issue; Slightly believe that same-sex couples should NOT be allowed to marry and have the same rights as traditional couples; Somewhat believe that same-sex couples should NOT be allowed to marry and have the same rights as traditional couples; Strongly believe that same-sex couples should NOT be allowed to marry and have the same rights as traditional couples]

- As you may know, the U.S. plans to withdraw all its troops from Afghanistan by the end of the year 2014. Some people think it is essential to stick to this timetable to make sure the troops come home soon. Others favor keeping troops in Afghanistan as long as it takes them to accomplish their goals, such as fully training the new Afghan military. [Strongly favor sticking to the 2014 timetable; Strongly favor sticking to the 2014 timetable; Strongly favor sticking to the 2014 timetable; I don't have an opinion either way on this issue; Slightly favor keeping the troops until goals are accomplished; Somewhat favor keeping the troops until goals are accomplished; Strongly favor keeping the troops until goals are accomplished]

Issue Importance   Runs from 0 [Not at all important] to 1 [Very important]. As a follow up to each of the Extremity questions, subjects were asked:

- How important is this issue to you personally? [Not at all; Slightly; Moderately; Somewhat; Very]

Personal Relevance   Runs from 0 [Not at all relevant] to 1 [Very relevant]. As a follow up to each of the Extremity questions, subjects were asked:

- How much does the outcome of this issue directly affect you? [Not at all; Slightly; Moderately; Somewhat; Very]

Moral Conviction   Runs from 0 [No moral conviction] to 1 [High moral conviction]. Derived from three questions. As a follow up to each of the Extremity questions, subjects were asked, "To what extent is your opinion on this issue. . ."

- . . . a reflection of your core moral beliefs and convictions? [Not at all; slightly; moderately; much; very much]

- . . . deeply connected to your fundamental beliefs about right and wrong?

- . . . based on a moral principle [Student sample only]

Emotions   For each emotion, runs from 0 [low] to 1 [high]. As a follow up to each Extremity question, subjects were presented with a grid that said,

- "How well do each of the following phrases describe how you feel toward people who disagree with you about this issue? ... warm toward them; cold toward them; angry at them; disgusted with them; afraid of them; respect for them; frustration with them; sad about them; appreciative of them?" [Not at all; Slightly; Somewhat; Very; Extremely]

Gap in Party Affect   Runs from -1 [Positive affect toward the Out Party paired with Negative affect toward the In Party] to 1 [Negative affect toward the Out Party paired with Negative affect toward the In Party]. (In the data, only 2% of the values are negative.) Derived by using information on the respondent's party identification to classify each of the following questions are pertaining to the In Party or the Out Party:

- Do you like the Democratic Party, dislike it, or neither like nor dislike it? [Like it a great deal; Somewhat like it; Like it a little; Neither like it nor dislike it; Dislike it a little; Somewhat dislike it; Dislike it a great deal]

- Do you like the Republican Party, dislike it, or neither like nor dislike it?

Participation scale   Runs from 0 [Low participation] to 1 [High participation]. Derived from nine questions. "Finally, we would like to find out about some things people do to help a party or a candidate win an election. During the recent campaign, did you. . .

- . . . talk to any people and try to show them why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates? [Yes; No]

- . . . wear a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or place a sign in your window or in front of your house?

- . . . do any (other) work for one of the parties or candidates?

- . . . attend a meeting to talk about political or social concerns?

- . . . attend a protest march, rally, or demonstration?

- . . . sign a petition about a political or social issue?

- . . . distribute information or advertising supporting a political or social interest group?

- . . . give money to an individual candidate running for public office?

- . . . give any money to a political party?

Instrumentation for "No Compromise"

Question Wordings – Study 1

Most of the measures used are provided in the "Reconsidering" appendix. The additional ones are provided below. For regression analysis, all variables are coded to run 0–1 except for education, where there are strata for no diploma, HS diploma, Some college, BA, and Advanced degree. Partisanship and ideology are split into separate scales for Democratic identity, Republican identity, liberalism, and conservatism.

Religious   Respondents were presented with a checklist as described below. There were classified as religious if they identified as a non-traditional believer, born again, evangelical, Pentecostal, fundamentalist, or Christian.

- Which of the following terms describe your religious beliefs? [Liberal; Progressive; Non-traditional believer; Born again; evangelical; Secular; agnostic; Atheist; Charismatic; Pentecostal; Humanist; Fundamentalist; Christian; Traditional; Mainline; Spiritual but not religious; None of the above]

Political knowledge   Derived from four questions and coded 0 [all wrong] to 1 [all correct].

- Who is the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court? [John Roberts; David Cole; Anthony Kennedy; Larry Thompson]

- Who is the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom? [David Cameron; Nick Clegg; Tony Hayward; Richard Branson]

- Who is the Speaker of the House of Representatives? [John Boehner; Harry Reid; Eric Holder; Mitt Romney]

- On which of the following does the U.S. federal government spend the least money? [Foreign aid; Medicare; national defense; Social Security]

Question Wordings – Study 2

Many of the measures are identical to those described in the appendix to "Reconsidering." (The data sources are the same.) The compromise proposals attached to each issue are as follows. Responses are coded from 0 [oppose compromise] to 1 [favor compromise].

Collective bargaining   Please think once more about the collective bargaining issue mentioned in the previous section. As you recall, many states face budget shortfalls. Some propose balancing budgets by limiting the collective bargaining power of state employee unions. Others propose raising state taxes on businesses.

   Suppose there were a proposal to mix these two approaches. Taxes on businesses would increase. As far as collective bargaining goes, it would be allowed for negotiations over wages, but would be prohibited for negotiations over benefits and pensions. Would you favor such a proposal, oppose it, or would you neither favor nor oppose it? [Strongly favor; Somewhat favor; Slightly favor; Neither favor nor oppose; Slightly oppose; Somewhat oppose; Strongly oppose]

Social Security   Please think once more about the Social Security shortfall mentioned in the previous section. As you recall, the Social Security fund will not be able to meet its obligations in the future if changes are not made. Some people propose raising taxes on people currently in the work force. Others propose cutting back on benefits the government provides to future retirees.

   Suppose there were a proposal in Congress to address the Social Security shortfall with a mixture of the two approaches. Some tax deductions would end and, as a result, most people would pay more. But benefits scheduled for people more than five years away from retirement would decrease, also serving to bridge the shortfall. Would you favor such a proposal, oppose it, or neither favor nor oppose it?

Stem Cell Research   Please think once more about the embryonic stem cell issue. As you recall, some people favor federal funding for stem cell research because it has the potential to lead to important scientific advances. Others oppose the research because it can involve destroying human embryos.

Suppose there were a proposal for the government to fund stem cell research, but in a limited way. Funding would permanently be capped at very low levels, and would only support research that could be truly transformative, such as finding a cure for Alzheimer's disease, but not less serious illnesses. Would you favor such a proposal, oppose it, or neither favor nor oppose it?

Same-sex Marriage   Please think once more about the same-sex marriage issue. Suppose there were a proposal to give same-sex couples the same legal status as traditional couples for purposes of taxation, hospital visits, and everything else, but for the partnerships to be called civil unions, rather than marriages. Moreover, leading gay rights groups would agree not to bring the issue up again for a generation. Would you favor such a proposal, oppose it, or neither favor nor oppose it?

Troops in Afghanistan   Please think once more about the matter of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. As you recall, some people think it is essential for the troops to come home in 2014. Others think they need to stay as long as it takes to fully develop and train the Afghan military.

Suppose there were a proposal for half of the 68,000 troops in Afghanistan to leave in 2014, but for a garrison of 34,000 troops to stay in the country for as long as it takes. Would you favor such a proposal, oppose it, or neither favor nor oppose it?

Question Wordings – Study 3

Social Security Attitude Characteristics   Similar to previous studies, the attitude characteristics are measured by an attitude extremity question with follow ups. All questions coded 0–1 in keeping with the conventions above.

- As you may know, the Social Security Program in the United States is projected to run out of funds in 2033 if changes are not made. Some people think that, to address this problem, we should decrease the benefits that the government pays out, such as by raising the retirement age or lowering monthly payments. How about you? How much do you support cuts to Social Security benefits? [Strongly oppose decreasing Social Security benefits; Somewhat oppose decreasing Social Security benefits; Slightly oppose decreasing Social Security benefits; I don't have an opinion one way or the other on this issue; Slightly support decreasing Social Security benefits; Somewhat support decreasing Social Security benefits; Strongly support decreasing Social Security benefits]

- (Importance) How important is this issue to you personally? [Not at all; Slightly; Moderately; Much; Very much]

- (Relevance) How much does the outcome of this issue directly affect you?

- (Moral conviction 1) To what extent is this issue a reflection of your core moral beliefs and convictions?

- (Moral conviction 2) To what extent is this issue deeply connected to your fundamental beliefs about right and wrong?

Instrumentation for "Unthinkable!"

Question Wording – Study 1

Social Security attitude characteristics were measured as in Study 3 of "No Compromise." (This is the same data source.)

Argument Quality   Coded 0 [low quality] to 1 [high quality].

- How would you rate the quality of the ideas raised in the news clipping? Do they seem high in quality, or do they not seem that way? [Very low in quality; Somewhat low in quality; Moderately high quality; Very high quality; Extremely high quality]

Question Wording – Study 2

Attitude importance, personal relevance, and moral conviction were measured with follow-up questions, as in Study 1 and elsewhere.

Extremity of Opinions on Issues   Coded from 0 [neutral attitude] to 1 [extreme attitude].

- As you likely know, there has been a lot of talk in the news lately about the United States taking military action against Syria to reduce that country's ability to use chemical weapons. How do you feel about this issue? Would you favor or oppose the U.S. taking military action against Syria in order to reduce that country's ability to use chemical weapons? [Strongly oppose taking military action against Syria; Somewhat oppose taking military action against Syria; Slightly oppose taking military action against Syria; Neither favor nor oppose taking military action against Syria; Slightly favor taking military action against Syria; Somewhat favor taking military action against Syria; Strongly favor taking military action against Syria]

- As you may know, the Social Security Trust Fund in the United States is projected to run out of funds in 2033 if changes are not made. Some people think that, to address this problem, we should decrease the benefits that the government pays out, such as by raising the retirement age or lowering monthly payments. How about you? How much do you support cuts to Social Security benefits?

- As you likely know, some people would like to change the laws covering the sale and ownership of firearms in the United States. Suppose that people who prefer that these laws be much more strict are on one end of a scale. Other people, who oppose these changes, are at the other end, And of course some people are somewhere in between.

- As you likely know, many states are now facing large shortfalls in their annual budgets. To help balance these budgets, some people think that state governments should limit the collective bargaining power of state employee unions, which include teachers, police officers, and firefighters.

- As you likely know, some people favor government investing in nuclear power as a way to meet our energy needs. How about you? Overall, do you favor or oppose government investing in nuclear energy as one way to provide electricity for the United States?

Issue arguments   There are eight arguments associated with each issue, but subjects only evaluated four for each issue—the four on their own side of the issue. (Neutral respondents were arbitrarily assigned to one side or the other.) The first two arguments in each set of four are deontological, and the latter two are consequential.

- Syria—Anti-intervention

- As a matter of right and wrong, America has no right to interfere with the internal politics of another nation.
- It is wrong to put American troops in harm's way for a conflict that does not directly affect Americans.
- Military action is simply not likely to be effective, since the Syrian government could continue to develop and use chemical weapons in secret.
- It is not prudent for America to conduct an expensive military operation in Syria, giving its looming debt problems.

- Syria—Pro intervention

  - America has a fundamental obligation to thwart the use of chemical weapons.
  - As a model of democracy, America has an obligation to oppose authoritarian dictators.
  - If America does not engage in military action, it is likely to embolden dictators elsewhere.
  - There would be costs to military action in Syria, but the benefits that could come from it are worth the costs.

- Social Security—Favor cuts

  - People have a fundamental obligation and responsibility to make provisions for their own retirement.
  - It is wrong to give away (through taxing and spending) money that people have worked hard to earn.
  - Cutting back on Social Security has some costs, but also benefits: it will free up some money for people to invest and create jobs.
  - Many Social Security benefits go to people in the middle or upper class who can get by without, and could be spent elsewhere.

- Social Security—Oppose cuts

  - Society has a core obligation to provide everyone with a safety net.
  - It is wrong to cut back on benefits for future retirees when they have already been paying into the system.
  - Having an assured income in retirement makes people happier and more productive workers earlier in life, which is good for everyone.
  - Many people don't have enough information or experience to handle the private investing that would be necessary if Social Security were to be scaled back.

- Gun control—Stricter gun control

  - It is wrong for private citizens to own a tool whose only purpose is to kill.
  - Citizens only have a right to own guns whose primary purpose is recreation (such as target shooting or hunting).
  - There are costs to gun control, such as to hobbyists, but the benefits of less violence are worth this tradeoff.
  - If it is harder to purchase the most dangerous types of guns, then the number of accidental deaths from guns is likely to decrease.

- Gun control—Looser gun control

  - Citizens have a fundamental right to protect themselves, and guns are a crucial way to do that.

- It's a matter of fundamental liberties. The government has no right to intrude on what individual citizens buy and sell from each other.
- Measures that restrict what kind of guns can be sold simply aren't likely to be effective, since there are so many guns already on the streets.
- Increased gun control would have benefits, but would also require paying for more regulation, enforcement, and background checks. We don't need those extra costs in our current economic situation.

- Collective bargaining—Against collective bargaining

  - Laws that enshrine collective bargaining require that workers pay fees to a union whether they want to or not. Taking away the right to choose is wrong.
  - Collective bargaining is a way for government workers to boost their salaries beyond what they have a right to receive.
  - In practice, collective bargaining raises expenses for government, which is not prudent in our current circumstances.
  - There are benefits to collective bargaining, but also important costs: When unions succeed in raising compensation for themselves, it can lead to unemployment for other people.

- Collective bargaining—Protect collective bargaining

  - The ability of people to bargain collectively is an inviolable right.
  - As a matter of right and wrong, people are entitled to fair compensation.
  - In the past, claims about government shortfalls have been exaggerated. It's likely to be true this time, too.
  - To allow collective bargaining carries a cost to taxpayers, but these are outweighed by the benefits it creates for workers, making it a prudent policy.

- Nuclear energy—Oppose nuclear energy

  - Even if nuclear power has some advantages relative to alternative ways to produce energy, it is wrong to take on any risk of a nuclear meltdown.
  - Nuclear energy generates radioactive waste, and it is wrong that anybody should have to store that material.
  - Nuclear energy requires thinking about both potential risks and benefits. For the time being, the risk of a meltdown is too big to take on.
  - Even if investing in nuclear power would provide some benefits, it's not a high enough priority to spend money when we face so many problems in education, health, and other areas.

- Nuclear energy—Favor Nuclear Energy

  - As oil reserves continue to deplete, we have an obligation to the next generation to develop sustainable energy alternatives.
  - When the people of a particular area decide that they want to construct a nuclear power plant and take on the risks that come with it, they have a right to do so.
  - The risks the come along with nuclear energy are minor when compared to the benefit of decreased air pollution.
  - Nuclear energy requires thinking about both potential risks and benefits. The technology has now advanced far enough that the risk of a meltdown is minor.

Question Wording – Study 3

Attitude importance, personal relevance, and moral conviction were measured with follow-up questions, as in Study 1 and elsewhere.

Extremity of Opinions on Issues   Coded from 0 [neutral attitude] to 1 [extreme attitude].

- As you know, there are currently several proposals to change the laws covering the sale and ownership of firearms in the United States. Suppose people who prefer that these laws be much more strict are on one end of a scale. Other people, who oppose these changes are at the other end. And of course some people are somewhere in between. Where would you place yourself on such a scale? [Strongly support stricter laws concerning gun ownership; Somewhat support stricter laws concerning gun ownership; Slightly support stricter laws concerning gun ownership; I don't have an opinion one way or the other on this issue; Slightly oppose stricter laws concerning gun ownership; Somewhat oppose stricter laws concerning gun ownership; Strongly oppose stricter laws concerning gun ownership]

- As you may know, the Social Security program in the United States is projected to run out of funds in 2033 if changes are not made. One idea that has been proposed to address the problem is to raise taxes on people currently in the work force. Alternatively, some people have proposed cutting back on the benefits the government provides future retirees. How about you? Would you prefer to see taxes raised to preserve benefits at the current level, or would you prefer to cut benefits so taxes don't have to go up.

- As you likely know, many people believe that the government of Iran is attempting to develop a nuclear weapon, which it could use or give to some other organization. The United States has undertaken economic and diplomatic efforts to get Iran to shut down its nuclear program. Suppose all economic and diplomatic efforts fail. Some people think that, if that happens, the United States should take military action against Iran. Other people oppose the United States taking military action. How about you? Where would you place yourself on such a scale?

- As you likely know, some people favor government investing in nuclear power as a way to meet our energy needs. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale. Others oppose investing in nuclear energy. Suppose these people are at the other end. How about you? Overall, do you favor or oppose government investing in nuclear energy as one way to provide electricity for the United States?

- As you likely know, some people feel that the wealthy already pay enough of their income in taxes. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale. Others think that wealthy citizens should pay higher taxes to support government projects and programs that benefit less wealthy people. Suppose these people are at the other end. How about you? Do you favor or oppose raising taxes on wealthy Americans?

Hypothetical revelations   There are two revelations for each issue: one for each side. Subjects saw the revelation that pushed against their prior attitudes. Subjects with neutral issue were randomly assigned one revelation or the other.

- Gun control

  - Suppose, just for the sake of argument, you learned that a reputable bipartisan research organization conducted a rigorous study on the likely effects of stricter gun control legislation and concluded that the number of lives saved would likely be quite large – perhaps several hundred per year. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where do you suppose you would place yourself on this issue?

  - Suppose, just for the sake of argument, you learned that a reputable bipartisan research organization conducted a rigorous study on the likely effects of stricter gun control legislation and concluded that the number of lives saved would likely be small – perhaps even zero. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where do you suppose you would place yourself on this issue?

- Social Security

  - Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that a bipartisan study group conducted a careful analysis of individuals' ability to invest money wisely and found that, with a small amount of training, most people are quite capable of making sound investments. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where would you place yourself on this issue?

  - Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that a bipartisan study group conducted a careful analysis of retirement savings and concluded that payments to Social Security beneficiaries generate as much general economic benefit as any plausible alternative use of the money. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where would you place yourself on this issue?

- Intervene in Iran

  - Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that the Department of Defense determined that, on account of improvements in military technology, successfully disrupting Iran's nuclear program would be surprisingly easy, requiring only remote strikes from planes and unmanned drones. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where would you place yourself on the scale?

  - Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that the Department of Defense determined that, on account of sophisticated Iranian defenses, successfully disrupting Iran's nuclear program would be surprisingly costly, requiring an intervention on the scale of those in Iraq and Afghanistan. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where would you place yourself on the scale?

- Nuclear energy

  - Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that the International Atomic Energy Administration, in cooperation with a well-regarded team of international researchers, determined that the likelihood of even newly constructed nuclear reactors experiencing a serious incident in a given year is surprisingly high – on the order of one in one thousand. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where would you place yourself on the scale?

  - Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that the International Atomic Energy Administration, in cooperation with a well-regarded team of international researchers, determined that the likelihood of newly constructed nuclear reactors experiencing a serious incident in a given year is extremely low – on the order of one in ten million. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where would you place yourself on the scale?

- Taxes

  - Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that a team of highly respected and bipartisan economists conducted a rigorous analysis and reached a firm consensus that increased taxes on the wealthy would not hurt economic recovery, as wealthy citizens would likely work just as hard even if they have to pay more in taxes. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where do you suppose you would place yourself on the scale?

  - Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that a team of highly respected and bipartisan economists conducted a rigorous analysis and reached a firm consensus that a lower tax rate for wealthy Americans would speed economic recovery, as these individuals would invest the money they saved in new business ventures. That has not happened, but supposing it did, where do you suppose you would place yourself on the scale?

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