

## THE POLITICAL SELF

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Politics exists in some form in most, if not all, human societies. Political behavior has even been observed in some nonhuman primates (de Waal, 2013). Intense attitudes and beliefs often form the basis for activism and collective action (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Indeed, activism has made events such as the abolishment of slavery and outright segregation in some societies possible. Yet because activists tend to organize around a shared grievance, it appears to also possess a dark side—a need for a rival or “enemy” to spur collective action in pursuit of a political goal (Martin, Scully, & Levitt, 1990; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). In the political domain, the “enemy” appears to take at least two potential forms: an obstacle to achieving desired ends or groups attempting to undo already achieved programs, policies, institutions, or practices. What is it about politics that generates such intensity and animosity? How can a social domain trigger such intense

positive feelings and reactions while at the same time rely on what appears to be a foundation of negative feelings and reactions?

In this chapter we present a perspective that suggests that, at least for some people, politics is a central component of their identity. For others, politics may remain a more peripheral concern but temporarily become a central component of their identity due to situational factors. Regardless of its permanence, when politics is a central component of the self, it appears that the protection of one's political self becomes paramount. We suggest this is because many political attitudes and beliefs are, in part, reflections of one's moral intuitions. Moralized issues help people define themselves and identify like-minded others (Graham & Haidt, 2010), yet they also make compromise with those who hold different views difficult (Skitka, 2010).

We first connect the political domain to issues of self and identity and then provide a brief theoretical overview of our approach. Next, we explore how the political domain provides people with opportunity to satisfy their need for affiliation and inclusion with others. Finally, we explore how the political domain also offers opportunity for people to satisfy their need for differentiation and distinctiveness from others.

## POLITICS AND THE SELF

People simultaneously seek inclusion with and differentiation from others (Brewer, 1999). These two opposing needs are part of a psychological mechanism that attempts to balance this tension and obtain a state of optimal distinctiveness (Brewer, 1991). Thus, large-scale societies spur the formation of smaller subgroups that can balance these competing needs more effectively. The political domain represents a social context in which the inclusion-differentiation dynamic constitutes an almost ever-present tension. In this chapter, we propose the construct of the *political self*, a subdivision of the self that helps an individual navigate the tension between the competing needs for assimilation and differentiation within the political domain.

In general, the self serves organizational and motivational functions. It organizes self-relevant information, such as one's identities, roles, groups, attitudes, values, and goals (Sherman & Cohen, 2006), into self-schemas that allow people to hold cognitive generalizations about the self. These self-schemas are based on their prior experiences and make it easier to process, evaluate, retrieve, and respond to self-relevant information (Markus, 1977). Most people also strive to maintain a positive self-image leading them to interpret and evaluate information in a self-serving manner. Self-defining traits, values, beliefs, attitudes, goals, groups, and relationships are looked upon favorably, whereas alternative characteristics, views, and affiliations are evaluated less favorably or, at times, even denigrated and

denounced (Brewer, 1999). This logic can be extended to the collective self (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). That is, people often strive to maintain a positive group image, make favorable social comparisons that differentiate their group from others, and resist incompatible and/or negative information about their group (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998).

Thus, the political self organizes one's beliefs, attitudes, and affiliations and aids in the processing of politically relevant information. People use their value and belief systems to define themselves as unique individuals and to affiliate with others who share their views (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Moreover, as we show later, people often display self-serving political biases when evaluating people based on their ideological views and ideologically relevant information. These biases function to enhance one's self-image and social identity within the political domain through favoring the in-group *and* derogating political out-groups.

We have limited our analysis of the political self to two ideological identifications within the political domain, liberal and conservative. Although there are a number of other potential political identifications, the bulk of psychological research has focused primarily on these two groups. We further propose that although liberals and conservatives have different values underlying their political views (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009) both groups are committed to maintaining their beliefs and promoting their group interests. In this way, the political self is similar across ideological lines. Indeed, we suspect that the political self serves similar functions across the political spectrum.

Furthermore, we do not define these ideologies by the specific policies, parties, or organizations they support. Rather we consider them general patterns of thought and behavior that have largely remained consistent across time and place (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). Specifically, those who self-identify as conservative have demonstrated a heightened desire for social conformity and a respect for cultural tradition (Altemeyer, 1996; Feldman, 2003). Those who self-identify as liberals on the other hand have demonstrated a heightened desire for uniqueness and a tendency to challenge long-standing norms and traditions (Haidt, 2012; Stern, West, & Schmidt, 2014). Thus, these patterns of thought appear to produce a psychological affinity for attitudes, beliefs, values, and, potentially, social policies available within one's social context that match one's underlying psychological intuitions, motives, and needs (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; Jost et al., 2003). To further clarify, this chapter focuses on the psychological characteristics of those who identify as liberal and conservative. We acknowledge that there is a robust debate over whether ideology is ideally conceptualized in a unidimensional (e.g., left-right, liberal-conservative) or

multidimensional fashion (Feldman & Johnston, 2014; Jost, 2006; Stenner, 2009) but believe such a discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter.

### THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

The necessity of interdependence has led humans to develop psychological adaptations for group living (Brewer, 1997; Haidt, 2012). It also introduces bedrock social organization dilemmas<sup>1</sup> (BSODs; Hibbing, Smith, & Alford, 2013; Smith, Oxley, Hibbing, Alford, & Hibbing, 2011) that are universal to most, if not all, human societies. A BSOD is a social problem that arises from living within a large-scale interdependent human society. It is a general descriptive category that can be used to group more specific cases that arise in different human societies and thus provide a way to understand cross-cultural commonalities within the political domain. For instance, BSODs include how to share resources, how to punish free-riders, exploiters, and social deviants; how to manage intergroup relations; and how to distribute scarce resources (Hibbing et al., 2013).

Although considered universal, the specific form BSODs take within a given society is context dependent. For instance, debates over interracial marriage or same-sex marriage constitute peripheral issues organized around stable definitional cores (Jost et al., 2003) concerned with in-group identification, inequality, and access to intangible resources such as status, opportunity, and rights. The peripheral issues, such as which aggrieved group is challenging an oppressive law, can change over time, but within a society, the core of the debate, who is worthy of certain status, opportunities, and rights, persists.

The persistence of BSODs implies that different preferred solutions emerge among members of the same society. If everyone agreed on a solution there would not be a dilemma. In this way, BSODs can be considered *essentially contested concepts*, which do not and cannot have an agreed-upon meaning (MacKenzie, 2003). That there are fundamental ideas, concepts, or dimensions along which humans disagree, and appear to almost always disagree, is psychologically interesting and important, in part, because these disagreements provide opportunity for the political self to satisfy the competing needs of assimilation and differentiation.

### THE POLITICAL SELF AND THE NEED FOR ASSIMILATION

One theme that underlies many BSODs concerns balancing the rights and needs of the individual against those of the larger community (Brewer, 1991; Feldman, 2003; Haidt, 2012). Within large-scale human societies, a

broad national identity often exists. Optimal-distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991) suggests this national identity would have difficulty achieving optimal distinctiveness because increased identification with a national social identity will result in feelings of depersonalization and trigger a desire to express individuality.

Yet the needs for assimilation and differentiation are dynamic and hold each other in check. The need for differentiation spurred by immersion into a larger social group ultimately prompts a need for assimilation into smaller social groups that better satisfy both needs simultaneously (Brewer, 1999). These subgroups, and especially political subgroups, can be organized around a shared grievance (or a collection of shared grievances)—the lack of a solution for a BSOD or the presence of an inadequate one. This is often a prerequisite for the development of a politicized group identity and collective action (Simon & Klandermans, 2001).

Ideological identification implies a psychological affinity for an ideological narrative that details how social reality *should* and *ought* to be like, why current reality diverges from this ideal, and how to solve this predicament (Martin et al., 1990). Thus, the shared narrative that helps bind people together into a political group (Graham & Haidt, 2010) capable of taking action (Simon & Klandermans, 2001) is a reflection of individual group members being psychologically similar.

### Foundations of Similarity: Psychological Characteristics of Liberals

Psychological research indicates consistent associations between liberalism and cognitive flexibility<sup>2</sup> (Jost et al., 2003; Onraet, Van Hiel, Dhont, & Patyn, 2013; Stevens, 2013; Van Hiel, Onraet, & De Pauw, 2010), openness to experience (Jost et al., 2003), a desire to for uniqueness (Stern et al., 2014), and a greater tendency to experience collective (or group-based) guilt (Klandermans, Werner, & van Doorn, 2008; Roccas, Klar, & Liviatan, 2004). Liberals' intuitive moral concerns generally focus on care and fairness, and give less weight to moral concerns associated with issues of sanctity, authority, or loyalty (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2009).

Consistent with the association between liberalism and cognitive flexibility (Jost et al., 2003), liberals display a greater tendency to adopt situational explanations for people's behavior (e.g., Skitka, 1999; for an exception, see Morgan, Mullen, & Skitka, 2010). Compared to conservatives, liberals tend to rely less on stereotypes in person perception (Altemeyer, 1996; Stern, West, Jost, & Rule, 2013). Additionally and consistent with the association between liberalism and a need for uniqueness, liberals do not identify as strongly with national and ethnic in-groups as conservatives (Altemeyer,

1996; Klandermands et al., 2008; Roccas et al., 2004). Finally, the experience of collective guilt appears to motivate greater acceptance of policies typically associated with liberalism (in the United States) such as affirmative action (Branscombe, Slugoski, & Kappen, 2004), increased environmental regulations (Ferguson & Branscombe, 2010), and the withdrawal of American and British troops from Iraq (Iyer, Schmader, & Lickell, 2007).

### Foundations of Similarity: Psychological Characteristics of Conservatives

Extensive research on the psychological foundations of political conservatism (e.g., Altemeyer, 1996; Jost et al., 2003) has found consistent associations between conservatism and cognitive rigidity (e.g., needs for order, structure, and closure; intolerance of ambiguity; Jost et al., 2003; Onraet et al., 2013; Van Hiel et al., 2010), threat sensitivity (Onraet et al., 2013; Van Hiel et al., 2010), and disgust sensitivity (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009; Inbar, Pizarro, Iyer, & Haidt, 2012). Conservatism is also consistently associated with intuitive moral concerns about loyalty, authority, and sanctity (Haidt, 2012).

These psychological characteristics, in part, produce an affinity for conservative ideologies or social movements (Haidt, 2012; Jost et al., 2009, 2003). For instance, conservatives' heightened threat sensitivity (Onraet et al., 2013; Van Hiel et al., 2010) often manifests as conservatives perceiving the world as a more dangerous place than do liberals (Altemeyer, 1996). Compared to liberals, conservatives are more likely to employ stereotypes across a wide range of behavioral domains (e.g., unemployment, AIDS infection, being impacted by a natural disaster) and possess a tendency to make dispositional attributions over situational ones (Altemeyer, 1996; Skitka, 1999). The replicability of these findings has led to widespread acceptance of the view that conservatism is a form of motivated social cognition adopted in response to social threat and uncertainty (Jost et al., 2003).

### Political Ideology as Motivated Social Cognition

The psychological literature has focused almost exclusively on conservatism (e.g., Altemeyer, 1996; Jost et al., 2003). Despite this, we agree with Jost et al. (2003) "that conservative ideologies—like virtually all other belief systems—are adopted in part because they satisfy some psychological needs" (p. 340, emphasis added). Indeed, in the conclusion of their meta-analysis on conservatism as motivated social cognition, Jost et al. encouraged investigations into the psychological motives underlying liberalism. In this spirit, Stern et al. (2014) assessed beliefs and preferences on political (e.g., "America should

strive to strengthen its military") and nonpolitical (e.g., "I like poetry") stimuli and then measured perceived in-group consensus among liberals, conservatives, and moderates. In student and nonstudent samples, liberals underestimated their similarity to other liberals while conservatives and moderates overestimated their similarity to other conservatives and moderates. This underestimation of similarity was driven by liberals' stronger need for uniqueness compared to conservatives and moderates.

Consistent with Stern et al.'s (2014) findings, compared to conservatives, liberals are more likely to experience collective guilt and criticize their national or ethnic in-group for harmful actions, such as excessive acts of warfare (Roccas et al., 2004), damage to the environment (Ferguson & Branscombe, 2010), and slavery and apartheid (Branscombe et al., 2004; Klandermands et al., 2008). Supporting the notion that liberalism, too, may be a form of motivated social cognition, political values can drive attributions. For instance, even though conservatives tend to reach dispositional explanations for behavior more easily than do liberals (Skitka, 1999) this effect can be reversed. Three different studies showed that liberals were more likely to reach dispositional conclusions and blame U.S. Marines who killed civilians in Iraq and police officers in Chicago who killed an escaped cougar from the zoo for their actions (Morgan et al., 2010). This reversal was driven primarily by a desire to maintain value consistency. In other words, people's attributions were shaped by whether or not the attributions were consistent with their values.

The term *motivated social cognition* probably characterizes political ideologies generally, and we consider ideological identification a reflection of one's moral social identity (Parker & Janoff-Bulman, 2013). Moral social identities emerge when widespread societal consensus on a BSOD does not exist. For instance, the legality of abortion remains a contentious issue in some democracies (e.g., United States, Ireland) with divisions between prochoice and prolife camps. Thus, moral social identities are, to a degree, based on the existence of an oppositional out-group. Identification with the moral in-group is, in part, driven by perceived threat from the moral out-group and a desire to distance (or differentiate) one's self from them (Parker & Janoff-Bulman, 2013). In other words, ideological in-groups are often sustained by ideological out-groups that threaten the in-group's ideals. Those competing ideals are often anchored in nonrational moral intuitions. To understand such processes, we turn to research on the moral foundations of politics.

### The Moral Foundations of Politics

Morality may, in part, underlie political attitudes, beliefs, and affiliations (e.g., Haidt, 2012; Skitka & Bauman, 2008). The process of moralization (Rozin, 1999) imbues attitudes and beliefs with moral conviction (Skitka,

2010; Tedlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000), the strong and absolute belief that something is right or wrong without the need for proof or evidence (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005; Skitka & Mullen, 2002). A moral conviction requires little cognitive effort to maintain, is driven primarily by affect, is experienced more intensely than other attitudes and beliefs, and is considered objectively and universally true (Skitka, 2010).

Effron and Miller (2012) further suggest the moralization of a political issue, and thus the development of moral convictions concerned with it provides people with the social legitimacy to express their attitudes and beliefs and to advocate for positions in which they do not possess a strong material stake. Examples of this phenomenon may include males who support pro-choice policies or heterosexuals who support same-sex marriage. Additionally, it may provide legitimacy for supporting policies that are against one's own material interests, such as people of lower socioeconomic status who support tax cuts for the wealthy and people of high socioeconomic status who support strong social safety nets even at the expense of tax increases on the wealthy. Consistent with this analysis, moral convictions predicted voting during the 2000 and 2004 U.S. presidential elections, even when controlling for factors such as party affiliation and attitude strength (Skitka & Bauman, 2008). Likewise, attitudes over a 7-year period in a representative sample of American adolescents revealed that political disengagement was highest among males who did not possess moral convictions about social and political issues (Snell, 2010).

The potential consequences of moralization at the group and societal levels of behavior include government action (e.g., regulation; prohibition); increased institutional support (e.g., from schools or foundations) for reform; scientific investigation into processes and relationships that ultimately confirm the moral qualities of the issue; and a license to express strong public disapproval (e.g., irritation; outrage) of those perceived as transgressing the new moral value (Rozin, 1999). These behavioral consequences can provide the political self with further opportunities for assimilation. Specifically, government action, increased institutional support, and scientific confirmation may create opportunity for social validation and ideological cohesion among psychologically similar individuals that further reinforce their moral conviction. In other words, moral convictions provide a foundation for the development of value- and belief-based systems that allow people to both define themselves as unique individuals within the political domain, satisfying the need for differentiation (explored in more detail below), and to affiliate with others who hold similar views (Sherman & Cohen, 2006), thereby satisfying the need for assimilation. This affiliation helps people create a shared sociopolitical reality (Jost et al., 2009) and further reinforces social bonds (Graham & Haidt, 2010).

In sum, the process of moralization (Rozin, 1999) and the development of moral convictions (Skitka, 2010) can motivate political behavior. For instance, moral convictions about discrimination motivated group-based anger (e.g., "I feel angry because of what happened to the Dutch Muslim woman"), group efficacy (e.g., "I think together we can successfully fight against discrimination of Dutch Muslims"), and collective action tendencies (e.g., "I would like to participate in a demonstration against discrimination toward Dutch Muslims") in Dutch non-Muslims following discrimination against a Dutch Muslim woman (van Zomeren, Postmes, Spears, & Bettache, 2011). Additionally, moral outrage—a reaction to a moral transgression consisting of affective, cognitive, and behavioral components (Tedlock et al., 2000)—mediated the impact of the system justifying attitudes on support for redistributive socioeconomic policies (Jost et al., 2012; Waksjak, Jost, Tyler, & Chen, 2007). Such findings are consistent with the idea that moral outrage over a shared grievance can be a prerequisite for collective action (Martin et al., 1990; Simon & Klendermans, 2001).

### Moral Foundations Theory

Because moral convictions are affectively driven, require little cognitive effort to maintain, are experienced more intensely than other attitudes and beliefs, and are assumed to be objective and universally true (Goodwin & Darley, 2012), they are fairly resistant to change (Skitka, 2010). Where, then, do these moralized political convictions come from? This is precisely one of the questions at the heart of Moral Foundations Theory (MFT; Haidt, 2012; Haidt & Graham, 2009), a social intuitionist model (Haidt, 2001) that proposes a specific set of intuitions, or foundations, that shape our moral judgments.

MFT rests on four main claims: (a) Naivism—the human mind is pre-empted, via natural selection, to respond to certain sets of patterns in the social environment; (b) Cultural learning/socialization revises this foundation through development and experience within a culture and society; (c) Intuitionism—intuitive moral judgments precede moral reasoning, which is often employed for socially strategic purposes (Haidt, 2001); and, (d) Moral pluralism—there are many foundations of morality because each helped humans face many different types of recurrent BSODs (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt, 2012).

Briefly, MFT proposes a set of innate psychological adaptations, universal to most if not all human societies. These psychological adaptations, or moral foundations, developed in response to adaptive problems posed by particular recurring BSODs such as how to care for the sick and elderly, how to distribute scarce resources, and how to navigate social hierarchy

(Haidt, 2012). Specifically, five moral foundations are proposed: Care/harm, Fairness/cheating, Loyalty/betrayal, Authority/subversion, and Sanctity/degradation (Haidt 2012).<sup>3</sup> The addition of a sixth foundation, Liberty/oppression, has also been provisionally proposed (Iyer, Koleva, Graham, Ditto, & Haidt, 2012).

The moral foundations can be further categorized into the *individualizing* foundations of Care, Fairness, and Liberty and the *binding* foundations of Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity. The individualizing foundations are primarily based on the ethic of autonomy, where the individual is the primary unit of value while the binding foundations are based primarily on the ethics of community and divinity, where group cohesion and stability and the belief that it is morally necessary to live in a pure, dignified way are, respectively, prioritized (Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997). Modernization increases the emphasis a society places on the individualizing foundations relative to the binding foundations promoting increased individualism (Haidt & Graham, 2009). Decreased emphasis on the binding foundations can potentially weaken social cohesion and stability as individual expression, or uniqueness, is promoted over social conformity (Haidt & Graham, 2009). Thus, in many modern Western democracies, the individualizing and binding foundations may frequently find themselves in conflict with one another.

### Moral Foundations Theory and the Political Self

The distinction between the individualizing and binding foundations roughly parallels the tension between needs for distinctiveness and assimilation (Brewer, 1991). Indeed, we suggest that the moral foundations constitute some of the psychological adaptations for group living suggested by Brewer (1997) and others (Haidt, 2012). According to MFT, each foundation developed because of a particular adaptive challenge within the social environment (Haidt, 2012; Haidt & Graham, 2009). Care developed as a means to protect one's children, Fairness developed in response to concerns over how to reap the benefits of cooperation with non-kin, and Liberty developed in response to the challenge of living in small groups with individuals who may attempt to dominate, constrain, and oppress others. Loyalty developed in response to a need to form cohesive coalitions with non-kin, Authority developed in response to a need to forge beneficial relationships within social hierarchies, and Sanctity developed to avoid contaminants in order to maintain body and spiritual purity (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt, 2012).

MFT contends that cultural variation in morality can, in part, be explained by how different cultures emphasize the moral foundations (Haidt,

2012). Indeed, it is theorized that cultures can expand or reduce the set of triggers for each moral foundation through socialization and the development of shared social reality. In other words, personal experience (e.g., specific events such as 9/11) and socialization (e.g., demographic differences, exposure to cultural narratives) within a culture can shape how the moral foundations are emphasized, and as a result, how they guide intuitions and judgments, at both the individual and cultural levels. For example, intuitions associated with the Sanctity foundation can be triggered by exposure to taboo ideas such as communism, fascism, or racism (Graham & Haidt, 2012; Haidt & Graham, 2009). What a given individual considers taboo however is presumed to depend on how this individual emphasizes the moral foundations *and* his or her cultural experience (Haidt, 2012).

Applying MFT to the political domain within a culture or society provides a connection between BSODs and the differences that can develop over how to solve them. Moral foundations research has found that self-identified liberals place greater emphasis on the individualizing foundations of Care, Fairness, and Liberty, compared to the binding foundations of Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity. They also place a greater emphasis on the individualizing foundations compared to self-identified conservatives (Haidt, 2012). Consistent with this, self-identified liberals tend to view issues such as stem cell research and climate change as moral issues about providing care and preventing harm (Clifford & Jerrit, 2013; Feinberg & Willer, 2013). In contrast, self-identified conservatives, who place equal emphasis on the individualizing and binding foundations (Haidt, 2012), view stem cell research as a moral issue about maintaining sanctity (Clifford & Jerrit, 2013). They do not view climate change as a moral issue about preventing harm, although when the issue is recast as one concerning sanctity, by focusing on pollution levels and the need to purify the air, the differences in attitudes about climate change between liberals and conservatives are reduced (Feinberg & Willer, 2013).

How people emphasize the moral foundations also impacts political behavior. For example, religious leaders' sermons emphasize different moral foundations depending on their congregation's political leanings, with more liberal congregations emphasizing concerns associated with Care and Fairness and more conservative congregations emphasizing concerns associated with Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity (Graham et al., 2009). Consistent with this, supporters of stem cell research tend to rely on rhetoric which appeals to the Care foundation while opponents rely on rhetoric which appeals to the Sanctity foundation (Clifford & Jerrit, 2013). Finally, on a number of "culture war" issues within the United States (e.g., abortion rights, gay rights, gun control, enhanced interrogation tactics), attitudes were better predicted by the moral foundations than self-reported political ideology (Koleva, Graham, Iyer, Ditto, & Haidt, 2012; Stevens, 2013).

### Moral Convictions, Moral Outrage, and the Political Self

The moral foundations therefore provide a stable definitional core around which people can organize their attitudes, beliefs, and preferences about BSODs. The liberal moral domain is primarily concerned with how the individual is treated, while the conservative moral domain also includes concerns about how individual behavior impacts the social cohesion within a society (Haidt, 2012; Haidt & Graham, 2009). These different moral concerns produce different and often opposing interpretations of political events and issues (Clifford & Jernit, 2013; Feinberg & Willer, 2013).

Tetlock et al. (2000) proposed that a series of moral outrage and moral cleansing processes occur in response to perceived moral transgressions. Moral outrage consists of affective (e.g., anger, disgust, shame), cognitive (e.g., negative dispositional attributions), and behavioral (e.g., derogation or ostracism of transgressors, physical aggression toward deviants) components. The experience of moral outrage triggers a need for moral cleansing—attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that attempt to restore or establish the preferred moral order. For instance, liberals appear morally outraged by how historically disadvantaged groups continue to face discrimination and oppression. Thus, as a way to reduce moral outrage, liberals often advocate policies that take such historical disadvantages into consideration to promote diversity and inclusiveness (Haidt, 2012).

The moral outrage and moral cleansing processes suggested by Tetlock et al. (2000) are grounded in a model of psychological equilibrium. They come online when social reality diverges from an ideal and promotes actions (moral cleansing) that reduce negative affect (moral outrage). In other words, a good deal of political behavior, particularly when an issue has become moralized, may reflect moral outrage and moral cleansing processes. This is similar to the view of Simon and Klandermans (2001), who proposed that a shared grievance is a prerequisite for collective action in the political realm. Thus, an integration of these literatures with research on moral conviction (Rozin, 1999; Skitka, 2010), the moral foundations (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt, 2012), and broader issues of self and identity (Brewer 1991; Sherman & Cohen, 2006) offers a novel way to understand political behavior.

### Conclusions: The Political Self, the Need for Affiliation, and Morality

Many political attitudes appear to reflect deeper moral concerns (Koleva et al., 2012; Stevens, 2013). The certainty and rigidity with which these attitudes are held are a result of their moral tinge—moral attitudes and beliefs are considered facts about the world that are objectively and universally

true (Goodwin & Darley, 2012). Once moral convictions become central to the self (Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007), they require little cognitive effort to maintain, are driven primarily by affect (Haidt, 2001), are experienced more intensely than other attitudes and beliefs (Skitka, 2010), and are considered facts about the world (Goodwin & Darley, 2012).

We therefore suspect that in the political domain, rigidity is associated with moral conviction regardless of whether an individual identifies as a liberal or a conservative. We further suggest that the consistent association between cognitive rigidity and conservatism reported in the social psychological literature (Jost et al., 2003) is, in part, driven by how the conservatives emphasize the moral foundations. Because conservatives emphasize both the individualizing and binding foundations, they may possess a greater number of moral convictions compared to liberals. Thus, the set of stimuli within the political domain that can trigger the moral outrage-moral cleansing process proposed by Tetlock et al. (2000) in conservatives is larger than the set of stimuli that can trigger the same process in liberals, which may result in conservatives demonstrating more rigidity in their beliefs.

In sum, shared moral convictions allow people to satisfy their need for affiliation through agreement on a shared sociopolitical reality. This shared reality is replete with a narrative that describes how current social reality came to be, how this reality diverges from its ideal form, and what should be done to restore or establish this ideal. An ideological narrative also defines heroes attempting to restore or establish the ideal moral order and villains who stand in their way (Graham & Haidt, 2012; Martin et al., 1990). Thus, the political self is, in part, defined by an individual's attitudes toward their political in-group as well as attitudes toward rival political out-groups (Parker & Janoff-Bulman, 2013). We now turn to an exploration of how the political self helps people define villains in an ideological narrative, because we suspect this is one way for people to satisfy a need for differentiation within a large-scale society.

### THE POLITICAL SELF AND THE NEED FOR DIFFERENTIATION

Social identity theory has long held that people derive their identity in part from their social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Because people are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept (and their group memberships are important to their self-definitions), people often evaluate in-groups more favorably than out-groups. This in-group favoritism is not always linked to out-group derogation (Brewer, 1999). The political domain within a large-scale society however, complicates these matters. Individuals share a broad social identity (e.g., national identity) that likely triggers feelings of

immersion and thus a need for differentiation. Disagreement over how to solve BSODs allows political subgroups to develop and provide an opportunity for differentiation in the political domain.

### Self-Serving Political Biases

The social cognition literature indicates that people also express positive attitudes toward *ideas* shared by members of their in-group and negative attitudes toward ideas held by the out-group. Morality is often central to the self-concept (Leach et al., 2007), and self-enhancement motives can drive people to process, interpret, and evaluate social reality in a self-serving manner. People are often more accepting of evidence consistent with their preexisting beliefs and are critical of evidence that challenges their views (Edwards & Smith, 1996; Klaczynski, 2000). This phenomenon has been referred to as confirmation bias (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979) or motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990).

Individuals' preexisting political beliefs can bias their evaluation of ideologically relevant evidence and arguments concerning a wide range of topics. For instance, confirmation biases have occurred when people have assessed information about capital punishment (Edwards & Smith, 1996; Liu & Ditto, 2013; Lord et al., 1979), gun control (Taber & Lodge, 2006), affirmative action (Crawford, 2012; Crawford, Jussim, Cain, & Cohen, 2013), gay rights (Crawford et al., 2013; Munro & Ditto, 1997), and abortion (Edwards & Smith, 1996). It appears that such socially strategic reasoning is triggered by individuals' automatic affective response to belief-relevant information (Haidt, 2001; Zajonc, 1980). That is, people can be largely unaware of the fact that their reasoning is emotionally driven and biased because post hoc rationalization processes provide illusions of objectivity and conscious deliberation (Haidt, 2001).

Indeed, exposure to political stimuli automatically triggers an initial affective response (Lodge & Taber, 2005). Thus, when political information is consistent with individuals' political attitudes and beliefs, they experience a positive affective response, which leads them to process the information heuristically and assimilate it into their existing ideological views (Munro & Ditto, 1997; Klaczynski, 2000). However, when political views are challenged, people experience negative arousal, which induces effortful processing aimed at disconfirming the evidence (Munro & Ditto, 1997). For instance, people analyze counterattitudinal evidence longer, generate more and stronger counterarguments in response to it, and list more flaws with the research than they do in response to confirmatory evidence (Lord et al., 1979; Taber & Lodge, 2006).

These self-serving political biases serve to further differentiate individuals and the political groups they identify with from political rivals. The

upshot of such biased processes is to create positive illusions that "We, and our views, are objective, logical, and evidence-based, whereas they, and their views, are not." Thus, "we" are intellectually superior (because of our greater use of logic and evidence) and "our" positions are anchored in "our objective" assessments of "reality," whereas "their" positions are irrational and unjustified. In other words, people often enhance the image of their political in-group, and by extension their self-image, through the derogation of a rival political out-group.

### Political Conflicts are Often Moral Conflicts

Political differences are disagreements over positions and policy, but they are often not *merely* such disagreements. Because liberals and conservatives emphasize different moral foundations (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt, 2012) and hold different moral convictions (Morgan et al., 2010), political disagreement often reflects fundamental and sometimes even *nonnegotiable* moral differences. Differences, therefore, are not mere disagreements; they can become (or at least perceived as) *moral transgressions*, violations of fundamental principles of morality. That is, to someone who is prochoice, a prolife position may not be perceived as a mere disagreement; it may be perceived as violating the fundamental rights of individual women. To someone who is prolife however, a prochoice position may similarly not be perceived as a mere disagreement; instead, it reflects a violation of the sanctity of human life.

We therefore propose that once a political issue, such as abortion rights, becomes moralized, several psychological and political consequences likely follow: (a) Individual positions on the issue can serve as expressions of ideological identity (Kahan, 2014); (b) Such positions serve the differentiation need by distinguishing people from their political opponents; (c) Conflicts that appear political but which are primarily moral are not readily resolved by negotiating and compromising on issues of policy; (d) Political involvement is further energized because of perceived or feared moral transgressions by political rivals; and, (e) In some extreme cases, politically motivated violence may even occur (Graham & Haidt, 2012; Skitka, 2012). For instance, some anti-abortion activists have bombed abortion clinics and murdered doctors who are willing to perform abortions, and some environmentalists have committed arson and bombed property owned by people who are perceived to have damaged the environment.

In other words, moral differences can trigger a moral outrage-moral cleansing process whereby people are driven to restore their preferred moral order (Tetlock et al., 2000) through collective action (van Zomeren et al., 2011; Waksalak et al., 2007). Because many people think about their



moral convictions as objective facts about the world (Goodwin & Darley, 2012; Skitka 2010), those who hold different moral convictions tend to trigger negative affect and are often perceived as immoral (Haidt, Rosenberg, & Hom, 2003; Tetlock et al., 2000). Once people are categorized as immoral, the perception generalizes across situations and contexts and becomes difficult to change (Trafimow, 2001). Subsequent moral behavior by the same target(s) is often met with suspicion and typically explained with reference to situational factors (Wojciszke & Szymkow, 2003).

In line with this view, Parker and Janoff-Bulman (2013) have proposed that moral social identities are oppositional. In three studies, people's positive and negative feelings toward morality-based in-groups and out-groups (e.g., prolife or prochoice) or nonmorality-based in-groups and out-groups (e.g., Yankees or Red Sox fans) were assessed. Moral in-groups, compared to nonmoral in-groups, generated fewer positive emotions, while moral out-groups, compared to nonmoral out-groups, generated more negative emotions. People's moral social identities were based on in-group positivity and out-group negativity. Moral social identities may therefore result from a desire to affiliate and belong *and* a desire to distance the self from undesirable others (Parker & Janoff-Bulman, 2013).

### Political Intolerance as Moral Intolerance

We thus propose that political conflicts can become imbued with the types of moral outrage and moral cleansing processes discussed earlier in this chapter. These processes may in turn further serve to differentiate the political self from political rivals and potentially perpetuate ideological conflict. Political intolerance may, in other words, often be a reflection of moral intolerance where one's political rivals are cast as the villains. Interestingly, Haidt et al. (2003) reported that people were less tolerant of moral differences, such as stances on abortion rights and gun control, than racial, gender, or class differences. People also reported less desire for moral diversity at their university, within a lecture, and from a potential roommate. Finally, when assessed on one's desire to date, and thus interact closely with an individual, moral diversity had a negative impact while demographic differences did not.

Consistent with these findings, recent research indicates that ideological differences often inspire hostility and intolerance directed toward one's ideological opponents. Three independent research groups have converged on an *ideological conflict hypothesis* (ICH; Brandt, Reyna, Chambers, Crawford, & Wetherell, 2014). The ICH suggests that people on the left and right express similarly high levels of prejudice toward out-groups perceived as ideologically opposed, including demographic groups. For example,

Chambers, Schlenker, and Collisson (2013) tested two competing hypotheses: Conservatives are more racially prejudiced than liberals vs. Liberals and conservatives are equally prejudiced against groups perceived as their ideological opponents. Both perspectives predict that conservatives will dislike African Americans more than liberals (either because conservatives are more prejudiced or because African Americans are overwhelmingly left of center in their politics). The hypotheses differ, however, in predicting differences in reactions to *ideologically opposed and ideologically similar African Americans*. If conservatives are more racially prejudiced, they should dislike a liberal African American more than liberals dislike a conservative African American. This would occur because conservatives have two bases for hostility (prejudice and ideology), whereas liberals only have one (ideology). Similarly, if conservatives are more racially prejudiced, then liberals should like a liberal African American more than conservatives like a conservative African American.

If, however, ideology drives much of what appears to be racial prejudice, then liberals should dislike a conservative African American as much as conservatives dislike a liberal African American; and conservatives should like a conservative African American as much as liberals like liberal African Americans. Chambers et al. (2013) confirmed these latter ideological conflict predictions. In integrating these and other results (Crawford & Pilanski, 2013; Wetherell, Brandt, & Renya, 2013), Brandt et al. (2014) show high levels of intolerance to ideological opponents among *both* liberals and conservatives, including not just dislike but willingness to deprive one's opponents of basic rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

Such ideological prejudice is readily understood from the perspective developed in the present chapter. It is likely rooted in moral conviction and justified through the sorts of political-serving motivational biases reviewed earlier. Such processes psychologically bolster perceptions of the superiority of one's beliefs and one's moral-political groups. As such, they also enable people to differentiate themselves from others within their society by categorizing political out-groups and their members as bad and immoral.

### Exaggeration of Political Differences

Finally, there is good evidence that political (Chambers, Baron, & Inman, 2006; Chambers & Melnyk, 2006) or moral (Graham, Nosek, & Haidt, 2012) stereotypes are typically exaggerations of real differences. That is, people correctly identify issues where an ideological or moral divide exists in the issue positions of the rival groups (Chambers et al., 2006; Graham et al., 2012). Yet they also tend to exaggerate the extent of these differences so that their rivals appear more extreme and unwilling to compromise. For