

The Moral Roots of Partisan Division: How Moral Conviction Increases Affective Polarization

Kristin N. Garrett
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Abstract

Bias, disdain, and hostility toward partisan opponents have increased substantially over the last few decades in the American electorate. While studies have suggested different factors that might underlie this affective polarization, the culprit usually relates to partisan strength. I argue in this paper, however, that partisan moral convictions heighten affective polarization beyond the effects of partisanship. Individuals across the range of partisan strength are more likely to show aversion to partisan opponents and affinity for partisan allies if they base their opinions on their beliefs about right and wrong. Testing this theory on data from the 2012 ANES Evaluations of Government and Society Study, I find that people who tend to moralize politics are more likely to exhibit polarized affect, job approval ratings, and blame attribution. These findings shed light on the moral roots of affective polarization and raise important normative questions about moral conviction and electoral politics.

Scholars of American Politics have long debated the nature and extent of party polarization in the American electorate, but the majority tend to agree that the mass public has become progressively divided along partisan and ideological lines (see Hetherington 2009; Layman, Carsey, and Horowitz 2006). In addition to this partisan-ideological polarization, Republicans and Democrats have come to increasingly dislike and even abhor each other, a distinct trend labeled affective polarization (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015). Recent studies show that bias, anger, and disdain toward partisan opponents have escalated substantially over the last three decades among average citizens, leading to more hostile rhetoric, political activism, discrimination against partisan opponents, and favoritism toward copartisans (Haidt and Hetherington 2012; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Lelkes and Westwood 2015; Mason 2013, 2015; Pew 2014).

Evidence clearly suggests that affective polarization is on the rise, and studies show that individuals who are strong or sorted partisans are more likely to hold negative views of the opposite party (Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason 2015; Pew 2014). Even after modeling these predictors, however, substantial variance remains in the level of partisan bias and hostility citizens display. This raises the specific question, why do some Americans hold more divided views than others, despite expressing the same strength of partisanship? It also highlights the broader question, what drives affective polarization?

Whereas previous theories have focused on factors like partisan strength, partisan-ideological sorting, negative campaigns, or partisan media as the root cause of affective polarization (see Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Mason 2015), I argue in this paper that the moralization of politics further heightens affective polarization. Recent work in moral psychology finds that attitude moralization is a distinctive phenomenon, which might recruit the type of psychological processes that would induce polarizing judgments (Skitka 2010, 2014; Skitka, Bauman, and Sargis 2005; Skitka and Morgan 2014). Building on this research, I theorize that opinions linked to partisan moral convictions—the perception that one’s own party and its affiliates are fundamentally right and the other side is absolutely wrong—are more likely to engender polarized views than opinions based on personal preferences or normative conventions. This means individuals across the range of partisan strength are more likely to show aversion to the out-party and favoritism to the in-party if they base their partisan evaluations on their deeply held beliefs about right and wrong.

Based on this theory, I hypothesize that people who tend to moralize politics will be more likely to attribute positive affect, higher job approval ratings, and less blame to in-party leaders and negative

affect, lower job approval ratings, and more blame to out-party leaders than individuals who do not moralize politics. To test these predictions, I utilize data from the 2012 American National Election Studies (ANES) Evaluations of Government and Society Study (EGSS), and I run models comparing how propensity to moralize influences the feelings, job approval, and blame that Democratic and Republican respondents express about party leaders.

The results of this study support my expectations. Greater propensity to moralize facilitates more polarized affect, job approval ratings, and blame attribution even when I control for partisan and ideological strength. These findings are particularly important because they help us better understand how morality influences the polarized political climate we see in America today, and they raise key normative questions about moral conviction and electoral politics.

Affective Polarization

Traditionally, party polarization has been defined as partisan-ideological or policy-based division between the Democratic and Republican parties. Scholars have assessed polarization in the mass public based on the extent to which voters have sorted into the correct party and ideology, or by how much consistency they show in aligning their issue positions and their party identification across a range of issues (Abramowitz 2006, 2010; Abramowitz and Saunders 1998, 2005, 2008; Abramowitz and Stone 2006; Brewer 2005; Fiorina 2013; Fiorina and Abrams 2008; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005, 2008; Fiorina and Levendusky 2006; Hetherington 2001, 2009; Jacobson 2005, 2007; Layman and Carsey 2002*a,b*; Levendusky 2009). This ideological or policy-based definition of polarization has led to much of the debate over the existence and extent of polarization in the American electorate.

More recently, however, scholars have specified affective polarization—“the tendency of people identifying as Republicans or Democrats to view opposing partisans negatively and copartisans positively”—as a separate dimension of partisan division in the mass public (Iyengar and Westwood 2015, 691). Whereas polarization typically implies distance on an ideological or policy-preference scale, affective polarization refers to the growing social distance between the parties. While scholars might debate the extent of partisan-ideological or policy-based polarization in the mass public, recent studies show that bias, disdain, anger, and hostility toward partisan opponents have increased substantially over the last three decades among average citizens (Haidt and Hetherington 2012; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason 2013, 2015). This affective polarization predicts

promotion of hostile rhetoric, greater political activism, avoidance of partisan opponents, and a desire for preferential treatment of one's own party (Lelkes and Westwood 2015; Mason 2015). Perhaps most concerning, affective polarization now permeates relationship dynamics and apolitical situations. Partisans are increasingly uncomfortable with their children marrying members of the opposite party, they attribute negative attributes to average party supporters, and they are willing to discriminate against opposing partisans in nonpolitical judgments and actions (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Pew 2014; Phillips and Carsey 2013). Iyengar and Westwood (2015) even show that partisan hostility in the American electorate now exceeds racial animus.

While evidence suggests that affective polarization is on the rise, reports also show that not all Americans display such partisan hostility. For example, weak partisans who are politically unengaged and uninformed are less likely to express negative views of the opposite party than strong partisans who are politically engaged and knowledgeable (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Mason 2015; Pew 2014). In order to explain the rise, as well as the variance, in partisan hostility, some studies suggest that partisan sorting—individuals aligning their partisan and ideological identities—has driven social polarization (Fiorina 2013; Mason 2013, 2015). Others indicate that the mere act of identifying with a political party triggers negative evaluations of the opposite party, which are then reinforced by exposure to negative political campaigns and the rise of partisan media (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Levendusky 2013). These theories generally ascribe the roots of affective polarization to increasing partisan alignment or strength. Even when partisanship is modeled, however, substantial variance remains to explain in the level of partisan bias and hostility citizens display.

To complement these theories, therefore, I suggest that another factor besides partisan extremity influences affective polarization: the moralization of politics. Some citizens develop moral convictions along party lines, meaning they come to view their party and its affiliates as right and good and the other side as wrong and immoral. Individuals who base their opinions about the political parties, party leaders, and party members on their fundamental beliefs about right and wrong are more likely to show hostility toward opposing partisans and favoritism toward copartisans than individuals who base their opinions on nonmoral concerns. While stronger partisans might hold more polarized attitudes than weaker partisans, I expect citizens to display more affective polarization, irrespective of partisan strength, if their partisan evaluations are based on their moral convictions, rather than their personal preferences or normative conventions.

The Moralization of Politics

In recent years, scholars have shown that individuals develop political opinions based on moral convictions, not just personal preferences, group norms, religious beliefs, or personal values (Ryan 2014; Skitka, Bauman, and Sargis 2005; Skitka, Morgan, and Wisneski 2015). Moral conviction, which is defined as a person's perception that an attitude is grounded in his or her "core beliefs about fundamental right and wrong," is distinct from these other nonmoral attitude domains (Skitka and Morgan 2014, 96). It is also different from other dimensions of attitude strength like extremity, importance, and personal relevance (Ryan 2014). The domain theory of attitudes suggests that morally convicted attitudes, or attitudes held with strong moral conviction, are unique in that people experience them as objectively true, universally applicable, inherently motivating, strongly tied to emotions, and uniquely independent of external authority and peer influence (Skitka 2010, 2014; Skitka and Morgan 2014).¹

When it comes to partisan evaluations, some people undoubtedly base their opinions of the political parties and party adherents on personal preferences or normative conventions, while others base their opinions on core moral beliefs. These latter individuals develop what I refer to as *partisan moral convictions*, or the perceptions that their attitudes about the political parties, party leaders, and party members, are connected to their strong and absolute beliefs about right and wrong. They come to view their party and its supporters as fundamentally right and good and the other party and its adherents as fundamentally wrong and immoral. Because there is little room for gray in a moral world of black and white, people who base their political opinions on partisan moral convictions are more likely to display affectively polarized views. I expound upon this point further below.

In order for people to develop partisan moral convictions, the political parties and their affiliates have to get linked to people's underlying mental system for processing morality.² This means the parties have to be presented in such a way that they trigger moral emotions and evaluations, which signal to individuals that they should be considered objects of moral concern. There are multiple mechanisms by which this process of moralization might occur in the American political system. First, people often

¹Morally convicted attitudes are also frequently referred to as moralized attitudes or moral mandates.

²Studies indicate that moral appraisals emerge from complex interactions between multiple brain regions and neural networks (Berns et al. 2012; Greene 2007, 2009; Moll and de Oliveira-Souza 2007; Moll et al. 2002, 2005). Humans appear hard-wired with these mental programs that process rules of right and wrong, guide our learning about morality, and regulate social conduct (DeScioli and Kurzban 2009, 2013; Moll et al. 2005). Some cognitive scientists even suggest that the innate principles and pathways that make up our moral faculty are similar to those mental mechanisms for processing human language (Berns et al. 2012; Mikhail 2007, 2011; Saunders 2014). This line of work indicates the humans are naturally equipped with the necessary framework to develop and then perceive moral convictions.

hear the political parties being described by family, friends, and the media in moral terms of right and wrong, good and bad, moral and immoral. Over time, these conversations might build up a mental connection between an attitude object, like a party or a candidate, and a sense that the object is moral or immoral. Second, political parties and their leaders provide cues about their moral stances through the positions they take on various issues, which individuals may or may not perceive as moral concerns (Ryan 2014; Wright, Cullum, and Schwab 2008). If a party leader adopts strong and visible positions on issues that people view as matters of right and wrong, the leader might get linked by association to morality in people's minds. Third, party labels send moral signals about leaders' character traits (Clifford 2014). These cues about whether politicians are honest or dishonest, fair or discriminatory, patriotic or unpatriotic might influence people to develop the perception that the politicians are moral or immoral. Fourth, party labels themselves might be enough to signal that party leaders and affiliates are objects of moral concern. Applying principles from social identity theory, people who tend to moralize politics might be more likely to accumulate associations between their moral intuitions and politically relevant social groups, like the political parties, coming to view the in-party as basically moral and the out-party as fundamentally immoral. (Leach, Bilali, and Pagliaro 2014; Turner et al. 1987).³

While the current political environment is ripe for individuals to develop partisan moral convictions, some people are more likely to base their partisan opinions on their sense of right and wrong than others. Studies show substantial variance in people's propensity to moralize different political issues, causes, and candidates (Ryan 2014; Skitka and Bauman 2008; Skitka, Morgan, and Wisneski 2015; Wright, Cullum, and Schwab 2008). Individuals who express a greater tendency to moralize politics, or to habitually think about politics in terms of right and wrong, should more readily associate the political parties, party leaders, and party members with their core moral beliefs and convictions. Consequently, they should be more likely to develop partisan moral convictions, which in turn influence them to evaluate copartisans more positively and opposing partisans more negatively.

Partisan Conviction and Affective Polarization

People who develop morally convicted attitudes toward the political parties and their affiliates are more likely to display the antipathy, anger, bias, and activism that characterize affective polarization.

³The structure of our two party system likely encourages people to further celebrate one side as moral and to demonize the other as immoral. Heit and Nicholson (2010) show that people tend to view Democrats as exact opposites of Republicans, which might facilitate the absolute stance that one party and its leaders are morally right and the other morally wrong.

Research in the fields of moral and political psychology shows that moralized attitudes trigger more hostile opinions, negative emotions, and punitive actions than attitudes based on preferences or conventions alone (see Skitka 2014; Skitka and Morgan 2009, 2014).⁴ People who hold strong moral convictions want greater social and physical distance from, they show greater intolerance towards, and they show greater willingness to discriminate against those who hold conflicting views (Skitka, Bauman, and Sargis 2005; Skitka et al. 2012; Wright, Cullum, and Schwab 2008). Also, they are less likely to cooperate or compromise with the opposing side, which often leads to tension and defensiveness in group interactions (Ryan 2013; Skitka, Bauman, and Sargis 2005). In addition, moral conviction motivates people to action, and people who hold strong moral convictions about political issues, causes, or candidates are more likely to engage in political activism (Ryan 2014; Skitka 2014; Skitka and Bauman 2008; van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears 2012). Finally, moral convictions evoke particularly strong negative emotions like anger, disgust, and contempt (Mullen and Skitka 2006; Skitka 2014; Skitka and Wisneski 2011), and they lead to a one-sided view of politics—greater favor for political friends and hostility toward political foes (Ryan 2014).

Not all of the consequences of moral conviction are negative. While people tend to dislike and distance themselves from individuals who hold a different moral perspective, they seem to like and be drawn toward individuals who hold similar moral beliefs (Leach, Ellemers, and Barreto 2007; Skitka, Bauman, and Sargis 2005; Wright, Cullum, and Schwab 2008). As a result, at the same time that moral conviction leads people to adopt more hostile positions toward those on the wrong moral side, it also leads them to adopt more favorable stances toward those on the right moral team.

Because morally convicted attitudes lead individuals to respond in a more polarized way than otherwise strong but nonmoral attitudes, people who base their partisan evaluations on their beliefs about right and wrong are more likely to display positive feelings toward copartisans and negative feelings toward opposing partisans than people who do not base their partisan evaluations on moral beliefs. Much more is at stake when you think one party is good and the other is evil than when you think one party is preferable to the other. More hostility is provoked when a party violates what you hold to be sacred than when a party violates what you view to be important. For this reason, I expect that moral convictions will heighten affective polarization, even when controlling for partisanship.

⁴DeScioli and Kurzban (2013) and Rai and Fiske (2011) suggest that mental processes that create a sense of right and wrong developed to punish individuals who deviate from norms of cooperation and thus facilitate social coordination. Consequently, moralized attitudes trigger more hostile opinions, negative emotions, and punitive actions.

Applying the Theory

If this theory is accurate, it should help explain current indicators of affective polarization, such as the growing dislike of out-party leaders. Studies show that anger at out-party presidential candidates has been increasing over the past several decades (Mason 2013, 2015), and partisans have been deeply divided over presidential job performance since George W. Bush took office in 2000 (Pew 2014). I expect that partisan moral convictions help drive this phenomenon, and two points from my theory suggest how. First, individuals who tend to moralize politics, or habitually think about politics in moral terms, are more likely to hold moralized attitudes about different partisan objects, including party leaders. Second, these partisan moral convictions that leaders represent the right or wrong political side should engender polarized feelings and evaluations. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H1a: Partisans who display a higher propensity to moralize are more likely to express negative affect toward out-party leaders than partisans who display a lower propensity to moralize.

H1b: Partisans who display a higher propensity to moralize are more likely to express positive affect toward in-party leaders than partisans who display a lower propensity to moralize.

H2a: Partisans who display a higher propensity to moralize are more likely to express lower job approval of out-party leaders than partisans who display a lower propensity to moralize.

H2b: Partisans who display a higher propensity to moralize are more likely to express higher job approval of in-party leaders than partisans who display a lower propensity to moralize.

Recent studies on affective polarization also show that people are more likely to give their own side the benefit of the doubt, while they assume the worst about the opposition. They attribute positive stereotypes to the in-party and negative stereotypes to the out-party, and they are more suspicious of politicians from opposing parties (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Munro, Weih, and Tsai 2010). I expect that individuals who base their political opinions on partisan moral convictions are more likely to display this polarized pattern of letting their allies off the hook and faulting their opponents when things go wrong. This leads me to predict:

H3a: Partisans who display a higher propensity to moralize are more likely to attribute blame to out-party leaders than partisans who display a lower propensity to moralize.

H3b: Partisans who display a higher propensity to moralize are less likely to attribute blame to in-party leaders than partisans who display a lower propensity to moralize.

Data and Methods

To test these expectations, I utilize data from the 2012 American National Election Studies (ANES) Evaluations of Government and Society Study (EGSS). To operationalize the key explanatory variable, *propensity to moralize*, I use the EGSS's Moralization of Politics (MOP) scale, a battery of questions that evaluate respondents' level of moral conviction on different political issues. One of the challenges of measuring moral conviction in political contexts is that a person might moralize one political issue, such as a union worker moralizing collective bargaining rights, but not politics in general. The MOP scale is designed to navigate this obstacle by tapping into respondents' general tendency to think about different political objects in moral terms. 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. Then, they are asked to report which issue they think is the most important one facing the country and which issue they think is the least important. Next, they are asked to answer how much their opinion on an issue is based on their "moral values" in reference to three issues from the original list of ten: the issue they identified as most important, the issue they identified as least important, and one other randomly selected issue. For each of these issues, respondents answer on a 5-point scale ranging from "not at all" to "a great deal." I take the average of these answers to get an overall propensity to moralize score for each respondent (see Ryan 2014).

This score provides a basic measure of respondents' average tendency to base their political opinions on their core moral beliefs and convictions, which provides a rough indication of their proclivity to think about politics in moral terms. For this reason, I hypothesize that the MOP scale captures a habitual orientation to moralize different political objects. If this is true, individuals high on the scale should be more likely to hold partisan moral convictions and display the polarized pattern of evaluating party leaders that my theory predicts.

I operationalize the first dependent variable, *affect toward party leaders*, using feeling thermometer questions that the EGSS includes for several Democratic and Republican candidates in the 2012 presi-

dential election, including Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, and Newt Gingrich.⁵ A rating of 0 reflects a very unfavorable feeling toward the political candidate, a rating of 100 reflects a very favorable feeling, and a rating of 50 reflects a neutral feeling.

To operationalize the second dependent variable, *job approval of party leaders*, I rely on EGSS questions asking respondents to what extent they “approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president.” Scores range from 1, “disapprove extremely strongly,” to 7, “approve extremely strongly.” This question is only asked about President Obama, so I can only measure out-party disapproval from Republican respondents and in-party approval from Democratic respondents.

I operationalize the third dependent variable, *blame attributed to party leaders*, using a series of EGSS questions asking respondents how much different people and groups are to “blame for the poor economic conditions of the past few years.” Scores range from 1, “not at all,” to 5, “a great deal.” Among other leaders and groups, this question is asked in reference to President Obama, Democrats in Congress, President Bush, and Republicans in Congress. I rely on responses to the former two objects to represent blame directed at Democratic leaders and responses to the latter two objects to represent blame directed at Republican leaders.

To assess in-party and out-party affect, presidential job approval, and blame attribution, I include a dichotomous variable for party identification. Republicans are coded 1, and Democrats are coded 0. Independents and “other” party identifiers are excluded from the analysis.⁶ To assess affect toward, job approval of, and blame attributed to in-party and out-party candidates, I interact the dichotomous variable for party identification with the propensity to moralize score. Table 1 presents an overview of the data for the key independent variables and dependent variables used in these analyses, broken down by Republican and Democratic respondents.

In addition, I include several control variables to account for other factors that might influence views toward in-party and out-party leaders. Regarding demographics, I include a dummy variable for race (white), a dummy variable for gender (female), and a categorical variable for income. To capture negative or positive views toward the candidates stemming from the Religious Right, I also include a dummy variable for evangelical religious affiliation (evangelical Protestant).⁷ Lastly, I control for

⁵Both Romney and Gingrich were included because the 2012 GOP presidential primary was undecided at the time the survey was conducted.

⁶Only 23 observations are dropped because of the decision to omit Independents and other party identifiers.

⁷I ran other models including a religious attendance variable, which reflects level of religious commitment, instead of the

political ideology (7-point scale) and party identification (7-point scale) in order to verify that moral conviction influences affective polarization independent of partisan and ideological strength.

Table 1: Variable Overview for the Political Parties

Variable	Republicans		Democrats	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Propensity to Moralize</i>	2.94	1.13	2.88	1.16
<i>PID (7-pt scale)</i>	5.91	0.85	2.02	0.86
<i>Obama Affect</i>	24.30	25.13	71.67	26.95
<i>Romney Affect</i>	52.70	22.14	33.52	22.95
<i>Gingrich Affect</i>	46.35	23.80	23.07	22.38
<i>Obama Job Approval</i>	2.19	1.51	5.00	1.76
<i>Obama Blame</i>	3.68	1.21	2.29	1.20
<i>Bush Blame</i>	2.85	1.09	4.03	1.14
<i>Democrats Blame</i>	3.87	1.03	2.97	1.08
<i>Republicans Blame</i>	3.13	1.05	3.90	1.07
<i>N</i>		626		665

I utilize linear regression to test the marginal effect of propensity to moralize on both Republicans’ and Democrats’ affect toward party leaders, their approval of President Obama’s job performance, and their attribution of blame to party leaders. I regress (weighted OLS) feeling thermometer ratings for the Democratic and Republican candidates, Obama’s job approval rating, and blame attributed to Democratic and Republican leaders on dichotomous party identification (Republican), propensity to moralize, the interaction term between dichotomous party identification and propensity to moralize, and the demographic controls.⁸ Filling in candidate affect, presidential job approval, and party leader blame as dependent variables, I model the following equation:

$$DV_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Republican_i + \beta_2 Propensity\ to\ Moralize_i + \beta_3 (Republican_i * Propensity\ to\ Moralize_i) + \beta_4 Controls_i + e_i$$

evangelical dummy. This variable was not significant in any of the models and resulted in lower R-squared and adjusted R-squared values than models including the evangelical dummy. I also ran other models with additional controls like age, but left these variables out when they were not significant and resulted in lower R-squared and adjusted R-squared values.

⁸The EGSS includes a poststratification weight designed to ensure data is representative of the national population. All analyses are weighted so that results generalize to the overall population.

Results

To simplify the presentation of results and help clarify the interpretation of interaction terms, I only include figures in the body of this paper. The table of coefficient estimates from each model can be seen in Appendix A. In each figure, the x-axis shows the observed range of propensity to moralize, and the y-axis shows either respondents' affect toward leaders, their presidential job approval, or the level of blame they attribute to party leaders. The thick dashed line represents the marginal effect of propensity to moralize on the dependent variable for Democratic respondents, and the thick solid line represents this effect for Republican respondents. The thin dashed and solid lines represent the 95% confidence intervals for these estimates. Also, I include a rug plot on the x-axis, which reflects the distribution of propensity to moralize scores. Since the scores are clumped together, they are jittered to better reflect the spread of the data.

The results illustrated in Figure 1 support my first set of hypotheses that people who display a higher propensity to moralize are more likely to express negative affect toward leaders from the opposite party and positive affect toward leaders from their own party. This figure illustrates the estimated marginal effect of propensity to moralize on feeling thermometer ratings of President Obama among Democratic and Republican respondents, holding all other control variables constant at their means.⁹ The solid line shows that among Republicans, each one point increase in propensity to moralize leads, on average, to a -2.93 point decrease in how favorably people feel toward President Obama. This marginal effect represents almost a twelve point decrease in positive affect toward Obama over the total range of propensity to moralize, suggesting that Republicans with a higher propensity to moralize tend to show more dislike for an out-party leader. The dashed line illustrates that among Democrats, each one point increase in propensity to moralize leads, on average, to a 2.57 point increase in positive feeling toward President Obama. This marginal effect represents a ten point increase in positive affect toward Obama over the total range of propensity to moralize, indicating that Democratic moralizers tend to view an in-party leader more favorably.

As Figure 1 shows, the gap in how Democrats and Republicans feel toward President Obama grows larger as you move from left to right across the propensity to moralize scale. By the time you get to the right-hand side of the scale, the strongest partisan moralizers are more than 20 points apart in

⁹In this and every other figure, I show the relationship for Democrats and Republicans separately, while holding control variables constant at their means. The hypothetical respondent profile is for those who “lean Democrat” (PID = 3) or “lean Republican” (PID = 5).

their feelings toward Obama. This suggests that affective polarization between partisans increases as propensity to moralize increases, even when controlling for partisan and ideological strength.

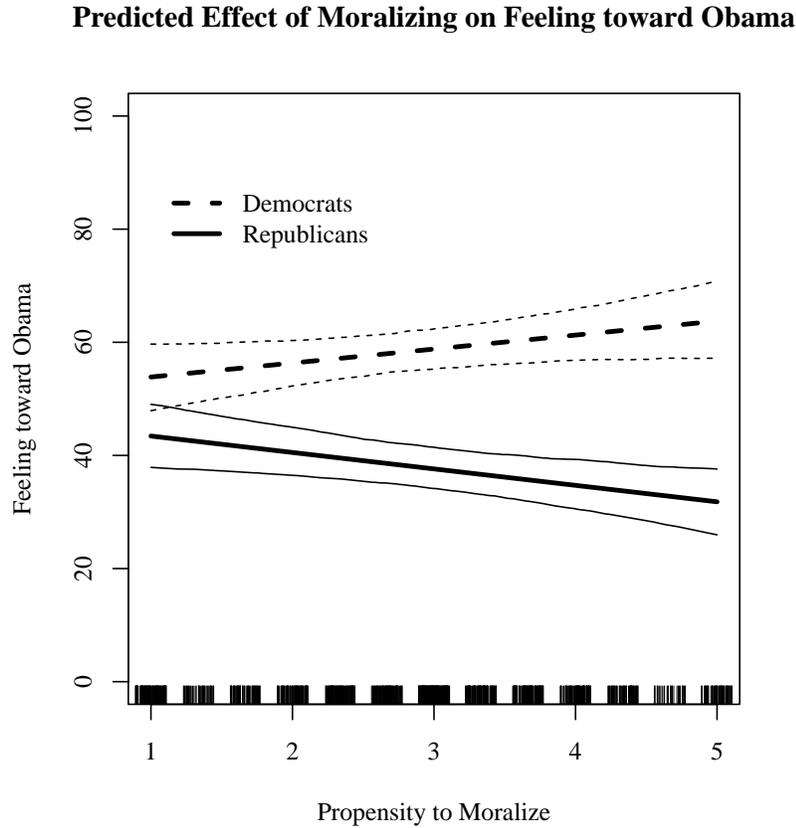


Figure 1: Estimated Marginal Effect of Propensity to Moralize on Affect Toward Obama

Figure 2 illustrates the estimated marginal effect of propensity to moralize on affect toward Mitt Romney among Democrats and Republicans, again holding control variables constant at their means. This figure looks different than the one for affect toward Obama and actually suggests that both Republican and Democratic moralizers show a greater tendency to dislike Romney than non-moralizers. Each one point increase in propensity to moralize leads, on average, to a -0.79 point decrease in positive affect toward Romney among Democrats and a -1.06 point decrease among Republicans. The results for the Gingrich model are similar.¹⁰ Consequently, increases in propensity to moralize do not influence more divided feelings toward Romney and Gingrich like they do toward Obama.

This finding fails to support my first set of hypotheses and raises questions about my theory, until

¹⁰Because the results for the Gingrich and Romney models are so similar, I only show figures for the Romney models in this paper. Results for the Gingrich models can be viewed in Appendix A.

we stop and consider how much voters actually knew about Romney and Gingrich when the EGSS was administered. My theory predicts that individuals who base their political opinions on partisan moral convictions will be more likely to display heightened affective polarization. This means some factor, whether close connections with a party, moralized media coverage, or strong policy stances on morally mandated issues, has to trigger moralized attitudes about the party leaders in order for citizens to exhibit the pattern of partisan bias I expect.

Predicted Effect of Moralizing on Feeling toward Romney

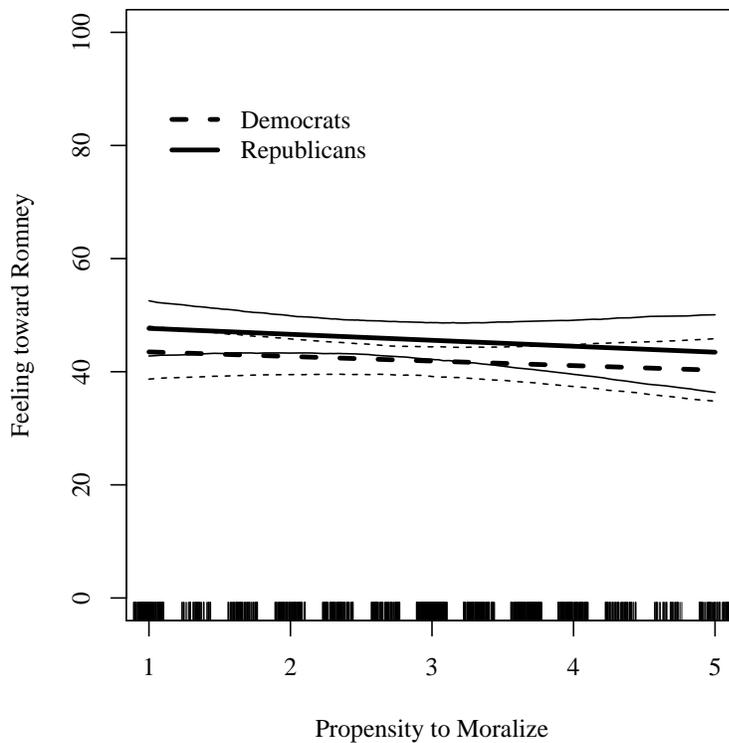


Figure 2: Estimated Marginal Effect of Propensity to Moralize on Affect Toward Romney

When EGSS data was collected in February of 2012, President Obama had already been in office for four years, while neither Romney nor Gingrich had secured the Republican presidential nomination. Consequently, Romney and Gingrich were less likely to be perceived as clearly and authentically representing the Republican Party than Obama was to be perceived as the figurehead of the Democratic Party. Also, when the EGSS was administered, neither Romney nor Gingrich had received the same level of media scrutiny as Obama, and neither Republican candidate had taken such nationally visible

policy stances as Obama. For this reason, average citizens might not have picked up on enough signals to associate the Republican candidates with their sense of right and wrong the way they did President Obama. In contrast, individuals with higher levels of political knowledge would be more likely to possess sufficient information to develop partisan moral convictions about Romney and Gingrich and, by extension, to display the pattern of polarized affect that I predict based on propensity to moralize.

I can test this expectation by comparing the effect of propensity to moralize on affect toward the Republican leaders between high and low knowledge respondents. The EGSS includes four general-knowledge items to assess respondents' level of political knowledge. I sum correct answers to these questions and divide respondents into low knowledge (0)—those who got two questions or less correct—and high knowledge (1)—those who got three questions or more correct—categories.¹¹

Figure 3 shows the estimated marginal effect of propensity to moralize on feeling thermometer ratings of Romney among high and low knowledge Democrats and Republicans, holding all other control variables constant at their means. Plot A illustrates that high knowledge respondents display the pattern of polarized affect my theory predicts. The dashed line shows that each one point increase in propensity to moralize leads, on average, to a -2.92 point decrease in how much Democrats like Romney, and the solid line shows that the same increase in propensity to moralize leads, on average, to a 0.75 point increase in how much Republicans like Romney. Among high knowledge individuals, the gap in affect toward Romney increases between partisans as propensity to moralize increases.

In contrast, Plot B shows that low knowledge Democrats and Republicans mix up the connection between their party identification, moral conviction, and feeling toward Romney. Each one point increase in propensity to moralize actually leads, on average, to a 1.68 point increase in how much Democrats like Romney and a -2.72 point decrease in how much Republicans like Romney. The high and low knowledge Gingrich models display the same pattern of results.

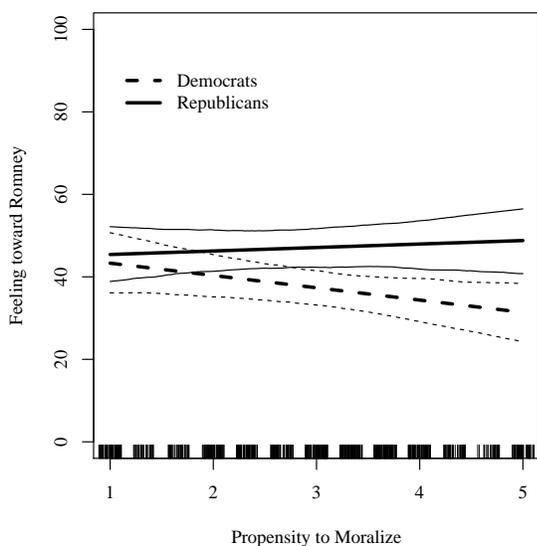
These findings for the knowledge-based Republican candidate models provide tentative support for my first hypothesis. Partisans who display a high propensity to moralize are more likely to express positive affect toward out-party leaders and negative affect toward in-party leaders, so long as they have the political knowledge necessary to recognize moral cues and develop moral convictions about the leaders. This in turn supports my theory that individuals who base their evaluations of political

¹¹I count missing answers as “wrong.” To verify my results, however, I also run models where missing answers were simply counted as missing. Results from the “missing” models are nearly identical to results from the “wrong” models, including same coefficient sign and significance.

elites on partisan moral convictions are more likely to report polarized feelings about those elites.

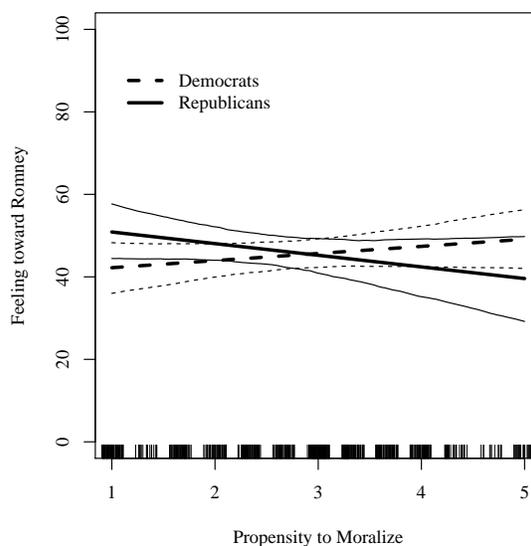
Despite this general trend, there appear to be key differences in how propensity to moralize influences feelings toward specific candidates. A comparison of Figure 1 to Plot A in Figure 3 shows that the marginal effect of propensity to moralize on polarized affect toward Obama is stronger than the marginal effect of propensity to moralize on polarized affect toward Romney among even high knowledge respondents. In this way, partisan moralizers appear to hold stronger morally convicted attitudes toward the president than toward less prominent political leaders who lost their bid for election.¹²

Predicted Effect of Moralizing on Feeling toward Romney



(a) High Knowledge

Predicted Effect of Moralizing on Feeling toward Romney



(b) Low Knowledge

Figure 3: Affect Toward Romney Among High and Low Knowledge Respondents

The results illustrated in Figure 4 support my second set of hypotheses that partisans who display a higher propensity to moralize are more likely to express lower job approval of out-party leaders and higher job approval of in-party leaders than partisans who display a lower propensity to moralize. This figure shows the estimated marginal effect of propensity to moralize on President Obama’s job approval rating among Democratic and Republican respondents, holding control variables constant at

¹²Some might suggest that racial sentiments are driving the heightened levels of polarized affect toward President Obama, rather than partisan moral convictions. To address this alternative hypothesis, I run several models testing how propensity to moralize influences feeling thermometer ratings for blacks among blacks and non-blacks, and I find no difference in the effect of propensity to moralize on feeling thermometer ratings between the two groups. Moral conviction does not appear to influence divided racial evaluations the way it does divided political evaluations, casting strong doubt on the premise that moral conviction related to racial sentiments, rather than partisanship, drives polarized affect toward President Obama.

their means. The solid line shows that each one point increase in propensity to moralize leads, on average, to a -0.15 point decrease in how much Republicans approve of the job President Obama is doing in office. This negative marginal effect represents more than a half point decrease in presidential job approval (measured on a 1-7 scale) over the total range of propensity to moralize. The dashed line illustrates that each one point increase in propensity to moralize leads, on average, to a 0.15 point increase in how much Democrats approve of President Obama's work in office. This positive marginal effect represents more than a half point increase in job approval across the propensity to moralize scale.

Predicted Effect of Moralizing on Obama's Job Approval Rating

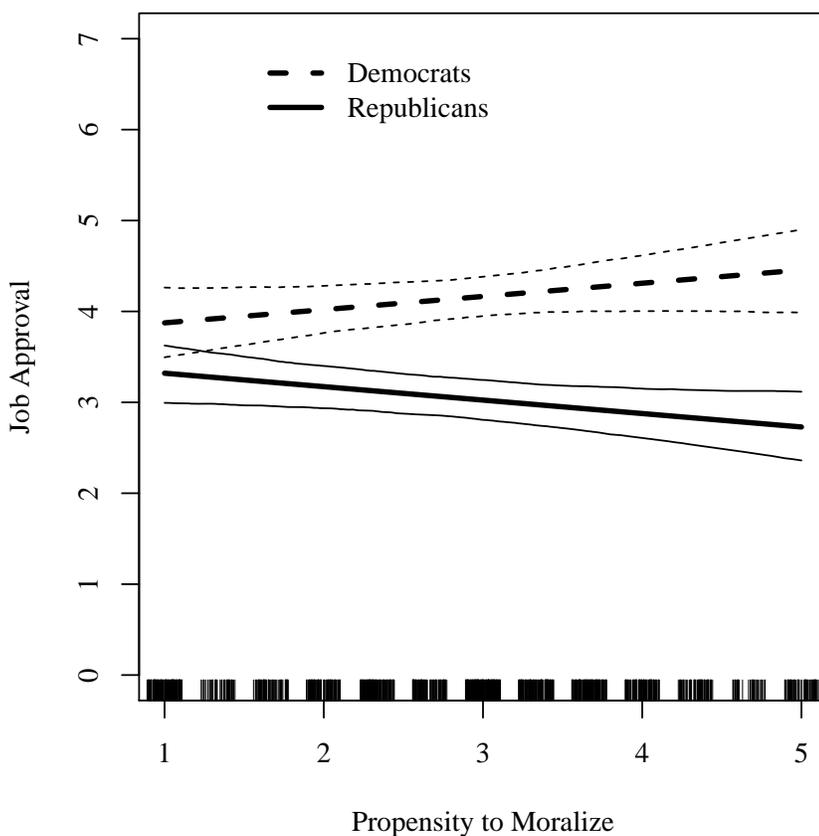


Figure 4: Estimated Marginal Effect of Propensity to Moralize on Obama's Job Approval Rating

As Figure 4 shows, the gap in President Obama's job approval ratings between Democrats and Republicans grows larger as you move from left to right across the propensity to moralize scale, and the strongest partisan moralizers are farther than 1 point apart in their assessment of how Obama has

handled his job as president. This suggests that polarized evaluations of party leaders increase as propensity to moralize politics increases, even after controlling for partisan and ideological strength.

Finally, the results depicted in Figure 5 provide mixed support for my third set of hypotheses that partisans who display a higher propensity to moralize are more likely to blame out-party leaders and less likely to blame in-party leaders for problems the country is facing. In each plot in this figure, higher scores reflect greater blame, so I expect the slope of the line for in-party members to be negative—signifying less blame—and the slope of the line for out-party members to be positive—signifying more blame. While the direction of the lines for in-party and out-party members is switched relative to the previous figures, I still expect the gap to grow between partisans as propensity to moralize increases.

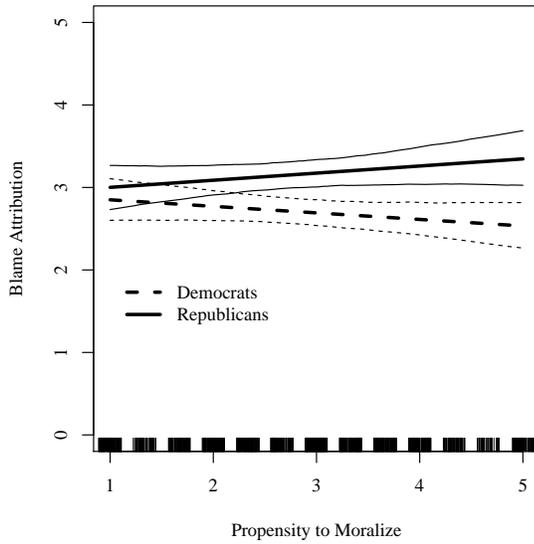
Plot A and Plot B in Figure 5 illustrate the estimated marginal effect of propensity to moralize on the amount of blame Democrats and Republicans place on President Obama and President George W. Bush for poor economic conditions, holding control variables constant at their means. In Plot A, the solid line shows that every one unit increase in propensity to moralize leads, on average, to a 0.09 point increase in the blame Republicans attribute to President Obama. The dashed line shows that the same increase in propensity to moralize causes, on average, a -0.08 point decrease in the blame Democrats direct at President Obama. These results support my third hypothesis that partisans who display a higher propensity to moralize are more likely to blame out-party leaders and excuse in-party leaders. As a result, the gap between partisans in the amount of blame they attribute to President Obama grows wider as their propensity to moralize politics gets higher.

Plot B displays a similar result. Every one unit increase in propensity to moralize leads, on average, to a -0.02 point decrease in blame directed at President Bush among Republicans and a 0.07 point increase in blame placed on President Bush by Democrats. Again, partisans become more divided in the amount of blame they attribute to a party leader the more they tend to moralize politics.

Plot C and Plot D in Figure 5 show the estimated marginal effect of propensity to moralize on the amount of blame Democrats and Republicans place on Democrats and Republicans in Congress, holding control variables constant at their means. The solid and dashed lines in Plot C show that every one unit increase in propensity to moralize leads, on average, to a 0.01 point increase in the blame Republicans and a 0.03 point increases in the blame Democrats attribute to Democrats in Congress. This result does not support my expectation that partisans who display a high propensity to moralize are more likely to blame out-party leaders and excuse in-party leaders. Moralizers from both parties

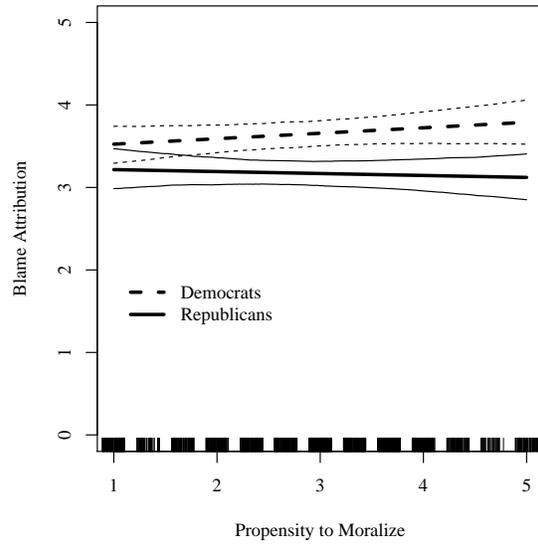
are not much different than non-moralizers in how much blame they place on Democratic leaders.

Predicted Effect of Moralizing on Tendency to Blame Obama



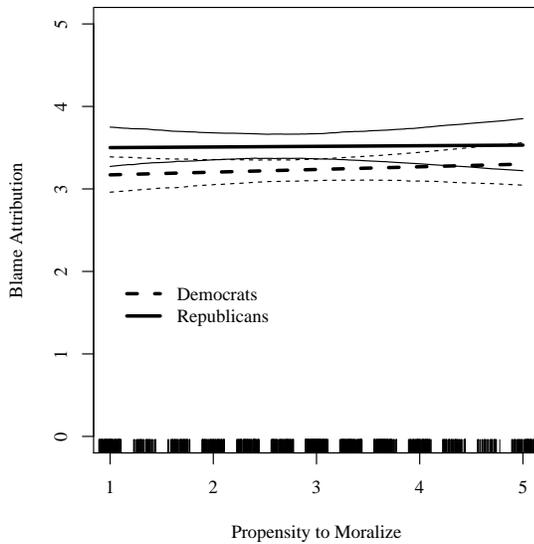
(a) Blame on Obama

Predicted Effect of Moralizing on Tendency to Blame Bush



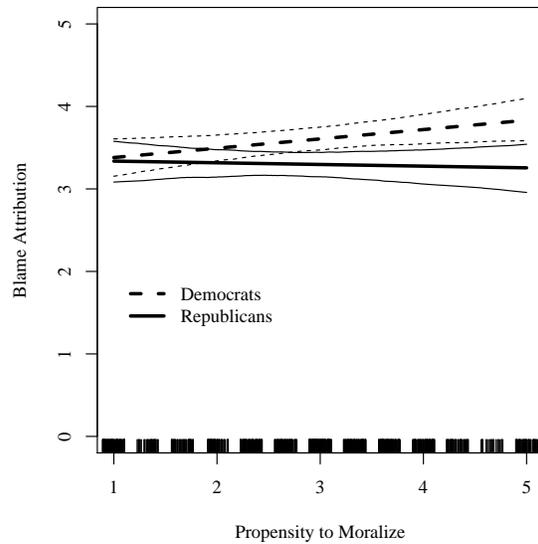
(b) Blame on Bush

Predicted Effect of Moralizing on Tendency to Blame Democrats



(c) Blame on Democrats in Congress

Predicted Effect of Moralizing on Tendency to Blame Republicans



(d) Blame on Republicans in Congress

Figure 5: Estimated Marginal Effect of Propensity to Moralize on Blame Attributed to Party Leaders

In Plot D, the solid line shows that every one unit increase in propensity to moralize leads, on average, to a -0.02 point decrease in the blame Republicans assign to Republicans in Congress. The dashed line shows that the same increase in propensity to moralize causes, on average, a 0.12 point increase

in the blame Democrats place on Republicans in Congress. This figure illustrates that Democrats and Republicans grow more divided in their evaluations of Republican leaders as they move from a lower to higher propensity to moralize politics.

How the Moralization of Politics Occurs

While this study is ultimately agnostic about how partisan moral convictions develop, it does provide some hints about the process. First, findings from this study suggest that it takes more than association with a party to link political objects to people's core moral beliefs and convictions. Principles from social identity theory suggest that the moralization and resulting one-sided view of politics could occur simply because people who tend to moralize politics are more likely to maximize perceived in-group similarities and out-group differences on the attribute of morality, causing them to view the in-party as basically moral and the out-party as fundamentally immoral. In this way, candidates who are recognized to be associated with one party or the other would be subject to the divisive evaluations driven by a high propensity to moralize. If group affiliation with an in-party or out-party was enough to drive the moralization of politics, as this model suggests, we would expect to see partisan moralizers display the same biased assessments of all party leaders.¹³

This study, however, reveals key differences in the effects of propensity to moralize on affective polarization, depending on factors like the prominence, specificity, and relevance of the partisan object being evaluated. For example, President Obama is the most divisive figure for morally convicted Democrats and Republicans of any leader in this study. The marginal effect of propensity to moralize on polarized affect toward Obama among individuals across the spectrum of political knowledge is larger than the marginal effect of propensity to moralize on polarized affect toward Romney or Gingrich among even high knowledge individuals. Likewise, the marginal effect of propensity to moralize on blame directed at President Obama, a specific party leader, is larger than the marginal effect of propensity to moralize on blame directed at Democrats or Republicans in Congress, both generic categories of party leaders. Finally, partisan moralizers are more polarized in the blame they attribute to President Obama, who is the current leader of the country, than in the blame they place on President Bush, who had been politically irrelevant for several years when the EGSS was administered.

¹³More specifically, we would expect to see similar levels of negativity toward all out-party leaders because the social identity approach predicts that individuals view out-group members as more homogenous than in-group members—in this case, as all immoral (Haslam et al. 1996).

These findings indicate that some aspect of being the current president, whether frequent media coverage, national prominence, well-publicized policy agendas, or current relevance, helps facilitate the connection between party leaders and moral intuitions. The results suggest a model where the moralization of politics takes place over time as people watch, discuss, and consider specific actions and messages by particular party leaders. In-party and out-party cues appear insufficient by themselves to drive morally convicted attitudes about political elites. Rather, individuals must build up a mental association between attitude objects like candidates or politicians and a sense that the objects are moral and immoral. Future work should investigate this expectation in order to better understand what factors drive the moralization of politics, which in turn facilitates affective polarization.

Discussion

Together, the results of this study provide evidence to support my theory. Partisans who display a higher propensity to moralize, that is who tend to view politics through a lens of right and wrong, are more likely to display polarized affect, job approval ratings, and blame attribution. Across these variables, morally convicted partisans view in-party leaders more positively and out-party leaders more negatively than non-morally convicted partisans, which suggests that citizens who base their political evaluations on partisan moral convictions are more likely to exhibit affective polarization than citizens who base their evaluations on personal preferences or normative conventions. This finding poses three important implications for how we think about polarization, moral conviction, and electoral politics.

First, this study suggests another factor, besides famously dominant partisan strength, that facilitates affective polarization. While party identification significantly influences biased affect toward, job approval of, and blame attributed to party leaders, propensity to moralize also affects significant differences in these outcome variables between partisans.¹⁴ Even after controlling for partisanship and ideology, and despite high levels of correlation between predictors in the models, I find that Republicans and Democrats are more likely to become divided in their feelings towards and evaluations of party leaders as propensity to moralize increases. These results implicate moral conviction as a key force that heightens affective polarization above and beyond what party identification does alone.

Insights from this study about the divisive impact of moral conviction also help clarify and resolve

¹⁴It is important to note that propensity to moralize is not simply a proxy for greater partisan extremity. While there is a notable relationship between propensity to moralize and partisanship, regressing (weighted OLS) propensity to moralize on partisan extremity shows that $B_{PartisanExtremity} = 0.15$; $SE = 0.05$. It also yields an R-squared value of 0.013, suggesting that partisan extremity explains less than 2% of the variance in propensity to moralize.

some of the debate over the extent of mass polarization in the U.S. While scholars from both camps have argued back and forth for years, by now it appears that much of the disagreement about electoral polarization is over terms. Levels of partisan bias, anger, and antipathy, which characterize affective polarization, have clearly increased in the American electorate, while citizens' issue positions, which define issue-based polarization, remain relatively moderate (Mason 2013, 2015).

Results from this study suggest we should not be surprised by this pattern of polarization. Citizens can agree on a majority of political issues, and yet still be bitterly divided because they disagree on the few topics they actually care about—the parties, leaders, and partisan issues that they consider to be matters of right and wrong. Also, partisans can perceive that one side is moral, and thus admirable, and the other immoral, and thus loathsome, without holding sorted, highly constrained issue attitudes (see Ben-Nun Bloom 2013). In this way, the polarizing effect of partisan moral convictions would facilitate the political landscape we see today: a nation that agrees on many things but is still deeply divided.

Second, findings from this study provide further evidence to substantiate the important role moral conviction plays in shaping the current political landscape. Citizens today are not just divided along partisan lines, they are divided along moral lines. A substantial gap exists between how moralizers and non-moralizers view partisan opponents and allies. When you control for partisan strength, Democrats and Republicans who rarely moralize politics barely differ in their feelings towards and evaluations of political elites, but partisans who habitually moralize politics are clearly divided in how they assess in-party and out-party leaders.

This gap raises questions about effective political representation. While many citizens are turned off by partisan division and desire greater cooperation across party lines, citizens who moralize politics are more likely to oppose compromise with the other side at any cost (Ryan 2013). Consequently, politicians have to decide whose views to represent. Since morally convicted individuals are more motivated to participate in politics and turn out to vote (Morgan, Skitka, and Wisneski 2010; Ryan 2014; Skitka and Bauman 2008), politicians have an electoral incentive to avoid alienating them by engaging in bipartisan activities, potentially leaving non-moralizers poorly represented.

Third, this study very tentatively suggests that it might be strategic for candidates to moralize campaigns in order to inspire partisan allies to action, even if means angering partisan opponents. When the EGSS was administered in February 2012, Barack Obama elicited much more aversion from morally convicted Republicans than either Mitt Romney or Newt Gingrich evoked from morally con-

victed Democrats. He also, however, inspired much more positive affect among Democratic moralizers than the GOP candidates aroused from Republican moralizers. Nine months later, President Obama won reelection over Romney, in large part, because of high voter turnout by Democratic supporters. Meanwhile, many Republican voters stayed home.

While this is one example, it makes sense for candidates to encourage their supporters to view the election as a moral decision. If they can convince their own side that they are the moral choice and the other candidate is the immoral choice, then they can harness the increased passion, loyalty, mobilization, and participation that stem from moral conviction to help them win the election (Skitka and Morgan 2009, 2014). They lose little if they rile the other side in the process, because members of the opposite party are unlikely to vote for them anyway. In contrast, candidates who arouse neither the anger nor affinity tied to moral conviction might fail to inspire voter turnout. Consequently, a candidate's success at encouraging partisan supporters to develop morally convicted attitudes could help him or her win an election.

Conclusion

To close, findings from this study raise two important normative questions about the nature of moral conviction and electoral politics. First, how can we moderate the affective polarization triggered by partisan moral conviction while also respecting individuals' core moral beliefs about the political parties and their affiliates? Over the last few decades, the American electorate has grown increasingly divided along partisan lines, showing greater hostility toward partisan foes and greater favoritism toward partisan allies (Haidt and Hetherington 2012; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Lelkes and Westwood 2015; Mason 2013, 2015). Most troubling, this trend now includes aversion to average citizens, not just political leaders and organizations, who side with the wrong political team (Pew 2014). This study suggests that people's deeply held beliefs about right and wrong facilitate heightened levels of this affective polarization, adding to the long list of negative consequences of moral conviction (see Skitka and Morgan 2009, 2014).

Before we jump to encourage individuals to moderate their moral beliefs, however, we have to remember that moral convictions have positive implications as well. They encourage political engagement and participation, and they provide an information shortcut that facilitates coherent political opinions despite low political sophistication (Ben-Nun Bloom 2013; Ryan 2014; Skitka and Bauman

2008). Also, some of the most important advances in our country's history, such as the Civil Rights Movement, have occurred because individuals were willing to stand up for their fundamental beliefs about right and wrong (Chong 2014).

Second, how can politicians leverage the increased political participation and activism engendered by moral conviction without contributing to affective polarization? It might be electorally advantageous for party leaders to moralize party platforms, issues, and campaigns. At the same time, however, we have to ask if it is normatively beneficial for the country as a whole. A moralized political climate makes it easier for citizens to firmly support their political side, but it also makes it easier for them to demonize the opposition.

Appendix A: Tables of Results

Table 2: Feeling Thermometer Ratings for Party Leaders

	Obama Rating	Romney Rating	Gingrich Rating
(Intercept)	97.45*** (7.50)	12.54* (5.79)	5.17 (4.98)
Republican	11.75+ (6.72)	-3.82 (5.58)	2.77 (5.50)
Propensity to Moralize	2.57+ (1.33)	-0.79 (1.11)	0.13 (0.93)
White	-13.64*** (2.74)	3.87+ (2.29)	0.80 (2.23)
Female	-1.09 (1.96)	1.15 (1.71)	0.82 (1.67)
Ideology	-3.71*** (0.89)	2.65** (0.83)	3.73*** (0.75)
Evangelical	-2.17 (2.19)	1.78 (1.99)	6.45** (1.96)
Income	0.44+ (0.25)	0.32 (0.20)	-0.27 (0.19)
Party Identification	-8.17*** (1.11)	4.18*** (1.06)	3.57*** (1.07)
Republican * Prop. to Moralize	-5.50** (1.77)	-0.27 (1.72)	-1.06 (1.53)
R ²	0.52	0.18	0.24
Adj. R ²	0.52	0.18	0.24
N	1212	1203	1203

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.10$. Tests of significance are two-tailed. All data are weighted.

Table 3: Romney Feeling Thermometer Ratings Based on Political Knowledge

	High Knowledge	Low Knowledge
(Intercept)	17.58* (8.53)	8.96 (8.05)
Republican	-5.96 (8.01)	2.49 (7.41)
Propensity to Moralize	-2.92+ (1.50)	1.68 (1.47)
White	0.68 (3.42)	7.38* (3.02)
Female	0.92 (2.23)	1.45 (2.47)
Ideology	4.08*** (1.11)	1.11 (1.13)
Evangel	0.19 (2.90)	2.18 (2.71)
Income	0.29 (0.29)	0.35 (0.29)
Party Identification	2.28+ (1.38)	5.17*** (1.55)
Republican * Prop. to Moralize	3.67+ (2.15)	-4.41+ (2.42)
R^2	0.26	0.16
Adj. R^2	0.25	0.15
N	627	576

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.10$. Tests of significance are two-tailed. All data are weighted.

Table 4: Gingrich Feeling Thermometer Ratings Based on Political Knowledge

	High Knowledge	Low Knowledge
(Intercept)	0.90 (7.03)	8.02 (6.89)
Republican	-4.28 (7.63)	13.95 ⁺ (7.72)
Propensity to Moralize	-0.94 (1.20)	1.65 (1.34)
White	1.38 (3.16)	2.46 (2.94)
Female	1.35 (2.13)	0.42 (2.43)
Ideology	4.76 ^{***} (0.98)	2.36 [*] (1.05)
Evangelical	5.81 [*] (2.73)	6.85 [*] (2.66)
Income	-0.32 (0.28)	-0.12 (0.26)
Party Identification	3.30 [*] (1.29)	3.14 [*] (1.57)
Republican * Prop. to Moralize	3.09 (1.90)	-5.43 [*] (2.15)
R^2	0.38	0.15
Adj. R^2	0.38	0.14
N	627	576

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.10$. Tests of significance are two-tailed. All data are weighted.

Table 5: Obama Feeling Thermometer Ratings Based on Political Knowledge

	High Knowledge	Low Knowledge
(Intercept)	105.59*** (7.94)	92.86*** (11.42)
Republican	-6.25 (7.77)	24.17* (10.33)
Propensity to Moralize	2.11 (1.35)	2.16 (2.12)
White	-14.59*** (3.34)	-15.23*** (4.04)
Female	-1.07 (2.16)	-0.50 (3.03)
Ideology	-5.01*** (1.12)	-2.34 ⁺ (1.29)
Evangelical	-2.14 (2.72)	-0.76 (3.10)
Income	0.55 (0.34)	0.20 (0.36)
Party Identification	-6.58*** (1.28)	-8.82*** (1.73)
Republican * Prop. to Moralize	-3.20 (2.04)	-7.16* (2.77)
R^2	0.66	0.44
Adj. R^2	0.65	0.43
N	629	583

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ⁺ $p < 0.10$. Tests of significance are two-tailed. All data are weighted.

Table 6: Presidential Job Approval Ratings

	Obama Approval
(Intercept)	6.96*** (0.42)
Republican	0.65+ (0.40)
Propensity to Moralize	0.15+ (0.09)
White	-0.89*** (0.17)
Female	-0.02 (0.12)
Ideology	-0.28*** (0.05)
Evangelical	-0.13 (0.13)
Income	0.00 (0.02)
Party Identification	-0.45*** (0.07)
Republican * Prop. to Moralize	-0.30** (0.11)
Adj.R ²	0.50
R ²	0.50
N	1212

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.10$. Tests of significance are two-tailed. All data are weighted.

Table 7: Attribution of Blame to Party Leaders

	Blame Obama	Blame Bush	Blame Democrats	Blame Republicans
(Intercept)	1.33*** (0.29)	4.78*** (0.26)	1.95*** (0.28)	4.12*** (0.26)
Republican	-0.37 (0.30)	0.34 (0.29)	0.01 (0.26)	0.55* (0.28)
Propensity to Moralize	-0.08 (0.05)	0.07 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	0.12* (0.05)
White	0.45*** (0.12)	-0.12 (0.11)	0.29** (0.10)	0.10 (0.11)
Female	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.18* (0.08)	-0.24** (0.08)	-0.19* (0.08)
Ideology	0.21*** (0.04)	-0.07* (0.03)	0.11** (0.03)	-0.07* (0.03)
Evangelical	0.17 (0.11)	-0.09 (0.10)	0.06 (0.09)	0.03 (0.10)
Income	-0.02 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Party Identification	0.18** (0.06)	-0.28*** (0.05)	0.17*** (0.05)	-0.23*** (0.05)
Republican *	0.16+ (0.08)	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.13+ (0.08)
R ²	0.30	0.26	0.20	0.17
Adj.R ²	0.30	0.26	0.20	0.16
N	1207	1208	1208	1208

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.10$. Tests of significance are two-tailed. All data are weighted.

References

- Abramowitz, Alan, and Kyle Saunders. 2005. "Why Can't We All Just Get Along? The Reality of a Polarized America." 3(2): 1–22.
- Abramowitz, Alan I. 2006. "Comment on Disconnected: The Political Class versus the People." In *Red and Blue Nation: Characteristics and Causes of America's Polarized Politics*, eds. Pietro S. Nivola, and David W. Brady. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 72–84.
- Abramowitz, Alan I. 2010. *The Disappearing Center: Engaged Citizens, Polarization, and American Democracy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Abramowitz, Alan I., and Kyle L. Saunders. 1998. "Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate." *The Journal of Politics* 60(3): 634–52.
- Abramowitz, Alan I., and Kyle L. Saunders. 2008. "Is Polarization a Myth?" *The Journal of Politics* 70(2): 542–55.
- Abramowitz, Alan I., and Walter J. Stone. 2006. "The Bush Effect: Polarization, Turnout, and Activism in the 2004 Presidential Election." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36(2): 141–54.
- Ben-Nun Bloom, Pazit. 2013. "The Public's Compass: Moral Conviction and Political Attitudes." *American Politics Research* 41(6): 937–64.
- Berns, Gregory S., Emily Bell, C. Monica Capra, Michael J. Prietula, Sara Moore, Brittany Anderson, Jeremy Ginges, and Scott Atran. 2012. "The Price of Your Soul: Neural Evidence for the Non-utilitarian Representation of Sacred Values." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 367(1589): 754–62.
- Brewer, Mark D. 2005. "The Rise of Partisanship and the Expansion of Partisan Conflict Within the American Electorate." *Political Research Quarterly* 58(2): 219–229.
- Chong, Dennis. 2014. *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Clifford, Scott. 2014. "Linking Issue Stances and Trait Inferences: A Theory of Moral Exemplification." *The Journal of Politics* 76(3): 698–710.
- DeScioli, Peter, and Robert Kurzban. 2009. "Mysteries of Morality." *Cognition* 112(2): 281–99.
- DeScioli, Peter, and Robert Kurzban. 2013. "A Solution to the Mysteries of Morality." *Psychological Bulletin* 139(2): 477–96.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 2013. "If I Could Hold a Seminar for Political Journalists?" *The Forum* 10(4): 2–10.
- Fiorina, Morris P., and Matthew S. Levendusky. 2006. "Disconnected: The Political Class Versus the People." In *Red and Blue Nation: Characteristics and Causes of America's Polarized Politics*, eds. Pietro S. Nivola, and David W. Brady. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 49–71.
- Fiorina, Morris P., and Samuel J. Abrams. 2008. "Political Polarization in the American Public." *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 563–88.
- Fiorina, Morris P., Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2005. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. Pearson Longman: New York.

- Fiorina, Morris P, Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2008. "Polarization in the American public: Misconceptions and misreadings." *The Journal of Politics* 70(2): 556–60.
- Greene, Joshua D. 2007. "The Secret Joke of Kant's Soul." In *Moral Psychology, Vol. 3: The Neuroscience of Morality: Emotion, Disease, and Development*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press , 359–72.
- Greene, Joshua D. 2009. "The Cognitive Neuroscience of Moral Judgment." In *The Cognitive Neurosciences*, ed. Michael S. Gazzaniga. Fourth ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press , 1–48.
- Haidt, Jonathan, and Marc J. Hetherington. 2012. "Look How Far We've Come Apart." Campaign Stops, September 17. Available online at <http://campaignstops.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/17/look-how-far-weve-come-apart/> (accessed August 11, 2015).
- Haslam, S. Alexander, Penelope J. Oakes, John C. Turner, and Craig McGarty. 1996. "Social Identity, Self-Categorization, and the Perceived Homogeneity of Ingroups and Outgroups: The Interaction Between Social Motivation and Cognition." In *Handbook of Motivation and Cognition, Vol. 3: The Interpersonal Context*, eds. Richard M. Sorrentino, and Tory E. Higgins. New York: Guilford Press , 182–222.
- Heit, Evan, and Stephen P. Nicholson. 2010. "The Opposite of Republican: Polarization and Political Categorization." *Cognitive Science* 34(8): 1503–16.
- Hetherington, Marc J. 2001. "Resurgent Mass Partisanship: The Role of Elite Polarization." 95(3): 619–631.
- Hetherington, Marc J. 2009. "Putting Polarization in Perspective." *British Journal of Political Science* 39(2): 413–48.
- Iyengar, Shanto, and Sean J. Westwood. 2015. "Fear and Loathing Across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(3): 690–707.
- Iyengar, Shanto, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2012. "Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76(3): 405–31.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2005. "Polarized Politics and the 2004 Congressional and Presidential Elections." *Political Science Quarterly* 120(2): 199–218.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2007. *A Divider, Not a Uniter: George W. Bush and the American People*. New York: Pearson Longman.
- Layman, Geoffrey C., and Thomas M. Carsey. 2002a. "Party Polarization and "Conflict Extension" in the American Electorate." *American Journal of Political Science* 46(4): 786–802.
- Layman, Geoffrey C., and Thomas M. Carsey. 2002b. "Party Polarization and Party Structuring of Policy Attitudes: A Comparison of Three NES Panel Studies." *Political Behavior* 24(3): 199–236.
- Layman, Geoffrey C., Thomas M. Carsey, and Juliana Menasce Horowitz. 2006. "Party Polarization in American Politics: Characteristics, Causes, and Consequences." *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 83–110.
- Leach, Colin Wayne, Naomi Ellemers, and Manuela Barreto. 2007. "Group Virtue: The Importance of Morality (Vs. Competence and Sociability) in the Positive Evaluation of In-groups." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 93(2): 234–49.

- Leach, Colin Wayne, Rezarta Bilali, and Stefano Pagliaro. 2014. "Groups and Morality." In *APA Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 2: Group Processes*, eds. Mario Mikulincer, Phillip R. Shaver, John F. Dovidio, and Jeffrey A. Simpson. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 123–149.
- Lelkes, Yphtach, and Sean J. Westwood. 2015. "The Limits of Partisan Prejudice." Unpublished paper.
- Levendusky, Matthew. 2013. "Partisan Media Exposure and Attitudes Toward the Opposition." *Political Communication* 30(4): 565–81.
- Levendusky, Matthew S. 2009. *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mason, Lilliana. 2013. "The Rise of Uncivil Agreement: Issue Versus Behavioral Polarization in the American Electorate." *American Behavioral Scientist* 57(1): 140–59.
- Mason, Lilliana. 2015. "'I Disrespectfully Agree': The Differential Effects of Partisan Sorting on Social and Issue Polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(1): 128–45.
- Mikhail, John. 2007. "Universal Moral Grammar: Theory, Evidence, and the Future." *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences* 11(4): 143–52.
- Mikhail, John. 2011. *Elements of Moral Cognition: Rawls' Linguistic Analogy and the Cognitive Science of Moral and Legal Judgment*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Moll, Jorge, and Ricardo de Oliveira-Souza. 2007. "Moral Judgments, Emotions and the Utilitarian Brain." *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences* 11(8): 319–21.
- Moll, Jorge, Ricardo de Oliveira-Souza, Paul J Eslinger, Ivanei E Bramati, Jania Mourao-Miranda, Pedro Angelo Andreiuolo, and Luiz Pessoa. 2002. "The Neural Correlates of Moral Sensitivity: A Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging Investigation of Basic and Moral Emotions." *Journal of Neuroscience* 22(7): 2730–6.
- Moll, Jorge, Roland Zahn, Ricardo de Oliveira-Souza, Frank Krueger, and Jordan Grafman. 2005. "The Neural Basis of Human Moral Cognition." *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 6(10): 799–809.
- Morgan, Gregory S., Linda J. Skitka, and Daniel Wisneski. 2010. "Moral and Religious Convictions and Intentions to Vote in the 2008 Presidential Election." *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 10(1): 307–20.
- Mullen, Elizabeth, and Linda J. Skitka. 2006. "Exploring the Psychological Underpinnings of the Moral Mandate Effect: Motivated Reasoning, Group Differentiation, or Anger?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90(4): 3629–43.
- Munro, Geoffrey D., Carrie Weih, and Jeffrey Tsai. 2010. "Motivated Suspicion: Asymmetrical Attributions of the Behavior of Political Ingroup and Outgroup Members." *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 32(2): 173–84.
- Pew. 2014. "Political Polarization in the American Public." Available online at <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/> (accessed October 7, 2014).
- Phillips, Chelsea J., and Thomas M. Carsey. 2013. "The Power and Influence of Political Identities Beyond Political Contexts." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago.

- Rai, Taze Shakti, and Alan Page Fiske. 2011. "Moral Psychology is Relationship Regulation: Moral Motives for Unity, Hierarchy, Equality, and Proportionality." *Psychological Review* 118(1): 57–75.
- Ryan, Timothy J. 2013. "No Compromise: Political Consequences of Moralized Attitudes." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago.
- Ryan, Timothy J. 2014. "Reconsidering Moral Issues in Politics." *Journal of Politics* 76(2): 380–97.
- Saunders, Katharine. 2014. "Investigating the Psychological Foundations of Moral Judgment." Unpublished paper, Doctoral dissertation submitted to Rutgers University.
- Skitka, Linda J. 2010. "The Psychology of Moral Conviction." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 4(4): 267–81.
- Skitka, Linda J. 2014. "The Psychological Foundations of Moral Conviction." In *Advances in Moral Psychology*, eds. Jennifer Wright, and Hagop Sarkissian. New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press , 148–166.
- Skitka, Linda J., and Christopher W. Bauman. 2008. "Moral Conviction and Political Engagement." *Political Psychology* 29(1): 29–54.
- Skitka, Linda J., and Daniel C. Wisneski. 2011. "Moral Conviction and Emotion." *Emotion Review* 3(3): 328–30.
- Skitka, Linda J., and G. Scott Morgan. 2009. "The Double-edged Sword of a Moral State of Mind." In *Personality, Identity, and Character: Explorations in Moral Psychology*, eds. Darcia Narvaez, and Daniel K. Lapsley. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press , 355–74.
- Skitka, Linda J., and G. Scott Morgan. 2014. "The Social and Political Implications of Moral Conviction." *Advances in Political Psychology* 35(1): 95–110.
- Skitka, Linda J., Christopher W. Bauman, and Edward G. Sargis. 2005. "Moral Conviction: Another Contributor to Attitude Strength or Something More?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 88(6): 895–917.
- Skitka, Linda J., G. Scott Morgan, and Daniel C. Wisneski. 2015. "Political Orientation and Moral Conviction: A Conservative Advantage or an Equal Opportunity Motivator of Political Engagement?" In *Social Psychology and Politics*, eds. Joseph Forgas, William Crano, and Klaus Fiedler. New York: Psychology Press , 57–74.
- Skitka, Linda J., James Hou fu Liu, Yiyin Yang, Hui Chen, Li Liu, and Lun Xu. 2012. "Exploring the Cross-cultural Generalizability and Scope of Morally motivated Intolerance." *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 4(3): 324–31.
- Turner, John, Michael A. Hogg, Penelope J. Oakes, Stephen D. Reicher, and Margaret S. Wetherell. 1987. *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-categorization Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.
- van Zomeren, Martijn, Tom Postmes, and Russell Spears. 2012. "On Conviction's Collective Consequences: Integrating Moral Conviction with the Social Identity Model of Collective Action." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 51(1): 52–71.
- Wright, Jennifer C., Jerry Cullum, and Nicholas Schwab. 2008. "The Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of Moral Conviction: Implications for Attitudinal and Behavioral Measures of Interpersonal Tolerance." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34(11): 1461–76.