

The Cambridge Handbook of Political Psychology

Edited by

Danny Osborne

University of Auckland

Chris G. Sibley

University of Auckland



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The Cambridge Handbook of Political Psychology

The Cambridge Handbook of Political Psychology provides a comprehensive review of the psychology of political behaviour from an international perspective. Its coverage spans from foundational approaches to political psychology, including the evolutionary, personality, and developmental roots of political attitudes, to contemporary challenges to governance, including populism, hate speech, conspiracy beliefs, inequality, climate change, and terrorism. Each chapter features cutting-edge research from internationally renowned scholars who offer their unique insights into how people think, feel, and act in different political contexts. By taking a distinctively international approach, this handbook highlights the nuances of political behaviour across cultures and geographical regions, as well as the truisms of political psychology that transcend context. Academics, graduate students, and practitioners alike, as well as those generally interested in politics and human behaviour, will benefit from this definitive overview of how people shape – and are shaped by – their political environment in a rapidly changing twenty-first century.

DANNY OSBORNE is an Associate Professor in the School of Psychology at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. His research focuses on the factors that contribute to, and impede, people's intentions to redress inequality, with a particular emphasis on ideology and collective action. He has published more than 120 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on core topics within political psychology.

CHRIS G. SIBLEY is a Professor in the School of Psychology at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. He is the founder of the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study, a 20-year longitudinal national probability study of social and political attitudes. He has published more than 300 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters. He is also a co-editor of *The Cambridge Handbook of the Psychology of Prejudice* (2016).

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This book is dedicated to Aurora Metheney and Lauren Duck

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Contributors

QUENTIN D. ATKINSON, University of Auckland

MARTHA AUGOUSTINOS, University of Adelaide

ARIN H. AYANIAN, Universität Bielefeld

JOAQUÍN BAHAMONDES, Universidad Católica del Norte

BERT N. BAKKER, University of Amsterdam

MATTHEW BALDWIN, University of Florida

KASEY BARR, Hebrew University

JULIA C. BECKER, University of Osnabrück

REBECCA BIGLER, The University of Texas at Austin

REZARTA BILALI, New York University

MICHAŁ BILEWICZ, University of Warsaw

BORIS BIZUMIC, Australian National University

FOUAD BOU ZEINEDDINE, Universität Innsbruck

CHRISTIA SPEARS BROWN, University of Kentucky

DAPHNA CANETTI, University of Haifa

ANANISH CHAUDHURI, University of Auckland

DENNIS CHONG, University of Southern California

OLIVER CHRIST, FernUniversität in Hagen

ALEKSANDRA CICHOCKA, University of Kent

ALEKSANDRA CISLAK, SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities

SCOTT CLAESSENS, University of Auckland

LOREN COLLINGWOOD, University of New Mexico

STEPHANIE L. DEMORA, University of California, Riverside

KAREN M. DOUGLAS, University of Kent

JOHN DUCKITT, University of Auckland

JOHANNA DUNAWAY, Texas A&M University
IREM EKER, University of Kent
GEOFFREY EVANS, University of Oxford
CHRISTINA E. FARHART, Carleton College
CHRISTOPHER M. FEDERICO, University of Minnesota
EFRAÍN GARCÍA-SÁNCHEZ, University of São Paulo
NATHANIEL GEIGER, Indiana University Bloomington
ELISABETH GIDENGIL, McGill University
JOSÉ S. GOMEZ, Columbia University
DONALD P. GREEN, Columbia University
EVA G. T. GREEN, University of Lausanne
MIKE GRUSZCZYNSKI, Indiana University Bloomington
BRITTANY E. HANSON, Saint Peter's University
CHARLES HARB, Doha Institute for Graduate Studies
ELIZABETH HARRIS, New York University
DIALA R. HAWI, Doha Institute for Graduate Studies
LAUREN C. HOWE, University of Zurich
SHANTO IYENGAR, Stanford University
HU YOUNG JEONG, Clark University
JOHN T. JOST, New York University
YUNSIENG P. KIM, University of Michigan
JON A. KROSNICK, Stanford University
ANDRÉ P. M. KROUWEL, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
JORIS LAMMERS, University of Cologne
YPHTACH LELKES, University of Pennsylvania
SEAN LONG, University of California, Riverside
WINNIFRED R. LOUIS, University of Queensland
ARIEL MALKA, Yeshiva University
KYLE MATTES, Florida International University

-
- ROSE MCDERMOTT, Brown University
- SAM MCFARLAND, Western Kentucky University
- CRAIG MCGARTY, Western Sydney University
- ALEX MINTZ, Reichman University
- G. SCOTT MORGAN, Drew University
- KEVIN J. MULLINIX, University of Kansas
- AMY MURPHY, Defence Science and Technology Laboratory
- ALEKSEI OPACIC, Harvard University
- DANNY OSBORNE, University of Auckland
- PHILIP PÄRNAMETS, New York University and the Karolinska Institute
- AINO PETTERSON, University of Kent
- DAVID P. REDLAWSK, University of Delaware
- EDUARDO J. RIVERA PICHARDO, New York University
- CLAIRE ROBERTSON, New York University
- KATHLEEN ROGERS, American Political Science Association Congressional Fellowship Program
- RIM SAAB, American University of Beirut and University of Sussex
- KIRA SANBONMATSU, Rutgers University
- KATHARINA SCHMID, Universitat Ramon LLull
- JAIME SETTLE, William & Mary
- RYAN SHANDLER, University of Oxford
- HANNAH SHEPPARD, Australian National University
- CHRIS G. SIBLEY, University of Auckland
- KEREN L. G. SNIDER, University of Haifa
- WIKTOR SORAL, University of Warsaw
- ANNI STERNISKO, New York University
- DIETLIND STOLLE, McGill University
- ROBBIE M. SUTTON, University of Kent
- JANET SWIM, The Pennsylvania State University

EMMA F. THOMAS, Flinders University

CRISTIAN TILEAGĂ, Loughborough University

NICHOLAS A. VALENTINO, University of Michigan

JAY J. VAN BAVEL, New York University

JAN-WILLEM VAN PROOIJEN, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

SALVADOR VARGAS SALFATE, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

MAYKEL VERKUYTEN, Utrecht University

JOHANNA RAY VOLLHARDT, Clark University

CHRISTIAN WELZEL, Leuphana University Lüneburg

DANIEL C. WISNESKI, Saint Peter's University

KUMAR YOGESWARAN, University of Canterbury

Part I

Foundations of Political Psychology

1 Political Psychology

Advancing an International Perspective on the Psychology of Political Behaviour

Danny Osborne and Chris G. Sibley

At its core, political psychology is an inherently interdisciplinary field of study that seeks to explain political phenomena with insights from psychology, political science, sociology, and related disciplines. Although first appearing in American-based academic writings in the 1920s with foundational works from Lippmann (1922), Merriam (1925), and Lasswell (1927) who each took integrative approaches to respectively assess public opinion, introduce behaviourism to politics, and use psychology to increase the efficacy of political propaganda, political psychology's origins date as far back as the 19th century with works including Le Bon's (1896) study of crowd behaviour and Bastian's (1860) introduction of the term *political psychology*. In each of these works, the field's founders integrated psychology and politics with an aim to explain the challenges of the zeitgeist, while providing solutions for the future – hallmarks of the field that later appeared in influential works including *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al., 1950), *The American Voter* (Campbell et al., 1960), *News That Matters* (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987), *The Rational Public* (Page & Shapiro, 1992), and *Get Out the Vote* (Green & Gerber, 2008), to name but a few excellent examples that have had a lasting impact on political psychology.

With this commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship, the field has blossomed into a dominant force in the social sciences as evidenced by the field's high-impact journal

outlets (*Political Psychology* and *Advances in Political Psychology*; see Mintz & Mograbi, 2015) and its thriving international society (International Society of Political Psychology; ISPP). Although initially dominated by men mostly from America and (Western) Europe, ISPP has increased the representation of women and global scholars over the years. Whereas 15% of presenters at ISPP in 1978 were women, 49% were women in 2016 (Reynolds, 2018). The geographical representation of ISPP has also increased, with presenters from all six (populated) continents attending recent annual conferences (Reynolds & Yeow, 2018). Yet much more work needs to be done to improve the representation of the Global South in terms of both membership (see Reynolds & Yeow, 2018) and scholarship (Rivera Pichardo et al., 2022).

Recognising this underrepresentation of the global community, there is a growing call to increase the diversity of the field (Arnett, 2008; Osborne, Sengupta, & Sibley, 2019). Although international collaborations are becoming more frequent (particularly through presentations at ISPP; Quayle et al., 2020), more must be done to foster scholarship that integrates across both disciplinary and national boundaries and that extends our focus beyond Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD; see Henrich et al., 2010) societies. We hope that *The Cambridge Handbook of Political Psychology* furthers these key goals by highlighting the excellence

of political psychology scholarship through chapters written by world-renowned experts from over 15 countries.

Overview of *The Cambridge Handbook of Political Psychology*

In the years since the publication of the excellent *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (Huddy et al., 2013), the topics addressed by political psychologists have transformed from important issues to contemporary threats to our way of life. Issues ranging from authoritarianism, declining democracies, and hate groups seemed like embers from a nearly extinguished fire a mere 10 years ago yet have reignited with an alarming vengeance in the years since. New (unforeseen) challenges have also arisen including cyberterrorism, social media, and the rapid spread of conspiracy beliefs. These – and other – changes to our ever-evolving zeitgeist require a new set of cutting-edge chapters that extend the foundations so brilliantly laid by the *Oxford Handbook* in order to continue the rich tradition of *problem-focused* interdisciplinary scholarship envisioned by political psychology's founders.

The Cambridge Handbook of Political Psychology meets these needs by providing a comprehensive overview of political psychology. By ambitiously covering 40 content-based chapters, we provide the traditional topics needed to understand both the foundations of the field (Part I) and the enduring challenges to democratic ideals (Part II), as well as the contemporary issues facing the international community (Part III) including the need to further diversify the field's methodological and geographical focus (Part IV). Yet the core themes that tie the field together are reflected in the connections the chapters make with each other throughout the handbook: chapter authors have initiated

important dialogues across subject areas by referencing each other's chapters (where appropriate) and highlighting the interconnections between sub-areas. Thus, *The Cambridge Handbook of Political Psychology* helps the reader navigate through the diverse field of political psychology, while illustrating a theme that unifies the field: political psychology is an inherently multidisciplinary field that increases understanding of how people shape and are shaped by the political world around them. To these ends, we begin this important dialogue by providing a brief overview of the handbook's four thematic sections and associated chapters below.

1.1 Part I: Foundations of Political Psychology

As an inherently interdisciplinary field, political psychology transcends disciplinary boundaries and spans across levels of analysis to explain variability in political phenomena. Yet a universal framework for organising and making sense of political behaviour has been lacking for some time. Claessens and colleagues (2022) address this oversight in Chapter 2 by explaining the evolutionary foundations of political ideology. The authors argue that contemporary ideological differences in social and economic conservatism originate from the evolutionary needs to facilitate group conformity and encourage cooperation within groups, respectively. Claessens and colleagues contend that right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) reflect contemporary manifestations of these challenges. They further explain that variability in SDO and RWA arises from the cost-benefit trade-offs of adopting these strategies and the phenotypic plasticity that enables organisms to respond to their environment. The authors conclude by challenging researchers to investigate the socioecological factors

that influence the expression of political ideologies in different contexts, as well as the proximate mechanisms of sociopolitical phenomena.

Given Claessens and colleagues' (2022) position that evolutionary pressures shaped contemporary political beliefs, political phenomena should be heritable. McDermott (2022) advances this argument in Chapter 3 by explicating the complex ways in which genes impact politics, noting that genes and biology help to answer core questions unaddressed by sociodemographic approaches to political psychology. She further notes that, although genes have a large impact on ideological identification, their effects on specific political views like party affiliation are relatively small. McDermott then illustrates how assortative mating can produce partisan-based genetic and biological differences, noting that mate choices play arguably the largest role in shaping a child's political ideology and may contribute to political polarisation. McDermott concludes with a thoughtful discussion of how a genetically informed political psychology can advance the field, noting that the complexities of this discipline necessitate interdisciplinary work – a hallmark of political psychology.

Harris and colleagues (2022) further examine the biological basis of political attitudes in Chapter 4 by highlighting the neuroscience of partisanship. They begin by drawing upon classic social psychological research (e.g., Tajfel et al., 1971) to illustrate the ease with which people form group attachments, and by covering recent fMRI studies demonstrating that this fundamental proclivity to identify with an in-group elicits distinct forms of neural activation when interacting with co-partisans. Harris and colleagues then discuss multiple brain regions that facilitate partisan biases, including the ventral medial prefrontal cortex (involved in self-referential processes) and the

orbitofrontal cortex (used in regulating goals). The authors end by discussing the myriad ways in which partisanship shapes political cognition, including belief perseverance, motivated social cognition, susceptibility to misinformation, conspiracy thinking, and vote choice. Ultimately, this chapter provides a compelling example of how social neuroscience can expand our understanding of political psychology.

Given that evolution, genes, and neuro-psychology contribute to political phenomena, certain political ideas should resonate with some more than others. Federico (2022) pursues this position in Chapter 5 by giving a comprehensive overview of the individual differences underlying political preferences. Federico begins by contrasting top-down approaches that examine the macro forces shaping citizens' views (e.g., political elites) with bottom-up approaches that identify voters' predispositions to specific political issues. In making this distinction, Federico notes that personality traits associated with rigid thinking often align with right-wing political preferences. This literature is, however, more nuanced than it seems at first blush. Accordingly, Federico identifies myriad factors that moderate the link between personality and political preferences including culture, political engagement, and the type of personality measure used to capture individual differences. Federico concludes by revisiting the literature on the rigidity of the right, noting that, while traits that capture rigid thinking are held disproportionately by right-wing voters, rigidity is nevertheless present among both the left and the right.

Whereas Federico (2022) focuses on how aspects of an individual influence their receptivity to specific policy positions, Bakker and Lelkes (2022) examine the *content* of these beliefs. Chapter 6 begins by noting that ideologies are a set of interrelated beliefs that interpret political phenomena, yet their

measurement suffers from three key problems: self-reports of ideology may reflect symbolic attachments (rather than a coherent belief system), the scale's meaning may vary across time and context, and ideology may be multi-dimensional. Research that addresses these concerns reveals that ideology is comprised of attitudes towards economic and cultural issues and that the correlation between dimensions varies across context. Bakker and Lelkes then note that the long tradition of finding a public 'innocent of ideology' (Converse, 1964, p. 241) is waning as polarisation among the elite helps voters to identify which issues 'go together'. The authors explain how both top-down (i.e., political elites and social networks) and bottom-up (i.e., citizens' values, traits, and biology) forces shape ideology, and conclude by encouraging researchers to examine the reciprocal associations between top-down and bottom-up processes, unpack the causal association between personality and ideology, and improve methodological rigour via preregistration and Open Science practices.

Howe and Krosnick (2022) expand beyond the focus on a coherent set of interrelated beliefs to 'opinions on matters of public debate that have significant implications for society' (i.e., public opinion). Chapter 7 begins with a discussion of the antecedents to public opinion and identifies both individual differences and sociodemographic factors that influence both the number of opinions people hold and the likelihood they report them. Howe and Krosnick then draw upon studies on genetics, classical and operant conditioning, and social psychology to explain how people develop valenced views, noting that both underlying dispositions and the larger sociostructural context shape public opinion. Next, the authors discuss the impact public opinion has on policy- and candidate-based voting, civic activism, and the reciprocal association between public opinion and public policy.

Howe and Krosnick conclude by challenging researchers to examine how citizens misperceive public opinion, identify the motivations shaping how people process political information, and develop new ways to measure public opinion.

Given Howe and Krosnick's (2022) exposition of the complexities of public opinion, how do voters decide which issues to support? Chong and Mullinix (2022) answer this key question in Chapter 8 by noting that, in the absence of perfect rationality, voters often use heuristics and motivated reasoning to guide their decisions. Although experimental studies demonstrate that heuristics can misdirect voters, the authors reveal that knowledge, personal relevance, and the availability of unbiased information can decrease the likelihood that this occurs. Moreover, accuracy and directional goals motivate people to respectively seek out multiple views on an issue and information that confirms a pre-existing belief. Yet Chong and Mullinix highlight that it may be rational to retain pre-existing beliefs, as a constrained belief system can efficiently navigate the political environment. Exposure to non-partisan news and incentivising accuracy can also decrease directionally motivated reasoning. The authors conclude by noting that, rather than illustrating the foibles of the public, framing effects occur because they provide new information and alter people's perceptions of the given issue. In short, although people utilise heuristics and engage in motivated reasoning, voters often process information rationally particularly when they are incentivised and it is supported by the social context.

Whereas Chong and Mullinix (2022) highlight the cognitive factors that shape voters' decisions, Redlawsk and Mattes (2022) examine the role of emotions in politics in Chapter 9. The authors begin by noting that distinct appraisals elicit discrete emotions that

activate a disposition or surveillance affective subsystem. Whereas the disposition subsystem elicits enthusiasm through reflexive habits and beliefs, the surveillance system is activated by threat that fuels anxiety and the search for information. Redlawsk and Mattes also note that anger is a reflexive emotion that arises in response to perceived injustices and contributes to political polarisation, political mobilisation, social media usage, populist support, and even violence. Conversely, threat appraisals that give rise to anxiety and fear – emotions that decrease risk-taking – increase conservatism and intergroup hostility. The authors then examine the appetitive emotions of hope and enthusiasm. Because these emotions originate from feelings of control and goal pursuit, they motivate political engagement, increase social media usage, and mobilise the public, yet can also foster populism by encouraging citizens to take control of their future. Redlawsk and Mattes then discuss contempt and disgust – rejection emotions that create distance between one's self and a 'contaminated' target, respectively. The authors conclude by examining moral and collective emotions. Whereas the former connects moral standards with behaviour, the latter links the individual to the wider group's experience and can foster group identity.

In this section's final chapter, Brown and Bigler (2022) discuss the developmental roots of political beliefs. Chapter 10 begins by highlighting the inherent connections between developmental science and political attitudes, explicating the need to integrate developmental insights into our understanding of politics across the lifespan, as questions about change and continuity are central to both fields. Brown and Bigler then discuss the practical reasons for advancing a developmentally informed political psychology, noting that understanding how political beliefs develop can promote civic engagement and competence. Brown and Bigler

then identify factors that influence the development of political attitudes, including culture, within-family dynamics, and aspects of the child. Throughout the chapter, the authors use the 2016 US presidential election to highlight these themes and conclude by emphasising the role that educational institutions can play in instilling democratic values in the next generation of voters.

1.2 Part II: The Politics of Intergroup Attitudes

Having laid the foundations to the field in the previous section, Part II examines one of the most central topics in political psychology: intergroup attitudes. Duckitt (2022) begins this journey in Chapter 11 with a comprehensive overview of authoritarianism that covers its various conceptualisations. Though diverse in both their content and ideological implications, Duckitt argues that the core thread tying these various traditions together is a focus on individual differences in people's intolerance and willingness to impose their beliefs onto others. Duckitt then identifies both the dispositional (i.e., genes, personality, motives, morals, and thinking styles) and situational (i.e., familial, social, and cultural influences, as well as environmental threats) antecedents to authoritarianism. Next, Duckitt discusses the societal consequences of authoritarianism, noting that it can undermine democratic values, make way for authoritarian leadership, foster prejudice, and increase political extremism. Duckitt concludes by summarising new directions for research, including the need to clarify right-versus left-wing authoritarianism and to examine the possibility that authoritarianism on the left and right has overlapping antecedents and consequences.

Bizumic and Sheppard (2022) continue the theme of this section by discussing the long history of ethnocentrism in Chapter 12. First

coined by Ludwig Gumplowicz in the late 1800s, the authors define ethnocentrism as 'a strong sense of ethnic group self-centredness and self-importance' (p. 200) that entails both an intragroup component (i.e., devotion to the in-group and group cohesion) and an intergroup component consisting of in-group (a) preference, (b) superiority, (c) purity, and (d) exploitativeness. Next, Bizumic and Sheppard discuss ethnocentrism's evolutionary origins by noting that it is a human universal and that pressures to develop strong, powerful, and resilient groups fostered it. Although essential for survival in ancestral times, ethnocentrism now mediates relationships between the need for ethnic group strength and myriad outcomes including support for the (former) US President Donald Trump and Brexit. Ethnocentrism also correlates with nationalism, anti-immigration policies, hawkish views on military intervention, and support for far-right political leaders. Thus, Bizumic and Sheppard make a strong case for incorporating ethnocentrism into political psychologists' toolbox.

Eker and colleagues (2022) further examine the contours of in-group favouritism in Chapter 13 by focusing on collective narcissism – an 'unrealistic belief in the greatness of an in-group that requires external recognition' (p. 215). Notably, collective narcissism originates from people's *dissatisfaction* with their personal circumstances including low feelings of personal control, as well as extrinsic goals to identify with the in-group and the perception that the in-group is threatened. Eker and colleagues then examine the consequences of collective narcissism, noting that grandiose and entitled views of the in-group negatively affect intragroup and intergroup processes. Next, the authors illustrate the effects of collective narcissism by showing that collective narcissism predicts populism support and can produce short-sighted decisions that temporarily

benefit the in-group, but have dire long-term effects (e.g., support for anti-environmental policies). Eker and colleagues conclude by reassuring the reader that not all forms of in-group identification foster collective narcissism, as a secure group attachment originates from high (rather than low) feelings of control and intrinsic (rather than extrinsic) motives.

Although the first three chapters in Part II focus on groups in general, Chapter 14 examines the enduring prominence of race in politics. Collingwood and colleagues (2022) begin by discussing the impact of white racism on politics, noting that the days of yore when politicians openly catered to white voters with blatant old-fashioned racism have given way to covert messages that disguise racial animus with appeals to hard work and personal effort. After clarifying the effects of these forms of modern racism on vote choice, Collingwood and colleagues contend that changing demographics in the USA have fostered a 'most-racial' era of public opinion with distinct implications for whites and people of colour. On the one hand, the diversification of the USA increases electoral opportunities for racial minorities and can boost voter turnout among underrepresented people eager to vote for co-ethnic candidates. On the other hand, anti-minority policies cloaked in a colour-blind ideology appeal to whites' feelings of status insecurity and racial resentment. Collingwood and colleagues conclude with an insightful discussion of cross-racial mobilisation, noting that the future of political parties will depend on their ability to establish coalitions across racial groups.

Christ and colleagues (2022) examine the implications of the changing demographics raised by Collingwood and colleagues (2022) by investigating the impact of macro-level diversity on intergroup attitudes. Chapter 15 begins by noting that the literature on macro-level diversity and intergroup outcomes is

inconclusive given the large variability in effect sizes across studies. Recent work, however, shows that diversity increases both perceived competition over resources and contact opportunities. In turn, these two factors undermine and improve intergroup relations, respectively. Christ and colleagues then identify the individual and contextual moderators of these associations, noting that macro-level diversity may exacerbate intergroup hostility for those high on RWA because diversity is particularly threatening to in-group cohesion. Conversely, contextual factors like the economic conditions and social norms about diversity can heighten or attenuate the negative effects of diversity on intergroup relations, respectively. Residential segregation can also weaken the impact macro-level diversity has on intergroup contact and, in turn, the effects of contact on intergroup relations. Thus, Christ and colleagues help to resolve the inconsistencies in the literature by identifying the countervailing effects of macro-level diversity on intergroup outcomes and by discussing the moderators of these effects.

Moving to another central topic in the political psychology of intergroup relations, Rogers and Sanbonmatsu (2022) examine the persistent disparity in women's representation in politics in Chapter 16 and argue that gendered social roles shape voters' evaluations of candidates. Because the division of labour segregates men and women in the workplace and home, respectively, people assume that men and women have traits consistent with the roles they occupy. Accordingly, men are seen as more capable leaders than women, and women are punished for displaying agentic behaviour by running for office. Rogers and Sanbonmatsu then highlight the need to acknowledge intersectional identities by explicating the unique challenges – and potential advantages – that accompany ethnic, racial, and sexual minority women who run for office.

Next, the authors examine sexism and violence towards women in politics, acknowledging that sexism can play a decisive factor in elections between male and female candidates. Rogers and Sanbonmatsu conclude by explaining how gender influences campaigns, noting that, although female candidates often tailor their campaign to gendered expectations, women can run successful campaigns that counter these stereotypes.

Expanding on Rogers and Sanbonmatsu's (2022) examination of gender in politics, Sutton and colleagues (2022) discuss the politics of abortion, pregnancy, and motherhood in Chapter 17. They begin by noting that women's fertility has been both revered and used to oppress them throughout history. Although the situation has improved recently, restrictions on women's reproductive rights persist across the globe. Accordingly, Sutton and colleagues examine the correlates of abortion attitudes, focusing on the negative associations benevolent and hostile sexism has on abortion support. The authors extend this discussion by noting that the idealisation of motherhood fostered by benevolent sexism also predicts willingness to restrict pregnant women's behaviours. These results help to explain gender inequality and the 'motherhood penalty' in which women's economic standing drops after becoming a mother. Sutton and colleagues contend that the factors that contribute to this penalty ultimately lead back to the value that societies place on motherhood and the assumption that women *should* be the primary caregivers. The authors conclude by acknowledging that attitudes towards abortion, pregnancy, and motherhood are deeply partisan issues in which the left and right advocate for more and less freedom, respectively.

In addition to race, ethnicity, and gender, religion and politics are often intimately intertwined. Accordingly, Malka (2022) examines the potential for religion to foster support for

authoritarian governance in Chapter 18. He begins by positing that, at its core, religion structures people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours through belief in a supernatural power. Because religious beliefs are often held as inalienable moral convictions, democratic values that confer equal rights to opposing viewpoints may conflict with religiosity. Religions also often exalt deference to authority, which may predispose believers to anti-democratic values. Yet surprisingly, religiosity often correlates positively with civic engagement and support for the democratic process. Accordingly, Malka makes a critical distinction between belief and behaviour; support for democratic values correlates negatively with religious belief, but positively with religious behaviour. Malka then examines variability in these associations, noting that religious affiliation alone fails to predict views towards democracy. Rather, the desire to blend politics and religion predicts anti-democratic views. Malka concludes by encouraging researchers to pursue more cross-national work, refine measures of democratic attitudes, differentiate between support and behaviour, use multidimensional measures of religiosity, and distil the causal pathways with panel data and experimental methods.

Hanson and colleagues (2022) expand the focus on religion and morality in Chapter 19 by examining the impact of moral convictions – core and unmalleable beliefs about right and wrong – in politics. The authors begin by noting that moral convictions entail beliefs about right and wrong, but can have normatively good or bad consequences. As for the bad, moral convictions can foster an unwillingness to compromise, affective polarisation, and a Machiavellian approach to achieving a desired goal. Yet moral convictions can also increase civic engagement across both the left and the right. Hanson and colleagues then explain the negativity bias in

research on moral convictions, noting that (a) moral convictions may just yield more negative than positive outcomes and (b) researchers may focus more on negative consequences. The authors conclude by challenging researchers to (a) identify how consensus on an issue shapes the positive or negative implications of a moral conviction, (b) investigate the boundary conditions of moral convictions, and (c) adopt experimental approaches to identify causal effects.

Yogeeswaran and Verkuyten (2022) change direction in Chapter 20 by providing a detailed discussion of national identity and its implications for political psychology. As the authors emphasise, it is critical to distinguish between two broad aspects of national identity: the first relates to feelings of pride, belongingness, and attachment to the nation; the second refers to how people define the national category (and, hence, who belongs). Accordingly, Yogeeswaran and Verkuyten review founding work and recent advances unpacking the distinction between patriotism (pride or love of one's nation) and nationalism (the belief that one's country is better and should have more influence than others). They then discuss research on the national identity of minority groups within nations, the links between aspects of national identity and attitudes towards multiculturalism and immigration, and the implications of how the core aspects of national identity and citizenship are defined for politics and intergroup relations. Yogeeswaran and Verkuyten close with suggestions for future research that are sure to influence the field for years to come.

Once in-groups are formed and national identities are established, questions over who belongs inevitably arise. Valentino and Kim (2022) address this challenging topic in Chapter 21 by reviewing the burgeoning literature on immigration attitudes. They begin by dispelling the notions that immigration

increases crime, competition for jobs, and exploitation of social services. Nonetheless, many Americans still oppose immigration. Accordingly, Valentino and Kim examine potential explanations for these views, focusing on contact and perceptions of both economic and cultural threat. They also argue that, by framing immigration as a threat, the media fosters anxiety and undermines immigration support. The authors then identify disgust sensitivity, threat sensitivity, and intolerance of uncertainty as important correlates of opposition to immigration. Valentino and Kim also demonstrate that symbolic predispositions including out-group hostility, ethnocentrism, and racial animus predict anti-immigration views better than measures of self-interest. The authors end on an optimistic note by suggesting that out-group empathy and humanitarian concerns – two tendencies nurtured by education – can increase support for immigration.

Building off of Valentino and Kim's (2022) optimism that humanitarian concerns can foster positive attitudes towards immigrants, McFarland (2022) examines variability in human rights support across nations and individuals in Chapter 22. He begins by noting that, despite the myriad challenges associated with examining international differences in human rights support, people in most countries support human rights. There is, however, variability in support for specific issues, as well as the correlation between support for different human rights. McFarland then discusses the predictors of human rights support, noting that human rights support correlates negatively with generalised prejudice, ethnocentrism, RWA, SDO, conservatism, and the binding moral foundations, but positively with identification with all humanity, universalism, globalism, and the individualising moral foundations. Other weaker correlates of human rights support include the values of

benevolence and self-direction (as well as empathy, principled moral reasoning, optimism, education/knowledge, Openness to Experience, and Extroversion), whereas blind patriotism, nationalism, Conscientiousness, and the need for structure, as well as the values of security, power, and hedonism, correlate negatively with human rights support.

1.3 Part III: Contemporary Challenges to Democracy

Whereas Part II examines topics long at the heart of political psychology, Part III focuses on new and emerging challenges to the field. Arguably one of the most important issues facing contemporary democracy is the rising rates of inequality seen over the last 30–40 years. Whereas much research examines the effects of inequality on society, Osborne and colleagues (2022) explain *why* inequality is so impactful in Chapter 23. They first review the distinct measures of inequality and show that, despite underestimating the divide between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', many believe that inequality is a 'necessary evil'. Nevertheless, inequality undermines people's mental and physical health, as well as social cohesion and democratic values. To explain these effects, Osborne and colleagues argue that inequality undermines well-being and social cohesion by increasing the salience of boundaries between the wealthy and the poor and by fostering feelings of relative deprivation – even among the wealthy (see also Osborne, García-Sánchez, & Sibley, 2019; Osborne et al., 2015). Osborne and colleagues conclude by noting that, although the COVID-19 pandemic has brought inequality to the fore, various psychological and structural barriers undermine support for the policies needed to reduce inequality.

After Osborne and colleagues (2022) explain *why* inequality matters, Evans and Opacic

(2022) examine the effects of social class on politics in Chapter 24. The authors begin by acknowledging that material conditions play only a minor role in linking social class to attitudes towards redistribution. Rather, cultural attitudes like authoritarianism mediate the association between social class and myriad political attitudes largely because working-class workplaces tend to hinder independent thinking and autonomy. Evans and Opacic then discuss the decline in class-based voting, noting that the tendency for the working class to vote for left-wing parties has fallen sharply for decades. The authors explain that the decline in class-based voting is due to political parties taking similar stances on the economic issues that affect the lower class (rather than the blurring of class boundaries). Right-wing parties also try to appeal to working-class voters by adopting restrictive positions on cultural issues. Evans and Opacic conclude by noting that right-wing populist parties appeal to *uneducated* middle-class whites whose identities feel threatened by offering them symbolic differences between the in-group and out-group.

Iyengar (2022) continues the discussion on distinctions between the in-group and out-group in Chapter 25 by assessing the causes and consequences of affective polarisation – the increasing hostility expressed towards out-partisans – in the USA. He begins by acknowledging that partisanship has become a core identity for many, which inherently leads to the categorisation of people as in-group and out-group members, as well as the tendency to favour the in-group. Accordingly, evidence of polarisation emerges across myriad measures including feeling thermometers, as well as implicit and social distance measures. Iyengar then examines the potential mechanisms of affective polarisation, noting that the salience of identities does not appear to contribute significantly to polarisation, nor

does perceived ideological (dis)agreement. Rather, Iyengar suggests that the rise in polarisation is due to increasingly partisan opinion leaders, partisan sorting along ideological and demographic lines, and social homophily (i.e., our social networks are becoming more homogenous). Finally, technology and the new media environment may have also contributed to polarisation by decreasing people's exposure to 'the other side'.

Van Prooijen and Krouwel (2022) extend Iyengar's (2022) discussion of affective polarisation in Chapter 26 by examining political extremism on the left and right. They begin by noting that, although people who are extremely liberal or conservative differ in obvious ways, they also share non-obvious similarities. For example, those who hold extreme beliefs on both sides of the aisle seek epistemic clarity to cope with distress. This preference for unambiguous and clear-cut rules and norms is also echoed in Chapter 11 by Duckitt (2022) who called for future work to focus on left-wing authoritarianism. In the second half of the chapter, van Prooijen and Krouwel discuss three key outcomes and societal problems that may result from political extremism on both sides: overconfidence, unfounded beliefs, and intolerance. Nevertheless, the authors recognise that political extremism can sometimes be an important driver for social change.

Another contemporary challenge to democracy involves identifying the limits to free speech. Bilewicz and Soral (2022) address this issue in Chapter 27 by examining the recent work on hate speech. The authors begin by noting the powerful impact of hate speech on both political mobilisation and violence. The authors then discuss the critical role of social media in promoting hate speech, noting that exposure to hateful rhetoric desensitises people to later offensive statements. Yet Bilewicz and Soral acknowledge the complexities of

the issue, as banning hate speech raises critical questions about the limits to free speech and may simply push social media users who propagate these messages to alternative platforms. Nevertheless, hate speech undermines intergroup relations by weakening support for immigration policies, activating stereotypes, and eliciting contempt towards the targets of hate speech, while also undermining minorities' well-being. Bilewicz and Soral conclude by discussing the ideological underpinnings of hate speech, noting that the preference for group-based hierarchy fosters the promotion and acceptance of hate speech, whereas the tendency to follow social norms ironically elicits support for banning hate speech.

Coinciding with the rise in hate speech is the international re-emergence of populism. To these ends, Gidengil and Stolle (2022) explicate the antecedents of populist support in Chapter 28. Despite being multifaceted, the authors argue that the core features of populism include an (a) anti-elitism in which citizens (b) are at the center of political decisions and (c) possess a Manichean world view that differentiates between 'good' in-groups and 'evil' out-groups. Gidengil and Stolle then examine the predictors of populism, focusing first on emotions. Although some work points to fear as a key motivator of populist support, others argue that anger drives people towards populism. Next, the authors discuss the personality correlates of populism, noting that Agreeableness – a trait rooted in kindness and harmony – should correlate negatively with the anger and hostility found in populist rhetoric. The other Big Five traits, however, could have nuanced associations with populist support, leading researchers to focus on RWA, SDO, and system justification as potential moderators and mediators of the relationship between traits and populism. Gidengil and Stolle conclude by imploring researchers to pursue experimental methods to increase

understanding of the causal processes underlying this global threat to democracy.

Noting the apparent global erosion of democratic norms, Welzel (2022) starts Chapter 29 by discussing the declining trust in institutions so apparent in Gidengil and Stolle's (2022) discussion of populism. Welzel is, however, more optimistic about the future and notes that the global trust crisis increases pressure on institutions to be accountable to their citizens. In making this assertion, Welzel distinguishes between democracy as a practice versus a norm. Whereas the recent declines in trust reflect changes in the *practice* of democracy, support for democratic *ideals* have abounded. Accordingly, Welzel argues that, contrary to the dominant narrative that the recent rise in populism occurs among an increasingly disenfranchised youth, voters who have given populism a temporary victory are part of an increasingly small cleavage of voters who feel left behind by a world that is becoming more, not less, likely to endorse the democratic ideals of freedom and equality. Welzel concludes that democracy requires citizens to endorse these values, as top-down approaches to democracy are likely to fail in the absence of benevolent elites.

Although Welzel (2022) ends on an optimistic note, democracy ultimately requires an engaged citizenry. Accordingly, Green and Gomez (2022) examine the psychology of voter turnout in Chapter 30. They begin by discussing the randomised control trial as a critical tool used to assess the efficacy of mobilisation strategies. Briefly, by randomly assigning voters to receive distinct forms of communication for political campaigns (versus a control group who receive nothing), researchers can identify the most effective ways to mobilise voters. Basing their review on this key methodological tool, Green and Gomez note that many techniques to boost turnout have shown initial promise. Yet

follow-up studies reveal time and again that the given intervention is – at best – marginally effective. The authors then examine the different social psychological theories of persuasion, focusing on how source credibility and individual differences between voters influence the effectiveness of a campaign message. In doing so, Green and Gomez uncover inconsistencies between the empirical literature and the theories upon which these studies are based, thus highlighting challenges to both core psychological theories and the mobilisation of voters.

Green and Gomez (2022) make clear the challenges of increasing voter turnout. What, then, mobilises the public to protest on behalf of their group or a chosen cause? Thomas and colleagues (2022) address this question in Chapter 31 by examining the individual, group, and contextual factors that motivate collective action. They begin by noting that the literature has focused extensively on disadvantaged groups who protest to advance their in-group, but has expanded to include allies who protest on behalf of other groups and/or the environment. Because these varied acts depend on people working together, Thomas and colleagues note that a common social identity is necessary to motivate collective action. Yet opinion-based groups whose identities emerge following a perceived injustice also pursue collective action. The authors then examine the role of life experiences in collective action and show that social interactions can catalyse an activist identity and encourage collective action, while noting that ideology and moral convictions can also facilitate the adoption of an activist identity. Thomas and colleagues conclude by discussing the outcomes of collective action for both activists and bystanders, thereby setting the agenda for future work in this area.

In Chapter 32, Dunaway and Settle (2022) examine the impact of new forms of media on politics. The authors begin by acknowledging

that the introduction of new forms of media inevitably increases fears over a malleable public, yet research consistently demonstrates that cognitive biases and selective exposure attenuate media effects. Dunaway and Settle then note that new technologies afford new ways of presenting information that may be more or less persuasive, though the seemingly impoverished attention span of social media users suggests that media effects may nevertheless still be minimal. The authors conclude by encouraging researchers to look beyond selective exposure and see how polarisation affects information processing in the new media environment, recognise the limits of attention, and distinguish between information content and structure. Ultimately, Dunaway and Settle convincingly argue that a media effects literature informed by psychology is needed to examine how new media impacts upon voters, as well as to develop a coherent framework for understanding these effects.

In Chapter 33, Farhart (2022) takes up the difficult task of explaining the rise of conspiracy theories. She begins by distinguishing conspiracy beliefs from other unverified information including rumours, misinformation, and disinformation, noting that conspiracies are difficult to dispel and entail the belief in a maleficent ‘plot by two or more powerful actors’ (p. 527) to attain power. After discussing measurement challenges, Farhart identifies the psychological, sociopolitical, and situational antecedents to conspiracy beliefs, as well as the consequences of conspiratorial thinking. Throughout this discussion, Farhart emphasises that the rapid rise of social media allows conspiracies about elections, scientific endeavours, pandemics, and other topics to proliferate. Farhart concludes with an insightful discussion of directions for future research, including the need to incorporate experimental and longitudinal methods, identify ways to mitigate the spread and adoption of conspiracy theories, and assess the

impact of the information environment on how conspiracies spread. In short, Farhart identifies the critical ways in which conspiracy theories have become weaponised in recent times.

Moving to a topic that has inspired numerous conspiracies, Geiger and colleagues (2022) examine public opinion on climate change in Chapter 34. Given the complexity of the issue, the authors argue that public opinion must push politicians to phase out fossil fuels, address transportation and housing challenges, adapt to the current consequences of climate change, and reverse its effects. Individuals also need to pursue pro-environmental collective action, discuss the issue with others and correct misinformation, and reduce their carbon footprint. Geiger and colleagues then discuss the psychological processes that foster engagement with climate change, noting that personal experience (e.g., proximity to the coastline), perceived congruence with one's world views (broadly defined), and social cues from a range of actors including (political) elites, the scientific community, and peers affect how people engage with climate change information. In doing so, Geiger and colleagues demonstrate that climate change is a 'wicked problem' (p. 546) with a complex web of interrelated issues that require a multipronged and coordinated effort to address.

Moving to another 'wicked problem' facing the 21st century, Shandler and colleagues (2022) examine the emergence of cyberterrorism in Chapter 35. They begin by arguing that 'cyberterrorism poses a qualitatively new threat to modern society' (p. 565) and that it is becoming increasingly feared by the public. Yet Shandler and colleagues note that cyberterrorism differs from conventional terrorism in important ways, as the actors are anonymous and can wage attacks remotely with limited resources. Accordingly, cyberterrorism elicits discrete emotions including anger and anxiety which undermines public confidence in government institutions, partly due to the

difficulty in identifying the perpetrators. The authors conclude by highlighting the need to (a) expand the focus beyond a few discrete emotions and outcomes, (b) examine the psychology of perpetrators, (c) adopt physiological measures of emotions, (d) identify ways to increase resilience among the public following a cyberterror attack, and (e) further incorporate experimental approaches.

In the final chapter examining contemporary challenges to democracy, Vollhardt and colleagues (2022) discuss the difficulties of reconciling after collective violence. They begin Chapter 36 by identifying five barriers to reconciliation. First, collective violence creates distinct identity threats for perpetrators and victims that must be mitigated. Second, Vollhardt and colleagues acknowledge that collective memories of victimhood are often passed down across generations and can become central to victims' identities. Third, perpetrator groups often deny the extent of victimisation. Accordingly, members of perpetrator groups should be given strategies to lessen the moral threat posed by accepting the truth. Fourth, emotions – both the shame and guilt felt by perpetrator group members' and the anger and resentment experienced among victim group members – need to change. Fifth, reconciliation requires justice. Yet because justice typically occurs at the institutional level, Vollhardt and colleagues acknowledge that victim group members often feel that the measures taken to restore justice are insufficient. Thus, Vollhardt and colleagues increase understanding of how to heal the deep-seated wounds left by collective violence by identifying – and outlining solutions to – the barriers to reconciliation.

1.4 Part IV: Diversifying Perspectives in Political Psychology

The chapters comprising the final section of *The Cambridge Handbook of Political*

Psychology ask the reader to consider diverse perspectives in the field. Rivera Pichardo and colleagues (2022) begin this journey in Chapter 37 by providing a comprehensive overview of research on political participation, collective memory, intergroup relations, ideology, and political Islam in the Global South. They start in Latin America, noting that, although some studies replicate results from WEIRD countries, others do not. For example, whereas the positive correlations RWA and SDO have with hostile intergroup attitudes replicate in Latin America, right-wing identification correlates *positively* (rather than negatively) with resistance to change. Many results from WEIRD countries also replicate in Africa, including the positive correlations between (a) contact and harmonious intergroup relations and (b) left-wing party identification and support for equality. Yet colonialism has uniquely shaped views on foreign intervention. Rivera Pichardo and colleagues then review research from Asia, identifying many results that replicate across cultures. Finally, the authors survey research in the Middle East and discuss the challenges of applying Western lenses to non-Western contexts. In doing so, the authors challenge researchers to investigate these understudied contexts and expand the literature beyond WEIRD nations.

In Chapter 38, Hawi and colleagues (2022) advance Rivera Pichardo and colleagues' (2022) position by focusing specifically on political psychology in the Arab region. The authors begin by providing an overview of the history of political psychology in the area, and then discuss the pitfalls of assuming an *etic* perspective that applies mainstream – often US-centric – models of political psychology to the Arab region. In doing so, they provide a foundational essay that lays out the goals and mandates for an *emic* or within-culture

model of how political psychology could and should operate in the Arab region, the core principles of theory generation for research there, and central topics of future inquiry. In this regard, the chapter is reminiscent of Tuhiwai Smith's (2012) book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, which is often seen as a foundational work critiquing the Western paradigm and outlining ways forward for the production of emic knowledge for Māori, the Indigenous peoples of New Zealand.

Continuing the call to diversify perspectives, Tileagă and Augoustinos (2022) clearly highlight the need to integrate critical methods into political psychology in Chapter 39. The authors start by noting that critical perspectives are needed to question core assumptions in the field and to give groups oppressed by conventional methods voice and agency. Tileagă and Augoustinos then illustrate how discursive approaches to political psychology increase understanding of the language of prejudice and political discourse, thus laying the necessary foundations for future work in this area. Throughout their chapter, Tileagă and Augoustinos acknowledge the need for both conventional and critical approaches to work together to increase understanding of political phenomena, as political psychology should be 'defined more by the *issues* and *problems* it researches ... than the paradigms it uses' (emphasis in the original; p. 644). Accordingly, Tileagă and Augoustinos provide a promising assessment of the field by articulating the knowledge to be gained from diversifying the methodological repertoires used in political psychology.

Mintz and Barr (2022) implement Tileagă and Augoustinos' (2022) encouragement in Chapter 40 by using the Cuban Missile Crisis to compare across Groupthink, Polythink, and Con-Div models of decision-making. Whereas Groupthink and Polythink

capture the foibles of in-group solidarity and dissension, respectively, Con-Div reflects effective decision-making that occurs when limited information-processing biases, healthy debate, and cogent policy directives circumvent both Groupthink and Polythink. Mintz and Barr then use the Cuban Missile Crisis – the quintessential example of an effective decision-making process – to examine the antecedents to Con-Div, noting that such effective decision-making often arises following a prior foreign policy disaster, the increased salience of electoral accountability, the establishment of clear goals and debate rules, and the use of a balanced advisory group. By creating such an environment, the group avoided indecision, resisted making a hasty decision, and achieved an optimal solution. Thus, Mintz and Barr present a promising model of group decision-making that diversifies our understanding of how complex political decisions are made and establishes the critical foundations for examining future foreign policy debates.

In the final chapter, Lammers and Baldwin (2022) further the aim of diversifying the field by imploring political psychologists to recognise both the differences and similarities between liberals and conservatives. Chapter 41 begins by acknowledging decades-long work on ideological differences in epistemic, existential, and relational needs, yet implores political psychologists to also attend to the similarities between liberals and conservatives – especially given that the effect sizes are often small and vary across studies. Accordingly, Lammers and Baldwin suggest that, rather than starting from needs and moving to issues, researchers could examine how liberals and conservatives construe politics. By focusing on construals, political psychology could (a) utilise experimental approaches to investigate political cognition, (b) use fewer assumptions about interconnected

ideas in the study of ideology, and (c) identify ways to achieve bipartisan support by examining how partisans construe divisive issues. Lammers and Baldwin conclude by imploring political psychology to become less partisan and accept diverse perspectives from the left and the right. Taking a construal approach over motivated cognition will help to develop a flexible experimental field that resonates with the public and finds common ground to resolve extant debate.

1.5 Concluding Comments

Given the contemporary challenges facing the international community including the rise of populism, affective polarisation, political extremism, inequality, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic, political psychology is arguably needed now more than ever. *The Cambridge Handbook of Political Psychology* addresses these pressing needs by providing insights into these and other challenges from world-renowned experts. Indeed, the chapters included in this volume demonstrate the exceptional scholarship that occurs when political psychologists work together across disciplinary and methodological boundaries to tackle the biggest challenges facing the world today. In addition to explaining the roots of these issues, the authors identify key paths forward by explicating the psychological processes underlying contemporary challenges and by articulating ambitious research programs that will guide the field into the future. We thus envision that *The Cambridge Handbook of Political Psychology* will not only comprehensively document the state-of-the-art literature during an historically challenging time, but that it will also lay the foundations for an enduring political psychology that provides the tools the next generation of scholars can use to tackle future challenges that will inevitably arise.

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2 The Evolutionary Basis of Political Ideology

Scott Claessens, Ananish Chaudhuri, Chris G. Sibley, and Quentin D. Atkinson

When Aristotle referred to man as a political animal he could not know how near the mark he was. The roots of politics are older than humanity.

Frans de Waal (1982, p. 207)

Frans de Waal's basis for these assertions was his rich observations of chimpanzee social behaviour at Arnhem Zoo in the 1970s. In *Chimpanzee Politics*, de Waal (1982) documented countless examples of coalition formation, competition, hierarchical dominance struggles, status-seeking, and Machiavellian social intelligence among our primate cousins (Table 2.1). Later, Jane Goodall (1982) confirmed these findings in a wild population of Gombe chimpanzees, adding further observations of aggressive behaviour to maintain social order and territorial coalitional defence against strangers. Such sociopolitical behaviours are also found in other great apes (Scott & Lockard, 2007; Stanford, 1998), as well as non-primate animal species including ants (van Wilgenburg et al., 2010). This social behaviour in non-human animals has parallels in human sociopolitical behaviour. Human politics are rife with disagreements regarding the status of social groups, leadership, political deception, law and order, military defence, and immigration. These political issues arise naturally from a phylogenetically ancient problem shared by all social species: managing conflicts of interest inherent to living in social groups (Petersen, 2015).

In the decades since de Waal and Goodall's seminal work, disparate disciplines have shown

that aspects of human political behaviour are at least partly based in biology. First, studies demonstrate that political ideology covaries with physiological differences, such as automatic eye-blink amplitude and electromyographic facial activity in response to aversive stimuli (Fodor et al., 2008; Hibbing et al., 2014; Oxley et al., 2008; but see Bakker et al., 2020). Second, behavioural genetics has identified a heritable component to political attitudes and values (Alford et al., 2005; Hatemi et al., 2012; see also Chapter 3). Third, developmental psychology shows that personality differences early in life predict political orientation decades later (Block & Block, 2006). Fourth, cross-cultural anthropology demonstrates that human political behaviour is a species-typical universal: humans all over the world live in social groups, form coalitions, cooperate with one another, favour the in-group, adhere to social norms and laws, and sanction norm violators (Brown, 1991). Taken together, this evidence inspires questions about the evolutionary foundations of human political psychology.

2.1 An Evolutionary Approach to Psychology

Unlike other approaches to psychology that describe how the human mind functions, an

Table 2.1. *Different solutions to the two key challenges of group living in great apes and humans*

Challenge of group living	Great ape behaviour	Human behaviour
Cooperation	Dominance hierarchies (Foerster et al., 2016; Goodall, 1986) Competition over food (Gilby, 2006) Lack of communication during coordination (Melis et al., 2009)	Egalitarian social relationships (Boehm, 1993) Cooperative food sharing (Gurven, 2004) Cooperative communication (Koomen & Herrmann, 2018)
Group conformity	Non-symbolically marked coalitions (de Waal, 1982) Behavioural traditions (Van Schaik et al., 2003; Whiten et al., 2007) Informational conformity (Haun et al., 2012) No third-party punishment of selfish behaviour (Riedl et al., 2012) Territorial coalitional defence (Goodall, 1982)	Symbolically marked cultural groups (Henrich, 2015) Cultural norms and institutions (Richerson & Boyd, 2005) Normative conformity (Claidière & Whiten, 2012; Schulman, 1967) Third-party punishment of norm violators (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004) In-group/out-group biases based on cultural markers (Kinzler et al., 2007, 2009)

evolutionary approach to psychology also considers *why* the human mind functions the way it does (Scott-Phillips et al., 2011; Tinbergen, 1963) by placing human psychology within the context of our species' particular evolutionary history. This approach acknowledges that many of the psychological mechanisms underlying modern human behaviour were inherited from our hominid ancestors (Barkow et al., 1992). Following the logic of evolution by natural selection (Darwin, 1859), these psychological mechanisms are thought to be universal features of the human mind that are adapted to the basic challenges of survival and reproduction that have faced our lineage. For example, incest avoidance is hypothesised to be a psychological mechanism shared by all humans that functions to avoid the deleterious genetic consequences of inbreeding (Westermarck, 1891).

As well as explaining universal features of the human mind, an evolutionary approach also explains variation in psychology and behaviour (Buss, 2009). First, different environmental

inputs into a universal psychological architecture can produce variation through phenotypic plasticity (Snell-Rood, 2013). Phenotypic plasticity adaptively calibrates psychology and behaviour to local ecological challenges (Sng et al., 2018). For example, the tendency for people lower in socio-economic status to discount future rewards is hypothesised to be an adaptive response to environmental harshness (Pepper & Nettle, 2017). Second, heritable variation in psychological traits can be maintained by evolution if different levels of the trait are adaptive in different contexts; a mechanism known as balancing selection on fitness trade-offs (Buss, 2009; Nettle, 2006). For example, the extraversion dimension of personality is hypothesised to result from the trade-offs underlying different extraversion levels (e.g., extroverts benefit from increased sexual encounters but also suffer from increased risk of illness; Nettle, 2006). An evolutionary approach therefore explains diversity, as well as uniformity, in human psychology and behaviour.

Evolutionary accounts of human behaviour also emphasise that culture has been a key driving force in human evolution (Henrich, 2015; Richerson & Boyd, 2005). Unlike other primates, humans depend upon a large body of socially learned beliefs, norms, and values in order to survive in novel environments. These cultural traits are inherited and accumulated within social groups over many generations, providing solutions to local adaptive problems (e.g., foraging, hunting, food processing) that individuals could not solve through trial and error alone (Henrich & McElreath, 2003). As a result, humans have evolved to be keenly attentive to cultural information, readily learning social norms from a young age (Rakoczy et al., 2008). Humans also preferentially direct their learning towards individuals within the same cultural group, as delineated by cultural markers like accent (Kinzler et al., 2009) or language (Kinzler et al., 2007). Thus, an evolutionary approach also highlights cultural variability (Henrich, 2015), highly interdependent sociality (Tomasello et al., 2012), and groupishness (Bernhard et al., 2006) as key features of human psychology.

Daniel Dennett once described evolutionary theory as a universal acid which revolutionises every discipline it touches (Dennett, 1995). Indeed, evolutionary perspectives on human psychology continue to shed light on various topics, including personality (Buss, 2009), culture (Henrich, 2015), religion (Norenzayan et al., 2016), and cooperation (Nowak, 2006). We now review several recent evolutionary approaches to political ideology.

2.2 Evolutionary Approaches to Political Ideology

Differences in human political preferences are profound. Individuals differ widely in their opinions regarding taxation, healthcare, education, public spending, border control, and

gun laws. In recent decades, these differences have resulted in a highly polarised political climate (Pew Research Center, 2014; see Chapter 25). Understanding why people develop different political preferences therefore remains a pressing question for the social sciences.

One potential explanation for human political differences is that they arise simply from partisan identification: individuals harbour different political attitudes because they identify with different political parties (Campbell et al., 1960). Some evolutionary scholars argue that people align their attitudes with political parties that best serve their inclusive fitness interests (i.e., advancing evolutionarily relevant outcomes like resources, reproduction, and social status for self and close genetic relations; Petersen, 2015; Weeden & Kurzban, 2014). This perspective fits with research showing that people readily group into political coalitions and perceive other coalitions as sources of threat (Brandt et al., 2014). However, it cannot explain why people's political attitudes frequently contradict their inclusive fitness interests, such as disadvantaged individuals opposing welfare policies or wealthy individuals supporting economic redistribution (Jost et al., 2003).

By contrast, differences in political preferences appear to arise from underlying differences in political ideology (Jost, 2006). Political ideology is defined as a set of stable interrelated beliefs and attitudes that organise views on political and social issues (Jost et al., 2009). Typically, political ideology is conceptualised as varying along a single left-right spectrum, with liberalism on the left and conservatism on the right (see Chapter 6). Liberals tend to emphasise social change and equality, whereas conservatives tend to endorse traditional morality and hierarchy. This liberal-conservative spectrum is the most widely used framework for describing political differences

in both popular media and the scientific literature (Claessens et al., 2020).

However, research over the last 50 years has repeatedly converged on a two-dimensional framework for describing political differences (Claessens et al., 2020; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). The first dimension, often referred to as economic conservatism or social dominance orientation (SDO), organises views on taxation, welfare systems, public healthcare, and free education, and captures preferences for hierarchy versus equality. The second dimension, often referred to as social conservatism or right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), organises views on abortion, same-sex marriage, criminal justice, and militarisation, and captures preferences for group-based social control versus individual autonomy. This two-dimensional framework fits better with the results of exploratory factor analytic models and offers improved internal consistency and external validity over unidimensional approaches (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009).

Since there is evidence that the two dimensions of political ideology are heritable (Batrićević & Littvay, 2017; Lewis & Bates, 2017), found across cultures (Ashton et al., 2005), and map onto low-level physiological and genetic differences (Hibbing et al., 2014), natural selection could have sculpted variation in them over evolutionary time. Indeed, recent research has provided insights into the evolutionary foundations of the two dimensions of political ideology.

A growing body of work shows a positive relationship between economic conservatism and physical dominance attributes (Petersen & Laustsen, 2019; Price et al., 2011, 2017). One recent study found that, across 12 high-powered cross-cultural conceptual replications, both self-reported measures of physical formidability (e.g., motivation to build muscularity) and objective measures of formidability (e.g., handgrip strength, upper-body strength)

correlated positively with economic conservatism and SDO in males, but not females (Petersen & Laustsen, 2019). In both our species and our primate cousins, conflicts over resources are often decided by differences in physical formidability, suggesting that the economic dimension of ideology may be related to resource conflict and competition.

Researchers have consistently found positive relationships between social conservatism and disgust sensitivity, pathogen avoidance, and parasite stress (Hodson & Costello, 2007; Inbar et al., 2009, 2012; Tybur et al., 2010; for a meta-analysis, see Terrizzi et al., 2013). One large-scale cross-cultural study found that individuals higher in traditionalism, a measure of social conservatism, exhibited greater disgust sensitivity and were more likely to come from nations with higher parasite stress (Tybur et al., 2016). No relationship was found for economic conservatism. Based on these findings, scholars have suggested that social conservatism may reflect variation in the sensitivity of the behavioural immune system, a cluster of evolved behavioural and psychological mechanisms that provide organisms with a first line of defence against disease-causing microorganisms (Schaller & Park, 2011).

Other authors argue that the relationship between disgust sensitivity and social conservatism can be understood under the more general umbrella of threat sensitivity, or negativity bias, which they claim uniquely describes the core of social conservatism (Hibbing et al., 2014). A human cognitive bias increasing the salience of threatening stimuli makes evolutionary sense under the logic of error management theory (Haselton & Nettle, 2006), which posits that decisions made under uncertainty should be adaptively biased towards making less costly errors. Indeed, sensitivity to threatening stimuli that are *not* disgusting, such as sudden noises (Oxley et al., 2008), has also been linked to social conservatism. Under this view, social

conservatives are self-protective and risk-averse in their policy views (e.g., adhering to tried-and-tested social norms, opposing social change) because they have a stronger negativity bias and, thus, are acting to reduce the probability of negative events occurring.

Moral Foundations Theory (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt, 2012) provides further insight into the evolutionary foundations of the two dimensions of political ideology. This theory argues that moral reasoning can largely be explained by people's sensitivities to five evolved moral foundations: Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation. These foundations are hypothesised to be solutions to adaptive problems faced by humans in their evolutionary history. The Care/Harm foundation is related to adaptive problems of nurturing and protecting vulnerable individuals, such as infants, and the Fairness/Cheating foundation reflects problems of cooperating with others to mutual benefit and detecting cheaters. The Loyalty/Betrayal foundation relates to problems of coalition-formation and group defence, while the Authority/Subversion foundation reflects the need for an established authority to promote group coordination. The Sanctity/Degradation foundation responds to problems of disease and contamination.

These five moral foundations correlate with political ideology. Initial research focused on the liberal-conservative spectrum, showing that liberals advocate the Care and Fairness dimensions above the others, while conservatives give equal weight to all five dimensions (Graham et al., 2009). More recent work has begun to link the moral foundations to the economic and social dimensions of ideology separately. Factor analysis shows that the five moral foundations can be reduced to two distinct sets: Individualising foundations (Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating) and Binding foundations (Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion,

Sanctity/Degradation; Graham et al., 2009; Sinn & Hayes, 2017). One study found that sensitivity to the Individualising foundations correlates with SDO, whereas sensitivity to the Binding foundations correlates with RWA (Federico et al., 2013). Another study found that factor analysis of self-report items capturing the moral foundations and political ideology produced a two-factor solution: one with high loadings from Individualising foundations and SDO, and the other with high loadings from Binding foundations and RWA (Sinn & Hayes, 2017). These results suggest that, despite its proposed five-factor structure, Moral Foundations Theory has independently converged upon the same two dimensions of ideology that have been repeatedly identified in political psychology (Claessens et al., 2020; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). The first dimension reflects adaptive problems relating to care, nurturance, and cooperation, and the second dimension reflects problems relating to group defence, group coordination, and disease avoidance.

In sum, evolutionary approaches provide important insights into the two dimensions of political ideology separately. However, until recently, these distinct threads of research were not synthesised into a cohesive two-dimensional theory of political ideology. As well as explaining the evolutionary origins of the two dimensions, such a synthesis would ideally explain why this specific two-dimensional structure organises political attitudes and values, as opposed to some other structure. Furthermore, researchers have not yet provided a rigorous evolutionary account of variation along the two dimensions within human populations.

2.3 Two Key Steps in the Evolution of Human Group Living

In order to synthesise existing evolutionary approaches to the two dimensions of political

ideology, we recently proposed a theory outlining the dual evolutionary foundations of political ideology (Claessens et al., 2020). We begin with the assertion outlined at the beginning of this chapter: politics is fundamentally the process of dealing with the conflicts of interest that arise from group living (Haidt, 2012; Hibbing et al., 2013; Petersen, 2015). Research bringing together evidence on the evolution of human group living from a range of disciplines suggests that large-scale human groups evolved in two key steps (Jensen et al., 2014; Sterelny, 2007; Tomasello et al., 2012; Tomasello & Vaish, 2013). In the first step, human societies transformed from the more competitive and hierarchical societies characteristic of the great apes to relatively egalitarian and mutually cooperative societies (Boehm, 1993). This shift was purportedly driven by an increased reliance on large game hunting, which required increased cooperation between individuals (Tomasello et al., 2012). In the second step, humans developed a group conformist psychology to deal with increasing group size, competition between rival groups, and ecological pressures. Social norms signalled cultural group identity, prescribed locally adaptive behaviour, and designated solutions to large-scale group coordination problems (Cronk & Leech, 2013; Henrich, 2015). Threats from rival groups and harsh ecological pressures also increased fitness interdependence within groups (i.e., the extent to which individuals' fitness interests positively covary; Aktipis et al., 2018) and created the conditions for the differential survival of some cultural groups over others (Richerson et al., 2016), encouraging in-group favouritism, adherence to tried-and-tested social norms, and punishment of in-group members who deviated from social norms (Henrich, 2015). Thus, in response to the challenges of group living, social drives for cooperation and group conformity were favoured in ancestral

humans, resulting in early hunter-gatherer groups characterised by relatively egalitarian sociopolitical structures (Boehm, 1993) and deeply embedded norms, conventions, and institutions (Henrich, 2015).

Comparisons of modern great apes and humans provide evidence for these two steps in the evolution of human group living (Table 2.1). Regarding the first key step, chimpanzees show some evidence of coordination with conspecifics to mutual benefit (Melis et al., 2009), but they do not seem to have other-regarding preferences (Silk et al., 2005), treating conspecifics merely as social tools to achieve individual goals (Melis et al., 2006a). In competition over food, contests between chimpanzees are usually decided by hierarchical dominance relationships (Melis et al., 2006b). In contrast, humans are spontaneously prosocial (Warneken & Tomasello, 2006), can effectively communicate with one another to solve coordination problems (Koomen & Herrmann, 2018), and are often egalitarian in their division of food (Gurven, 2004; Hamann et al., 2011).

Regarding the second key step, while chimpanzees (Whiten et al., 2007) and orangutans (Van Schaik et al., 2003) adopt local behavioural traditions, they do not seem to adhere to group-wide social norms (Burkart et al., 2018). Furthermore, while chimpanzees engage in second-party punishment of conspecifics when they have been personally affected, they do not punish third parties who violate shared group norms (Riedl et al., 2012). In contrast, humans naturally conform to social norms (Claidière & Whiten, 2012) and harbour a wide range of self-conscious emotions dedicated to normativity, such as shame and guilt (Vaish et al., 2011). Humans also actively enforce social norms on others, responding to norm violations with both second-party and third-party punishment (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004).

Developmental psychology has also revealed that cooperation and group conformity emerge reliably in humans at a young age. Children as young as one to three years old actively cooperate with others (Warneken et al., 2006) and prefer equal allocations of resources (Hamann et al., 2011). Normative behaviours, such as conformity and peer punishment, emerge later around five years of age (Vaish et al., 2011) indicating the development of a distinct social drive for group conformity. Together with comparative studies, this evidence suggests that the social drives for cooperation and group conformity are distinct evolved features of human psychology that were selected for after our shared common ancestor with great apes.

These two basic social drives for cooperation and group conformity map onto the two dimensions of political ideology (Claessens et al., 2020; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). Economic conservatism and SDO are associated with power, hierarchy, and dominance. These motives reflect the kind of anti-egalitarian behaviours that the first key step in the evolution of group living acted to suppress (Boehm, 1993). Social conservatism and RWA, by contrast, are associated with tradition, conformity, and religiosity – motives that reflect the group conformist normative psychology favoured by the second key step in the evolution of human group living.

We have also suggested two mechanisms, rooted in evolutionary logic, which could produce variation in cooperation and group conformity within human populations. First, as previously mentioned, fitness trade-offs can result in the evolution of functional heritable individual differences via balancing selection (Nettle, 2006). Both cooperation and group conformity come with fitness trade-offs. Cooperative behaviour comes with benefits (e.g., cooperative partner choice, reputational benefits), but also costs (e.g., exploitation by

free-riders). Similarly, group conformist behaviour comes with benefits (e.g., adaptability to the group's local conditions), but also costs (e.g., less innovation). These trade-offs are expected to maintain heritable individual differences in cooperative and group conformist behaviour within human populations (Cesarini et al., 2008; Wallace et al., 2007). Second, phenotypic plasticity allows the psychological mechanisms underlying cooperation and group conformity to calibrate behavioural outputs based on differing environmental inputs. Cooperative behaviour is elicited in some situations (e.g., reputation at stake), but suppressed in others (e.g., interacting with defectors; Delton & Robertson, 2016). Similarly, particular environmental conditions reliably evoke group conformity (e.g., environmental unpredictability, pathogen threats; Morgan et al., 2011; Murray & Schaller, 2012), while others suppress it (e.g., presence of potential mates; Griskevicius et al., 2006). This sensitivity to environmental input explains why SDO correlates with viewing the world as a competitive jungle, whereas RWA correlates with viewing the world as threatening, dangerous, and unpredictable (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). Together, fitness trade-offs and phenotypic plasticity maintain functional variation in cooperation and group conformist behaviour, naturally producing variation in economic and social conservatism in modern human populations.

This dual evolutionary theory of political ideology synthesises existing evolutionary approaches to the two dimensions. Under the dual foundations model, economic conservatism and SDO are associated with physical formidability because resource-holding power is an important cue for the psychological mechanisms underlying cooperative behaviour. If an individual correctly perceives their own resource-holding power as high, then this will motivate the accumulation of resources

via dominance and power rather than egalitarian sharing (Geniole et al., 2017), leading to a reduction in cooperative behaviour and a concurrent increase in economic conservatism and SDO. We also suggest that social conservatism and RWA are associated with disgust sensitivity because perceived threats from infectious diseases motivate out-group avoidance (Hodson et al., 2013), parochialism (Navarrete & Fessler, 2006), and conformity to group norms (Murray & Schaller, 2012), leading to a concurrent increase in social conservatism and RWA.

2.4 Conclusion and Future Directions

Evolutionary explanations for human psychology consider why humans behave the way they do (Scott-Phillips et al., 2011). In this chapter, we have applied this evolutionary approach to human political ideology to show that variation in ideology is related to specific psychological adaptations that function to navigate the challenges of human social group living. The dual evolutionary model of political ideology (Claessens et al., 2020) highlights two particular challenges of group living that organise political ideology – cooperation and group conformity – and, in doing so, offers an overarching framework for a wide variety of existing findings in political psychology. This confluence of evidence provides a deeper understanding of the human political animal, illuminating why people so often disagree in this morally charged arena of social life.

There remain several unanswered questions for evolutionary approaches to political ideology. First, does the economic dimension of political ideology capture preferences for competition at the group level or the individual level? Social dominance theorists stress that SDO is specifically a measure of group-based (not interpersonal) dominance (Pratto et al., 1994). Indeed, SDO predicts prejudice and

discrimination based on group identity (Pratto et al., 1994). However, drawing on empirical relationships between economic conservatism and physical dominance attributes (Petersen, 2015) and between SDO and interpersonal competition in economic games (Grünhage & Reuter, 2020; Haesevoets et al., 2015; Halali et al., 2018), the dual evolutionary model of political ideology suggests that the economic dimension fundamentally reflects competition between individuals rather than groups (Claessens et al., 2020). Researchers studying social dominance theory must integrate these new findings into their conceptualisation and definition of SDO.

Second, which socioecological factors influence the expression of political ideology? The socioecology of political ideology is an emerging area of research (Conway et al., 2020; Sng et al., 2018). One well-studied example is the relationship between regional parasite stress and conservative values like traditionalism, strong family ties, and religiosity (Fincher & Thornhill, 2012; Tybur et al., 2016). But other candidate socioecological influences on political ideology include population density, genetic relatedness, sex ratio, extrinsic mortality, and resource availability (Sng et al., 2018), as well as other competitive, unpredictable, and threatening environmental conditions implicated by the dual foundations model (Claessens et al., 2020). Emerging research in this area will undoubtedly rely on comparisons between different regions with different ecologies. Studies must control for sources of non-independence between regions, such as spatial proximity and cultural relatedness, as these dependencies can violate statistical assumptions and prove problematic for cross-regional inference, including prior work on political ideology (Bromham et al., 2018). Where possible, researchers should also utilise multilevel designs with individuals nested

within regions, in order to avoid the fallacy of drawing individual-level inferences from regional-level associations (Pollet et al., 2014).

Third, what are the proximate mechanisms underlying political behaviour in humans? Evolutionary approaches provide ultimate explanations for behaviour, which opens the door to research on the biological mechanisms underlying behaviour. For example, research has already begun to explore the neuropsychological correlates of political ideology (Amodio et al., 2007; Kanai et al., 2011). Future research could extend this work and link more explicitly to the evolutionary approaches reviewed above by studying how political ideology covaries with the strength of neurological responses to competition (Decety et al., 2004), inequality (Dawes et al., 2012), disease (Borg et al., 2008), and norm violations (Bas-Hoogendam et al., 2017).

Fourth, how well do the patterns identified by the evolutionary approaches reviewed above generalise to non-WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic; Henrich et al., 2010) and small-scale societies? Human societies across the world organise their political systems in very different ways, from smaller bands and tribes to ethnically diverse megacities and nation states (Service, 1962). If political psychology has evolutionary roots, we should see similar psychological mechanisms structuring political issues across cultures, at each of these levels of organisation. While some ambitious cross-cultural work on political ideology has been undertaken (Gelfand et al., 2011; Petersen & Laustsen, 2019; Tybur et al., 2016), future studies must extend their sampling to small-scale societies. Personality psychologists have already taken this step; for example, by testing the Big Five personality structure in the Tsimane of Bolivia (Gurven et al., 2013). In order to conduct research like this in small-scale societies, new self-report scales will be

required to measure political ideology. References to Western group identities, status markers, and social norms will need to be replaced with references to locally relevant cultural markers, status symbols, customs, and traditions. This work will improve the generalisability of evolutionary approaches to political ideology.

Finally, research should explore how evolutionary approaches can inform the species-wide political challenges of the 21st century. Modern large-scale challenges like climate change, economic shocks, and responses to global pandemics require unprecedented cooperation between humans across the world. But challenges like these have faced humans throughout our evolutionary history, albeit on a smaller scale, in the form of disease threats, extrinsic risk, and collective action problems. Understanding how ancestral humans solved those smaller-scale problems can help us create policies, design institutions, and collaborate across party lines to tackle the large-scale political challenges that face our species today.

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3 Genetic Contributions to Political Phenomena

Rose McDermott

Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he, who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity; he is like the ‘Tribeless, lawless, heartless one’ whom Homer denounces – the natural outcast is forthwith a lover of war; he may be compared to an isolated piece at draughts.

Aristotle, 2006 (*Politics*, Bk. I)

For most of the history of political science, it has been widely assumed, without evidence, that social and political attitudes and behaviour resulted entirely from processes of socialisation such as family, school, and peer groups (see Chapter 10). This perspective was most influentially instantiated in the famous work by Campbell and colleagues (1960), *The American Voter*, which argued that people developed their political beliefs at the feet of their parents, as a result of the affective bonds they felt to those caregivers. The basic logic goes something like this: you love your parents; your parents love the Republican Party; therefore, you grow up to love the Republican Party. Although this model is not wrong, it is incomplete because it omits half the story. Specifically, the dominant trope within political science neglects the way in which human biology and genetics contribute to complex social and political beliefs. This other half of the story is important, and recent work in this area strives to explore the manner and ways in which the effects of human nature interact with human nurture to create and sustain the beliefs that guide our daily lives (Alford & Hibbing, 2004; Alford et al., 2005; Fowler & Dawes,

2013; Fowler & Schreiber, 2008; Hatemi & McDermott, 2011a, 2012a, 2016).

This chapter begins by discussing some of the relevant findings in this area, paying particular attention to the importance of assortative mating in determining political ideology, a topic that has been typically neglected by political science. It then proceeds with some brief speculations about how the field might evolve, followed by a short comment on ethical concerns revolving around work in this area, before concluding.

3.1 Genetics Can Inform Politics

Models of socialisation assume that people’s social and political attitudes are driven by sociodemographic factors, such as age, sex, ethnicity, religion, education, and so on. The challenge for such models, of course, is that they have a hard time explaining more than just a trivial amount of variance. Why do people who are raised in the same environment, perhaps even the same family, have different beliefs and attitudes? How can individuals who share almost nothing in common, perhaps even raised half a world

apart, converge to have almost identical beliefs? Although models of socialisation can predict a great deal of political behaviour including how people are likely to vote based on demographic factors (see Chapter 10), they have a much harder time predicting the outliers and explaining why so many people fail to align with expectations.

One reason why sociodemographic models are unable to answer these important questions is that they assume that preferences are entirely driven by environmental constraints. As a result, preferences remain in a kind of black box, irrelevant to measured outcomes, similar to the way that rational choice or other economic models of decision-making make predictions based on assumptions of preferences as given, fixed, and even intransigent. Again, this can be very useful for generalised predictions. But it does not, and cannot, provide insight into the sources of individual variation outside of those demographic constraints.

This is where genetic and biological factors can provide some important insights. Unfortunately, many people believe that genetics are fixed and environments are fluid (Funk, 2020). This belief often results from inadequate science training, or science training that ends too early. Think about it this way: genetic and biological factors must be responsive to the environment, almost by definition, whereas environments are often absolutely impervious to intervention. Think for example of public projects designed to help people lift out of poverty. For such programs to be effective, huge changes to environments, from housing to schools, would need to shift. Yet such changes are painfully slow, if they ever occur at all. Biology can, and must, adapt much more quickly. Think of how quickly lungs can recover when people stop smoking, or how much cutting out sugar improves diabetic outcomes. If biological factors were unresponsive

to constantly shifting environmental factors, humans would not have survived as a species, let alone flourished across a wide array of physical environments ranging from the top of the Himalayas to barren deserts around the world. Humans are amazing specialist-generalists that adapt to their local environment with incredible precision (Barrett, 2012). For example, humans who make a living from deep-sea diving in Fiji develop larger spleens in order to have sufficient oxygen for longer periods of time underwater (Elia et al., 2019).

A clear example of how rapidly humans adapt to their environment comes from work on the human microbiome. This literature shows enormous and rapid shifts in constitution over just a few days due to changes in diet – changes that exert tremendous effects on multiple factors including the functioning of the immune system (Devkota & Chang, 2015; Morgan et al., 2013). Contrast the malleability of the microbiome with entrenched social forces such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, or prejudice. Just think about how difficult it has been to reduce crime, improve education or healthcare, or shift the nature of public housing. Do these environmental factors respond so quickly, easily, and effortlessly to new environmental demands? Not so much.

Once we accept that genetics are not essentialist or immutable (or at least not as unchangeable as many entrenched environmental forces), it is possible to understand how genetics and biology help explain variance in the patterns of social and political attitudes both among and between individuals. In order to do so, it is important to keep in mind that individuals are not necessarily solely the products of their parents alone, but rather, result from many generations of input. Just as some children in the same family can vary in hair and eye colour yet have the same parents, such children can have various political attitudes

while growing up in the same family, attending the same school, living in the same area, and sharing all other important sociodemographic characteristics.

What are the genetic contributions to political ideology? For many years in behavioural genetics, social and political attitudes were used as controls because scholars assumed (as did the political scientists of the time) that such effects were almost entirely environmentally determined. But some findings were inconsistent with these assumptions. In a groundbreaking piece, Martin and colleagues (1986) demonstrated for the first time the genetic transmission of social attitudes. Most behaviour genetics studies use the Wilson–Patterson (1968) scale to measure political attitudes. This quickly administered scale asks people to provide a ‘yes’, ‘no’, or ‘?’ response to 50 different social and political issues; it has proven to be a remarkably robust and reliable measure of political ideology. In order to assess the extent to which outcomes result from genetic factors, behaviour genetics scholars traction the difference between fraternal and identical twins. Fraternal twins are like any other sibling set, except they are born at the same time; identical twins are genetically the same person born in two different bodies, on which of course environment and experience operate differently over time. This means that it is possible to use the mathematical difference between these types of twins to statistically analyse the extent to which traits derive from genetics, shared, or unique environmental factors. Please note that unique environmental factors include things like in utero hormones which affect people in individual ways and that many people might consider biological in nature. The original work by Martin et al. (1986) showed that about 0.40 of individual variance on political attitudes derived from additive genetic factors, 0.45 from shared social environment, and the remainder (which includes an error term) from

unique environmental factors. It is important to realise that this refers to variance between individuals, and not percentages of effect within a given individual. Specifically, 0.40 of the variance being attributable to genetic factors does not mean that 40% of the variance in political attitudes within any given individual is from genetic factors as many wrongly assume; rather, it indicates that about 40% of the difference between individuals is attributable to overall genetic factors. There have been numerous validations and extensions on this work since (Alford et al., 2005; Hatemi et al., 2009, 2011, 2014).

Notably, the results from Martin and colleagues’ (1986) study focus on political ideology as assessed by the Wilson–Patterson scale. However, it should be obvious that the contribution of genetic factors to political outcomes may differ depending on the specific attitude being assessed. And, indeed, this is the case. Subsequent work by McDermott and Hatemi (2014b) has shown, for example, that while political ideology along a global conservative-liberal spectrum always appears to have a relatively large genetic component, genes have a relatively smaller impact on other factors such as specific political party affiliation, sense of civic duty, and ethnocentrism, suggesting that environmental factors make a far greater contribution to the expression of these attitudes. Interestingly, although it is possible to equate genetic contributions to political ideology across many cultures and time periods, this has not been the case with environmental influences (Hatemi et al., 2014). And, indeed, this would make sense because people would be affected by different local environmental pressures and forces in different places.

It is perhaps best to think of the development and derivation of these dynamics in evolutionary terms (see also Chapter 2). Modern humans confront the same fundamental issues

of reproduction and survival that would have challenged our ancestors over millennia. The successful negotiation of many of these challenges would have required similar abilities, such as the need to function in large-scale societies without killing too many members of one's own group, finding a mate, securing resources, raising children, and protecting against predation. These goals and drives have not changed much since humans existed in small-scale societies. As a result, humans have scaffolded these basic needs and desires onto modern political problems that nonetheless tap into these same underlying latent variable goals around survival and reproduction. So, for example, modern questions about immigration or war reflect the need to protect our in-group and defend ourselves against predation (Hatemi et al., 2013). Different people may have different notions about who constitutes the in-group and who remains in the out-group, but everyone retains a desire for safety and security. They just have different ideas about how to secure that outcome. Similarly, questions about taxation and welfare essentially tap into individuals' underlying notions regarding the best way to share and allocate resources, including assessments of who is worthy of receiving public largesse (Petersen, 2012). Finally, and often most controversially, issues surrounding sexuality, whether it be questions about pornography and prostitution in 18th-century England or current debates over abortion and transgender bathrooms, fundamentally relate to our notions of finding a mate, raising children, and regulating the expression of sexuality (see also Chapter 17). Few questions would have had a bigger effect on the outcome of natural selection than decisions about who was able to regulate other people's sexual behaviour, and for what purpose. This is also why the nature and character of assortative mating is more important than

most political scientists have realised (for a notable exception, see Alford et al., 2011).

3.1.1 Consequences of Biological Differences

There are several important consequences that result from a recognition that biology and genetics can contribute to complex social and political attitudes, preferences, and behaviour. Considering the role of biology also allows for the introduction of previously novel forms and methods of inquiry into political science, not the least of which is the twin decomposition method mentioned above.

Three specific examples serve to demonstrate the importance of these considerations. First, Schreiber and colleagues (2013) have shown that differences in brain activity during a risk-taking task can predict party identification more accurately than most previously established measures, including the use of the sociodemographic features discussed above. Specifically, Republicans show more activity in the right amygdala (i.e., the part of the brain typically associated with fear), whereas Democrats show more activity in the left insula (i.e., a part of the brain associated with the 'theory of mind', including the perception of internal feeling states and assessments of the intentions of others).

Some work also shows that liberals and conservatives differ in some important aspects of their physiology (Dodd et al., 2012; Hatemi et al., 2011). This can be conceptualised in terms of the well-known psychological tendencies of behavioural approach versus inhibition systems, which have long been linked to asymmetric brain activation patterns (Sutton & Davidson, 1997). Specifically, conservatives appear to be driven by a desire to avoid negative stimuli, whereas liberals are drawn to experience positive stimuli. This is also consistent with a

widely documented negativity bias on the part of political conservatives (Hibbing et al., 2014). Importantly for a discussion of assortative mating, these ideological asymmetries in preference also manifest in the differences between liberals and conservatives in their preferred sexual behaviour (Hatemi et al., 2017).

One of the most provocative differences between liberals and conservatives appears in their visual attention. Although this has only received recent attention, preliminary evidence indicates that the same stimulus elicits remarkably different neurological and physiological reactions in people across the ideological spectrum and appears to be related to social and political attitudes (Hatemi & McDermott, 2016). Additional evidence shows these differences in visual attention appear particularly acute in the area of disgust (Oosterhoff et al., 2018). Using eye-tracking technology, Oosterhoff and colleagues show that, relative to liberals, conservatives spend less time looking at disgusting images, but more time looking at facial expressions of disgust, suggesting that conservatives are particularly sensitive to disgust (see also Hatemi & McDermott, 2012b). These asymmetries did not appear in the domains of fear or sadness.

That ideological asymmetries in visual attention exist is important for two reasons. First, along with supporting evidence drawn from other domains discussed here, it illustrates the way that political ideology operates a powerful and meaningful top-down information-processing system that orchestrates a wide variety of downstream attentional and perceptual mechanisms (Hatemi & McDermott, 2016). This means that ideology informs what people choose to look at, listen to, and pay attention to, rather than developing ideology as a result of these inputs. This provides sobering ballast to those who believe that information alone can change entrenched

political beliefs; such shifts are unlikely in the most ideologically committed.

Second, these attentional differences indicate that when people disagree, they likely are not disagreeing about the interpretation of events alone. While they may certainly disagree about interpretations, they likely also disagree with the perceptual input. In other words, liberals and conservatives are not simply disagreeing about the meaning of a shared set of facts; they literally do not share the same set of facts. They both perceive and interpret stimuli from the environment in fundamentally different ways, at least in some areas and domains. Importantly, many of the most well-documented differences are in emotional domains, showing that, once again, information alone may be insufficient to change the minds of the most politically committed. Thus, models stressing the value of deliberation, however valuable for the less entrenched, may be ineffective for the vast majority of the ideologically committed.

3.2 Assortative Mating

Hopefully, the link between genetics and political ideology is now clear and convincing. Because the link between mating and genetics is obvious, the role of mating in determining the political ideology of offspring becomes apparent, important, and worthy of further consideration. If we believe that genetics plays an important role in contributing to the political ideology of offspring (as should be clear from the genetic findings presented), then the single most important decision that people make in determining their child's political ideology is their mate choice.

Obviously, myriad factors contribute to the selection of mates. These include things like religion, culture, family expectations, education, personal attractiveness, and so on.

However, the characteristics that people *believe* they care about in selecting a mate have been remarkably similar over time, and have not typically included politics (Buss, 1985).¹ These factors typically diverge by sex, in keeping with traditional differences in reproductive goals, strategies, and constraints. While there is more overlap than divergence in desired traits such as kindness and intelligence, men tend to prize physical attraction more than women do, while women value earning capacity more than men do. Importantly, political ideology does not show up in any of the top 10 characteristics claimed by either sex.

Other work examining the factors that people desire in a mate similarly demonstrate that people are generally unaware of the traits necessary for long-term stability in a relationship. For example, Klofstad and colleagues (2012) examined self-reported mate preferences and personal characteristics of the first five men and the first five women in each of 313 randomly selected zip codes. Results showed that individuals were more likely to admit to being overweight (i.e., a characteristic universally viewed as unattractive) than to state their political preference. These differences notably diverged from the American National Election Studies data on stated political affiliation. Perhaps the divergence between individuals' actual and stated political ideology reflects a desire to cast as wide a net as possible for potential mates, but also indicates an active suppression of actual political preference in seeking potential mates.

Why do these divergences in self-reported and actual political ideology matter? Because

even though people do not necessarily advertise their true political preferences when first seeking a mate, they nonetheless end up with ideologically similar mates more often than would be expected by chance in more ways than one. For one, these differences matter because spouses are more similar genetically on factors related to political ideology than would be expected by chance. If truly random mating on political attitudes existed, there would be no meaningful correlation between the genetic contributions to political ideology and mates. Yet there is clearly an association (see Alford et al., 2011; Hatemi et al., 2010). Perhaps in previous times when women had less possibility for economic independence and were thus more dependent on men, women's political opinions may have mattered less. Yet if we return to our earlier argument about how modern political attitudes reflect older underlying evolutionary drives and impetuses on the part of humans, it becomes possible to see how having similar attitudes on factors such as fidelity and child-raising may have made for relatively more or less successful marriages, ability to recruit necessary additional labour from friends and family members for child-rearing, and greater or lesser probability of raising children to reproductive capacity. However, certainly more explicit political awareness and ability to express this among women might only serve to increase assortative mating on political ideology.

When the factors that contribute to successful long-term mating are analysed, it turns out that there are only three factors that correlate more highly than would be expected by chance. These are political ideology, religion (which is more environmentally than genetically influenced; see Eaves et al., 1999), and drinking frequency (Alford et al., 2011; Eaves & Hatemi, 2008, 2011; Hatemi et al., 2010). But most importantly, the political affiliation between spouses does not happen as a result of

¹ Recent tendencies towards extreme political polarisation may have changed this since 2016. But it remains to be seen how widespread or stable these effects are. Moreover, they may be restricted to a fairly elite and ideologically extreme subset of the population.

convergence over time, but rather, is an association that exists from the outset.

Interestingly, there appears to be an additional area where assortative mating is particularly powerful, and that is race. Specifically, conservatives, and especially conservative men, strongly prefer to date within their own racial grouping (Klofstad et al., 2013). Other factors, including religion, education, and income, do not appear to differentially affect the preferences of liberals and conservatives. However, factors like whether or not people are willing to date someone with children differs by sex (i.e., as might be expected, women are more willing to take on someone else's children) and ideology. Namely, liberals are more likely than conservatives to express a willingness to date someone with children.

One of the meaningful consequences of this tendency towards assortative mating by ideology lies in the way that it inevitably serves to increase political polarisation over time, as liberals and conservatives increasingly pull apart (see also Chapter 25). In other words, liberals are more likely to mate with liberals and conservatives are more likely to mate with conservatives. Because many aspects of political ideology are heritable, as noted above, this means that, over time, fewer people occupy the ideological middle ground. This is particularly noteworthy in light of the fact that conservatives generally have more children than liberals (Hatemi et al., 2017), indicating a population growth skew in favour of conservatives over time.

In this way, political attitudes are more than just attitudes. They influence every aspect of how individuals see the world, even when exposed to the exact same stimuli. Spouses assort on these political and social attitudes. Spouses are more genetically similar on ideology than might be expected by chance, and parents transmit these genetic factors to their

offspring. These genes are polygenic and multifactorial, meaning no single gene, nor single pathway, is responsible for anything as complex as a political or social attitude. Rather, genes operate in recursive and interactive ways with the environment to produce and sustain beliefs. Parents help create these environments, as well as offer opportunities or restraints in the ability of their children to experience different environments. This provides an additional way that parents help shape their children's ideology through both genetic and environmental factors. Therefore, the single most important social process for ideological transmission may be one's choice of mate.

Yet, as discussed above, individual differences in political ideology are due in part to genetic differences. Spouses clearly assort on ideology, but individuals appear not to be consciously selecting on the basis of it. This implies that people deselect those who differ from them ideologically over the course of dating, before marrying or having children. How might this process occur if people are unaware of this selection process, as indicated by their failure to list it as an important characteristic in a mate when asked, or when volitionally listed in an online dating app? Such a process must be automatic and effortless to be simultaneously both so powerful and so unconscious.

A likely candidate lies in olfaction. Smell and the influence of pheromones is quite powerful in other critical aspects of mate selection, including immune system functioning (Penn & Potts, 1998). This suggests that a similar process may underlie assortment in the domain of left-right differences and attraction. Consistent with this intuition, McDermott and colleagues (2014) found that, although participants were unable to predict political ideology from scents, their attraction to scents did predict political ideology. These results suggest that the process was mediated through non-conscious factors (as predicted).

Additional evidence supporting this conjecture comes from genome-wide association studies of political ideology. These studies reveal linkages between genetic factors involved in ideology and those implicated in olfaction, including *OR2N1P* and *OR21J* (Hatemi et al., 2011). This finding appears consistent with a great deal of other work linking smell with disgust sensitivity, as well as mate selection, as discussed above (Inbar et al., 2009). In short, there is tentative evidence showing a (non-conscious) connection between olfaction and ideologically sorted mate selection.

3.3 Implications for Real-World Political Outcomes

What can these evolutionary, genetic, and biological factors tell us about real-world politics? One area that this perspective can enlighten lies in the domain of conflict. Recall that current attitudes can reflect and tap into latent evolutionary goals and drives related to defence and protection (see also Chapter 2). There is perhaps no area where this purpose emerges more strongly than in the domain of conflict and violence. One way to examine this question is to explore the extent to which dispositional traits predict attitudinal or behavioural responses to foreign policy choices.

Can we use measures of dispositional aggression to predict attitudes towards the use of force for reasons of national security? If dispositional aggression has a meaningful role in foreign policy, can this be linked to biological factors? That is, for this psychological trait, what role is played by genetic influences, familial environments, or individual experiences?

McDermott and Hatemi (2017) addressed this question by examining the effect of individual differences in aggression on questions of foreign policy intervention and complex moral

decision-making. Participants completed the Buss–Perry (1992) measure of physical aggression, a self-rated 9-item scale that asks people to judge whether or not a particular item is characteristic of them on a 6-point scale. Items include statements such as, ‘Once in a while, I can’t control the urge to strike another person’ or ‘If someone hits me, I hit back.’ Importantly, none of the questions inquire into political judgements, meaning there is little risk of conflation in the responses or results. Participants then rated their agreement to foreign policy items including ‘If it is proven that Iran is helping the terrorists or insurgents in Iraq, then Iran should be bombed’ and ‘Military force may be needed to prevent North Korea from developing more advanced nuclear weapons.’

Results were consistent with predictions. Individuals who score higher on the Buss–Perry Physical Aggression Scale are more likely to endorse the use of military force against both immediate and distal threats. Sex differences also emerged such that men were more likely than women to endorse aggressive action. Interestingly, the majority of variance in aggressive action among men was explained by genetic factors, but this was not the case in women. Rather, the majority of the variance in aggressive action among women was predicted by unique environmental factors. These findings highlight the critical value of dis-aggregating results by sex, especially when examining genetic factors.

McDermott and Hatemi (2017) also showed that environmental factors predicted the tendency towards aggression in foreign policy choice. Specifically, education and bonding with one’s father influenced the expression of aggression. These results are unsurprising given that previous work demonstrates the critical importance of father bonding in modulating aggression during child development, particularly between the ages of 18 and

24 months (Alink et al., 2006). Moreover, the results highlight the need to consider both genetic and environmental factors when examining attitudes towards foreign policy.

As should be obvious by now, there is a lot of fertile ground for the application of an individual variance model based on genetic foundations for real-world political decision-making in various realms. Accordingly, some important work has already begun. This includes research in the areas of leadership (McDermott et al., 2016), foreign policy and political violence (McDermott & Hatemi, 2014a), law (McDermott & Hatemi, 2018), culture (McDermott & Hatemi, 2014b), and discrimination (Hatemi et al., 2012; McDermott & Hatemi, 2011).

3.4 Going Forward

Although it is relatively easy to articulate the need for genetically informed research on political attitudes, it is more challenging to speculate about how these investigations will shape our understanding of politics going forward. For one thing, the standard has now become genome-wide association studies. While this approach has become more cost-efficient over the past decade, funding required to pursue these studies still presents formidable hurdles for social science scholars. This is especially the case because very large numbers of subjects are necessary for these studies because typical effect sizes are so small, partly because so many factors operate in concert to influence a given effect.

Given these complications, the majority of work on the genetic transmission of social and political factors will necessarily be relegated to the hard sciences, particularly genetics, where large grants are more common. Such scholars may have an opportunity to leverage studies on something like diseases in order to do double duty to study social attitudes, much

like how some of the initial work in the area piggy-backed off of a melanoma study in Australia (see Hatemi et al., 2014). Clearly, social scientists interested in pursuing this line of inquiry would benefit from engaging in collaborations with such scientists who often welcome colleagues who share interests, but also possess useful political knowledge. However, this often requires that such scholars learn at least a basic background and working knowledge of some of the harder science as well, if only to understand what is going on in a given analysis.

Cost is not the only limitation to undertaking such work. Anyone engaging in this kind of study needs to understand that this kind of investigation is still in its infancy and will likely be overturned or revised as science moves forward. This is a normal and natural process, but often works contrary to the professional and career interests of especially more junior scholars. To paraphrase Max Planck, social science may progress one funeral at a time, but few are willing to get thrown under the bus before their time.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

One of the most significant hurdles encountered in the investigation of genetic factors underlying political attitudes resides in both incendiary and important ethical concerns and constraints. Many outside observers are not fully aware of the enormous precautions that are put in place around the use of genetic data in order to do everything possible to keep such information secure and private. But the concerns are legitimate since DNA constitutes, by definition, personally identifiable information. Some reasonable precautions, such as destroying samples after analyses, seem especially warranted so that they cannot be used by others for purposes outside those agreed to by subjects.

One of the more vocal concerns, however, revolves around accusations that this kind of work is somehow akin to the horrific eugenics undertaken by the Nazis during the Second World War. Even though there is a huge difference between trying to understand and trying to manipulate basic processes, the distinction gets lost on many who fear that the former will slip easily and inevitably into the latter. The fact that a Chinese scientist was recently sentenced to three years in prison for gene editing only adds validity to the concerns about the unethical use of this technology for cloning or genetic manipulation (Cyranoski, 2020).

Alternatively, some have argued that the pursuit of this technology by private industries and corporations means that academics need to conduct this work to provide a check and balance that is not as influenced by financial conflicts of interest. However, some academics clearly have financial ties to industry that can compromise integrity, or at least appear to do so (Hatemi & McDermott, 2011b). Of course, this does not mean that scientists should conduct unethical work or be given any special licence to do so. However, it does suggest the importance of careful attention to the ethical issues involved in undertaking genetic work, regardless of who undertakes it.

Scholars must ultimately decide for themselves where the boundaries of their ethical limits and principles lie. However, scholars should at a minimum be bound by the standard ethical documents that govern scientific investigation, including the Helsinki Declaration and the Belmont report, both of which highlight the notion of informed consent and note the critical importance of respecting the dignity of subjects. Scholars should not assume that institutional IRB approval provides sufficient protection for subjects or in any way substitutes for the ethical treatment of research subjects. Possession of genetic

information holds unique information that can inform subjects about their relative vulnerability risk for particular diseases, as well as information about their parentage. Scholars must make decisions about how much to inform subjects about information they themselves might not be aware of, similar to MRI scholars who occasionally have to tell a subject about the possibility of a brain tumour or other abnormality. Such ethical responsibility must be taken seriously, and never neglected or dismissed.

3.6 Conclusion

Full incorporation of evolutionary, biological, and genetic contributions to political attitudes, preferences, and behaviour should start to change the way we think about politics. It should also help us start to change the way we think about science. Environments are not infinitely malleable and susceptible to easy intervention, nor is biology or genetics immutable, fixed, or unchanging. Genes operate in a social context and constantly interact with that environment in a recursive and iterative manner. These mechanisms also influence how we get our genes through processes like mate selection, and affect how those genes operate in a complex social and political world. And this interaction has real-world political and social consequences, including in-group protection, out-group discrimination, allocation of resources, and the regulation of human sexuality in all forms.

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4 The Psychology and Neuroscience of Partisanship

Elizabeth Harris, Philip Pärnamets, Anni Sternisko, Claire Robertson, and Jay J. Van Bavel

Citizens across the globe are becoming increasingly divided by their political identity (Kevins & Soroka, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2014; Zimmerman & Pinheiro, 2020). In the United States, partisan differences in identity and values continue to widen (Kozlowski & Murphy, 2019) even as other identity and value differences (based on religion, race, education, etc.) remain relatively stable (Pew Research Center, 2017). Over the past few decades, this chasm between political parties has grown in the USA among both politicians and the general public (DeSilver, 2013), and similar patterns have been observed in several other nations, including New Zealand, Canada, and Switzerland (Boxell et al., 2020). These partisan differences have infused many domains of social life with political conflict. For instance, 72% of Democrats would not, or ‘probably would not’, consider being in a relationship with someone who voted for US President Donald Trump (Brown, 2020) and would prefer to have a roommate from the same political party as themselves (Shafranek, 2021). These patterns reveal that polarisation is occurring not only in terms of policy beliefs, but also in terms of our feelings about the other party – known as affective polarisation (Boxell et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2019; Pew Research Center, 2014; see Chapter 25).

Why have citizens become increasingly polarised? The answer is that there is increasing identification with political parties – a process known as partisanship (Mason, 2018). This chapter will focus on the role that

social identity plays in contemporary politics (Greene, 2002). These party identities influence political preferences, such that partisans are more likely to agree with policies that were endorsed by their political party, regardless of the policy content, and, in some cases, their own ideological beliefs (Cohen, 2003; Samuels & Zucco Jr., 2014). There are many social and structural factors that are related to partisanship, including polarisation (Lupu, 2015), intergroup threat (e.g., Craig & Richeson, 2014), and media exposure (Barberá, 2015; Tucker et al., 2018). Our chapter will focus on the psychology and neuroscience of partisanship within these broader sociopolitical contexts. This will help reveal the roots of partisanship across political contexts.

4.1 The Psychological Roots of Partisanship

According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974), people are prone to form social groups (i.e., a collection of individuals who categorise themselves as similar to each other, but different from others, on some dimension) and develop a feeling of attachment towards these groups. Social identification often revolves around meaningful social categories (e.g., racial groups, religious groups), but can also be based on arbitrary social categorisations (termed ‘minimal groups’). For instance, people randomly classified as an ‘underestimator’ or ‘overestimator’ based on a bogus performance feedback were more likely to

allocate more resources to an anonymous in-group member than an anonymous out-group member (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel et al., 1971) and this pattern of in-group bias is mirrored in brain activity upon seeing fellow in-group members (Van Bavel et al., 2008). There is growing evidence that members of political groups harbour many of the tendencies inherent in social identity (Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018; Mason, 2018). In the domain of politics, these basic tendencies to identify with groups are amplified by competition for scarce resources (Sherif et al., 1955), different moral values (Graham et al., 2009; see Chapter 19), and intersections with other identities, such as national identity (Huddy, 2001), religion, and race (Pew Research Center, 2020). As such, social identity is a core feature of partisanship.

Recent research suggests that political group identity is represented similarly in the brain to more arbitrary group identities. For instance, Cikara and colleagues used multivoxel pattern analysis in functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to determine if partisan identities elicit similar patterns of activation in the brain to arbitrary group identities (Cikara et al., 2017). The researchers looked at brain activation as participants saw members of an arbitrary in-group (i.e., random teams they formed at the beginning of the experiment), as well as people who shared their political affiliations. When they examined the pattern of brain activation associated with thinking about an arbitrary group identity, they found that a similar pattern of brain activation was related to thinking about one's real-world political identity. This was driven by the recognition of in-group members (as opposed to out-group members) – mirroring classic research on in-group bias (Brewer, 1979, 1999). These findings suggest that arbitrary groups are represented in the brain similarly to partisan groups – providing the neural foundations of partisanship.

Partisanship motivates intergroup discrimination. For instance, a recent set of experiments found that avoidance and discrimination of partisan out-groups took precedence over personal benefits (Lelkes & Westwood, 2017). In one experiment, US partisans who identified as Republican or Democrat chose to work with a less competent partner who identified as Independent over a more competent partner of the opposite party, even though the task was entirely unrelated to politics (i.e., solving puzzles). In another experiment, partisans were willing to forgo financial gain if doing so would harm their political out-group (McConnell et al., 2018). Specifically, roughly 75% of partisans chose a \$3 bonus over a \$6 bonus that was yoked to an additional donation to a rival party (vs an impartial organisation). The effect size of partisanship on economic decisions was comparable to the effect of religious identity. These results suggest that partisanship mirrors other important social identities such that people are motivated to enhance the status of their political in-group and decrease that of their political out-group – even when it comes at their own expense.

Partisanship also influences judgements and biases punishments of moral transgressions analogous to other group identities. For instance, people punish in-group members less harshly than out-group members for non-cooperative behaviour (Anwar et al., 2012; Chen & Li, 2009; Goette et al., 2012; Yudkin et al., 2016). This same dynamic plays out in political contexts. For instance, Spaniards rated a corruption case as more serious when it implicated a politician from the opposing party than when it implicated a politician from their own party (Anduiza et al., 2013). Further, Ugandans were less likely to blame the government for poor services (e.g., health-care) in their local community when they were supporters (vs opponents) of the then incumbent president (Carlson, 2015). In other words,

political identity influences intergroup behaviour similarly to other social identities around the world.

4.2 The Biological Roots of Partisanship

In the last few decades, there has been a surge of interest in the effects of group membership on cognitive and biological processes with the goal of better understanding how these processes, in turn, contribute to parochialism, prejudice, and intergroup conflict (see Cikara & Van Bavel, 2014, for a review). Although the majority of this work has ignored partisanship *per se*, there are some important exceptions. In this section, we review recent work related to the biological foundations of partisanship.

Recent work suggests that physiological and psychological characteristics (including personality traits) are heritable, stable, and difficult to change, and so they must shape political dispositions, rather than the other way around (Hibbing et al., 2013; Jost et al., 2013). As such, the relationship between political attitudes and personality traits appears to be a function of an innate underlying genetic disposition (see Verhulst et al., 2012). For example, twin studies have found that genetic influences account for roughly 40% of the variation in political ideologies (Hatemi et al., 2014). These biological differences between people with different political views have also been observed in terms of grey matter volume differences in various brain structures (see Chawke & Kanai, 2016; Nam et al., 2018). This overarching pattern of results has led some to conclude, quite erroneously, that social and political outcomes (such as racism, political orientation, and partisanship) are ‘hard-wired’ (see Jost et al., 2014). We think this conclusion is premature and

misunderstands the relationship between the underlying biology and its interaction with the social and cultural context.

It is more accurate to say that social factors may shape the link between these ideological orientations and partisanship. Because identification with a political party is a voluntary process, people tend to be attracted to political parties that align with their ideology. Indeed, the relationship between political ideology and party identification is very high. However, this link can change over time. For instance, the correlation between conservative ideology in the USA and identification with the right-wing Republican Party has grown from a moderate correlation to a very strong one in the past few years (see Klein, 2020; Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018). The alignment with political ideology and partisan identity is likely to be especially high during periods of polarisation or when political systems are dominated by two competing groups because these factors can heighten partisan motives effective in creating a sense of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ (Hartstone & Augoustinos, 1995; Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018). It can also amplify partisan conflict since it becomes harder to find grounds for compromise when the members of opposing political parties possess different policy preferences and dispositions towards the world.

Another issue is that the tendency to identify with a group – or harbour in-group bias – is itself shaped by biology (see Chapter 3). For instance, research on twins suggests that genetics partially determines the tendency to affiliate with arbitrary groups and exists alongside essentialist tendencies that evolved to process salient cues, such as shared beliefs and ancestry (Lewis & Bates, 2010). Moreover, there appear to be independent genetic effects accounting for individual differences in in-group love (i.e., patriotism) and out-group

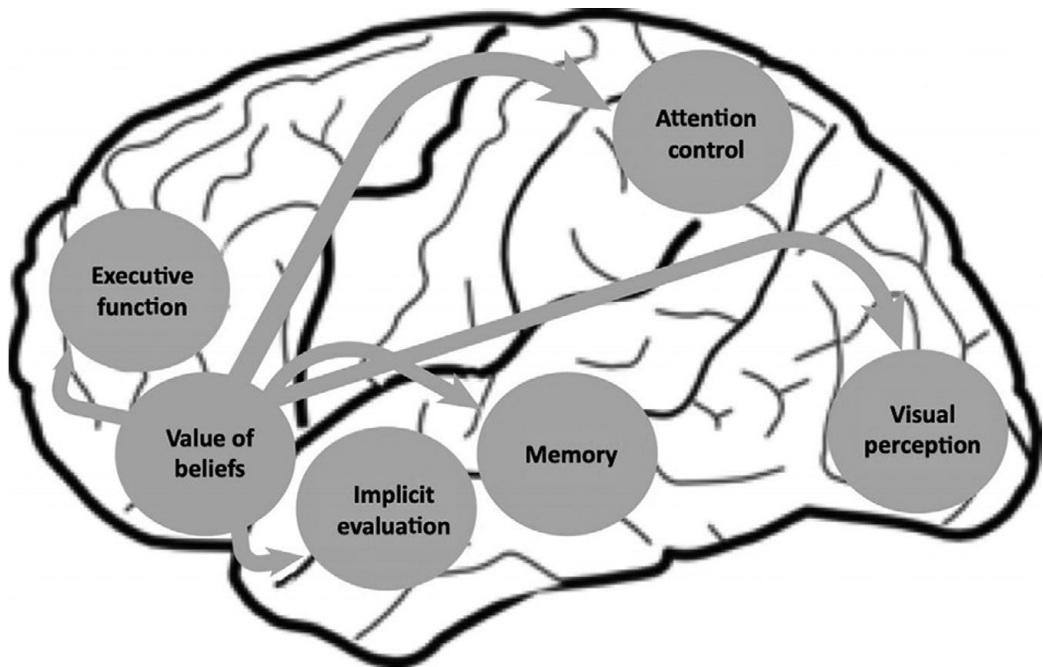
derogation (i.e., prejudice; Lewis et al., 2014). Thus, while forging coalitions and building group identities appears to be universal – since it has been observed in cultures studied around the world (Brown, 1991) – not everyone is equally group-ish. In short, some people might be more inclined to adopt partisan identities or engage in hyperpartisan beliefs.

In political domains, in-group favouritism may be intensified by a history of conflict and competition for limited resources (i.e., votes), differences in values and ideology, and the stereotypical exaggeration of actual differences (known as false polarisation; Wilson et al., 2020). As a result, it is hardly surprising that partisan affiliations influence how people evaluate political candidates and policies. In one of the first studies of neural correlates of political preferences, researchers examined implicit preferences of participants in relation to well-known Democratic and Republican politicians (Knutson et al., 2006). The researchers found a negative correlation between the participants' strength of partisan affiliation and their activation in the lateral prefrontal cortex (LPFC). The LPFC may serve to downregulate automatic association and valuations driven by activation in areas such as the ventral medial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC). Activation in the vmPFC, a part of the brain's core valuation system (Bartra et al., 2013), correlated with participants' valuations of politicians in this study (Knutson et al., 2006). Other neuroimaging studies have attempted to identify an overlap between the brain regions implicated in self-referential processing, such as the vmPFC (Kelley et al., 2002; Mitchell et al., 2006), and mentalising about political in-group members. A link between these areas could suggest overlap in processing of the self and of political in-group members. These studies have sparked a larger body of research designed to understand the

neuroscience of intergroup relations and partisanship (see Jost et al., 2014).

To better understand these neural component processes, we recently outlined several brain regions implicated in the processing of partisan information (Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018). When partisans encounter new or ambiguous information in the world, this information is often interpreted through the lens of that particularly social identity (see Xiao et al., 2016). We speculated that the orbitofrontal cortex (OFC) may be responsible for computing the value of competing goals: identity goals versus accuracy goals. This region allows highly identified partisans to prioritise the outcomes of in-group members and engage in cognition and action consistent with their identity goals. Such identity goals include the desire to belong in the group, obtain social status, and feel morally superior. The OFC has functional connections with other brain regions involved in reasoning (dorsolateral prefrontal cortex), memory (hippocampus), implicit evaluation (amygdala), and even perception (visual cortex; see Figure 4.1) – allowing partisan values to influence a variety of cognitive systems. Evidence from social and cognitive neuroscience suggests that these brain regions engage in distinct computations while generating evaluations. Thus, the impacts of partisanship may be dissociated at the neural level and underlie different forms of partisan bias.

Understanding these neural processes may be useful to promote an understanding for the complexity of the processes interacting to produce partisan cognition and beliefs (e.g., Figure 4.1). For instance, if an individual is engaged in motivated reasoning, then presenting them with additional factual information is unlikely to be of much value – they will either find a way to dismiss the source or counter-argue against the evidence. Many strategies



Trends in Cognitive Sciences

The Value of Beliefs Shapes Different Cognitive Processes. The identity-based model of belief assumes that partisan identities determine the value of different beliefs and can therefore distort belief at different states of cognitive processing, including **executive function**, attention control, memory, implicit evaluation (corresponding to the amygdala/hippocampus, not visible from this perspective), and visual perception. This cartoon roughly illustrates that these cognitive processes have dissociable neural substrates and can be treated as being functionally distinct. In practice, the functional relationships between different cognitive processes are often bidirectional.

Figure 4.1 The value of beliefs shapes different cognitive processes. *Source:* Van Bavel and Pereira (2018)

are unlikely to be effective if the source of the bias is unconscious because these processes unfold automatically, without motivation or cognitive capacity. Likewise, correcting distortions in memory will require deep and repeated engagement with the political content or effective cues for retrieval. Understanding the contribution of core valuation systems, memory and systems governing identity can help researchers to design interventions that take into account the processes involved, and therefore may be more effective. However, research into the neuroscience of partisanship and identity is in its infancy and in the current state of knowledge, policymakers and the

public should remain sceptical of neurally motivated attempts at reprogramming political or partisan beliefs.

4.3 Partisanship Affects Numerous Beliefs, Judgements, and Behaviours

Many studies investigate the effect of partisanship on various outcomes. In the current chapter, we focus on the effects of partisanship on beliefs generally, belief in misinformation, belief in conspiracy theories, and voting behaviour. The debates on the effects of partisanship on beliefs and reasoning have largely focused on several related questions: (1) How

does partisanship affect belief change in light of contradictory evidence? (2) Are information-processing biases similar across the ideological spectrum or particularly associated with one side of the political aisle? (3) Do partisan identities influence the belief and dissemination of misinformation? (4) Does partisanship influence substantive political behaviour?

4.3.1 Belief Perseverance and Belief Updating

When we process political information, people are influenced not only by the evidence itself, but also by our goals, including self, group, and system-serving goals (Jost et al., 2013; Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018). Indeed, extensive research suggests that individuals are motivated to process politically relevant information in a biased manner (e.g., Kahan et al., 2017; Meffert et al., 2006). Motivational models propose that when information is group identity-congruent yet untrue, our social identity motives conflict with our accuracy motivation. Whether we believe the information or not depends on the weights we give to these motivations which change across different contexts. Politically biased motivated cognition extends well beyond reasoning (Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018) and does not appear to be unique to the United States, with similar biases appearing in Brazil (Samuels & Zucco Jr., 2014) and Uganda (Carlson, 2016). Therefore, we believe this element of political cognition is nearly universal and is activated by the features of the local political environment (polarisation, election proximity, media coverage, discourse from political elites, etc.).

When faced with evidence that contradicts one's beliefs, practical rationality, and social norms, we expect a person to update or change the credence of those beliefs. Therefore, the finding that people maintain beliefs that have been discredited as complete falsehoods has

been studied by psychologists for over 50 years (e.g., Festinger et al., 1956; McGuire, 1964; Ross et al., 1975). Resistance to disconfirming evidence also extends to beliefs driven by partisan identity. For example, using large representative samples of voters, studies have found that people continued to believe statements that aligned with their partisan identity, despite those statements being labelled as false (Bullock, 2007). These partisan biases have now been observed in a wide variety of contexts and tasks with robust evidence of motivated reasoning across the political spectrum (Ditto et al., 2019; Mason, 2018; see also Chapter 26).

Belief perseverance – the failure to update in light of new evidence – is typically also interpreted in terms of a motivated cognition framework (Kunda, 1990; Taber & Lodge, 2006; Taber et al., 2001). Accordingly, cognition is affected by the agent's current motivations or goals. While many people have the goal to be accurate, cognitive scientists have argued that one of the most important goals for people is the communicative goal to convince *others* of one's position (Mercier & Sperber, 2011). Communicative goals can be manipulated to strengthen accuracy. For example, telling people they will publicly have to discuss their judgements leads them to process information more fairly (Tetlock, 1985). Importantly, goal selection is not only determined by external means, but also by goals associated with one's identity, which is a likely route for how partisanship affects one's beliefs and reasoning processes (Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018). These group identity-based goals motivate individuals to see their own party in a favourable light, which may weaken accuracy goals if the truth does not align with one's partisan identity or if their identity group does not embrace the norms of accuracy and objectivity (Van Bavel et al., 2020). This can be seen in how partisanship shapes beliefs about the

economy following a shift in political power, whereby people rapidly change their beliefs to bolster their identity (Gerber & Huber, 2010). However, it is important to distinguish between partisan cheerleading and actual differences in held beliefs. For example, incentivising people to respond accurately or giving them the option ‘don’t know’ to politically charged survey items (with a factual basis) largely erases partisan gaps in responses to many politicised questions (Bullock et al., 2015). This is why more objective measures of behaviour are necessary to determine if survey measures accurately reflect beliefs (e.g., Gollwitzer et al., 2020).

Other researchers approach the study of politically relevant information processing from a Bayesian updating framework (Coppock, 2016; Ripberger et al., 2017). The Bayesian framework posits that when agents come across a new piece of information, they use their prior knowledge (i.e., their ‘priors’) to create a probability distribution of its likelihood of being true, which results in an updated belief (i.e., the ‘posteriors’; McNamara & Houston, 1980). For example, when a liberal is more likely to believe that the conservative party’s leader committed a crime than the liberal party’s leader, this is not necessarily a biased response but a rational conclusion by the individual given their prior knowledge that they bring into the situation. This could, for example, include more awareness of transgressions committed by conservatives than by liberals, causing them to infer that the former is more likely (see Tappin et al., 2020).

The Bayesian approach is often contrasted with other forms of politically motivated reasoning and might account for what otherwise appears to be motivated reasoning. It is sometimes claimed that Bayesian reasoners, by necessity, must converge to the same opinion and exhibit symmetrical updating – that is, treat information from partisan sources

equally (see, for example, Bartels, 2002). However, this conception is incorrect and depends on how beliefs are modelled. More sophisticated models which assume that people also estimate the variance (certainty) of information they observe, and have priors about these, can achieve belief polarisation to the same observables under perfectly ‘rational’ Bayesian updating (Bullock, 2009; Gerber & Green, 1998). That said, we believe it is important to take accuracy and consistency into account when discussing ‘bias’ and rationality (Baron & Jost, 2019). If partisan ‘bias’ leads people to generate more accurate beliefs, then it is hard to call their judgement irrational. And if priors lead people to generate less accurate beliefs, then it is hard to call their judgement rational.

If one’s priors are affected by partisan cues and the reasoner’s identities, then the Bayesian approach may provide a powerful formalism for understanding and modelling the many psychological effects of partisanship. For example, there is an effect referred to as selective partisan exposure. Research suggests that partisans are more inclined to both select partisan-consistent information to read and read such information more deeply (e.g., Graf & Aday, 2008). Similarly, in the USA, there is a marked divide in the news sources that Democrats and Republicans choose to expose themselves to (Jurkowitz et al., 2020). Selective exposure is one likely cause of differing priors, fuelling ‘rational’ asymmetric updating. Attention is thought to play a large role in how humans and animals explore and decide (Gottlieb, 2018) and rational attention may explain partisan echo chambers and similar phenomena (Che & Mierendorff, 2019; see also Chapter 32). Researchers have also applied a Bayesian updating framework to multiple processes involving political information, such as perception of climate-related events (Ripberger et al., 2017), political persuasion

(Coppock, 2016), and the formation of partisan attitudes (Gerber & Green, 1998).

4.3.2 Partisan Symmetry Debate

A large part of the scholarly work on partisan biases is about whether they are observed symmetrically or asymmetrically (i.e., are they equally observed on the political left and right?) This question is largely explored in a US political context (e.g., see Chapter 41), bringing with it two consequences. First, due to the US two-party system, partisanship and ideology are often conflated. Second, the debate of whether partisanship affects cognition symmetrically or asymmetrically is often framed in terms of whether Republicans (conservatives) are more biased than Democrats (liberals), or if bias is bipartisan (affects Republicans and Democrats equally).

One highly influential hypothesis is that different self-identified partisan and ideological affinities are associated with varying degrees of bias and cognitive inflexibility. Results in this literature are highly mixed and likely dependent on the stimuli under consideration (see Harris & Van Bavel, 2021). Evidence for asymmetry has, however, been demonstrated in a wide range of apolitical contexts, where it is easier to make broader generalisations about asymmetry. For example, conservative participants explored novel stimuli less, likely due to emphasising negative events more during the learning phase (Shook & Fazio, 2009). Similarly, another study showed that Republican-leaning participants anchored their political belief updating more on prior irrelevant information compared to Democratic-leaning participants (Hornsby & Love, 2020). A large meta-analysis found that political conservatism was associated with, among other things, higher dogmatism, lower uncertainty tolerance, and lower openness to new experience (Jost et al., 2003). Other work has found

biases associated with liberalism, such as illusions of uniqueness (Stern et al., 2014). These suggest that there are robust, measurable differences in cognitive style between liberals and conservatives.

Other work has demonstrated a symmetry in the cognitive effects of partisanship and political extremism (see Chapter 26). Results from a composite measure of political beliefs, including voting behaviour and ideology, revealed that political extremism is associated with degraded metacognition (Rollwage et al., 2018), lower cognitive flexibility (Zmigrod et al., 2020), belief superiority, and dogmatism (Harris & Van Bavel, 2021; Toner et al., 2013). When participants receive false feedback about their own stated political attitudes, they did not correct the false feedback at different rates due to their degree of partisan involvement in both Swedish (Strandberg et al., 2018) and US samples (Strandberg et al., 2020). Similarly, a recent meta-analysis found that Democrats and Republicans were both more inclined to evaluate information more favourably when it aligns with their partisan identity (Ditto et al., 2019). Taken together, we believe there is good evidence for both symmetry and asymmetry in biased political cognition in different domains. As such, future theorising should move beyond the symmetry versus asymmetry debate, and focus on where and why each pattern is likely to be observed.

4.3.3 Misinformation

In 2017, ‘fake news’ was named the Collins Dictionary word of the year (Hunt, 2017). This dubious honour reflects the large impact fake news has had on economic, political, and social behaviour in recent years. Fake news is false information distributed as if it is real news, and it reflects one form of misinformation that is common in the political domain (see Van Bavel et al., in press for a review).

The influence of misinformation poses an existential threat to democracy because it confuses voters, fosters social conflict, undercuts trust in important institutions, and increases polarisation. Understanding what drives belief in misinformation is important, especially in a world where political polarisation is becoming more and more extreme (Pew Research Center, 2017). There is the concerning potential for a cycle in which political division feeds belief in partisan misinformation, and belief in partisan misinformation increases political division (as some analysts suggest is happening now; Sarlin, 2018). This vicious cycle activates the basic human capacity for partisanship and can foster social conflict.

This cycle now operates in a world where over 3 billion people have social media accounts and social media has become the main source of news for many (e.g., for approximately two-thirds of Americans; Shearer & Gottfried, 2017). This technological revolution makes it easier for partisans to create and distribute fake news, propaganda, conspiracy theories, and other forms of misinformation. Specifically, political fake news has become increasingly frequent, especially leading up to large political events. In fact, people engaged with ('liked', 'shared', etc.) fake news more than real news in the few months leading up to the 2016 US election (Silverman, 2016). Similarly, a recent analysis of rumours spread by over 3 million people online found that misinformation spread significantly more than truth – and the power of fake news was greatest for political content (Vosoughi et al., 2018). In recent years, the academic investigation of misinformation has grown rapidly. This body of work explores many potential factors that influence fake news belief, ranging from repetition of the fake news story (Fazio et al., 2019) to reduced analytic thinking (Bronstein et al., 2019).

One key factor in the belief and dissemination of misinformation appears to be partisanship. In one series of experiments, researchers found that Democrats were more likely to believe the negative fake news stories featuring Republican politicians (both known and unknown), whereas Republicans were more likely to believe negative fake news featuring Democratic politicians (Pereira et al., in press). This pattern existed across real news, actual fake news (from an online fake news source), and artificial fake news (stimuli created for the purpose of the experiment). A similar pattern of results was observed in partisans' willingness to share the fake news stories on social media. Along the same vein, when shown images of Obama's and Trump's inauguration crowds, Republicans were more likely to falsely believe that the image of Obama's crowd, which was objectively larger, was Trump's crowd as compared to Democrats (Schaffner & Luks, 2018). As such, partisanship can impede our ability to discern fake from true news and might motivate people to spread the news with their social network.

4.3.4 Conspiracy Theories

Partisanship is also linked to the belief in conspiracy theories, particularly those that directly respond to goals related to partisan identity (e.g., Duran et al., 2017; Edelson et al., 2017; Enders & Smallpage, 2018, 2019; Miller et al., 2016; Pasek et al., 2015; Smallpage et al., 2017; see Chapter 33). For instance, one study found that people believed more strongly in conspiracy theories that implied a political out-group was conspiring against them than groups without any political affiliation (e.g., Freemasons) (Smallpage et al., 2017). Similarly, Republicans (vs Democrats) were more likely to believe that Barack Obama was born outside of the United States, whereas

the reverse pattern occurred for the idea that the Bush administration breached the flood levees in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina (Enders et al., 2020). Such conspiracy theories are grounded in social identity needs and can be dangerous if they motivate people to engage in violence to defend themselves (see Sternisko et al., 2020).

While there seem to be ideological asymmetries in conspiracy theory beliefs (Van der Linden et al., 2020), there is evidence that partisan differences may primarily stem from social identity motives on both sides of the political spectrum, similar to that of general beliefs and fake news belief. In one study, researchers presented people with a conspiracy theory and varied whether it implicated the Obama or the Bush administration. They found that participants who identified as Republican were more likely to believe the conspiracy theory when it implied the Obama (vs Bush) administration as conspiring, whereas the reverse pattern occurred for participants who identified as Democrats (Enders & Smallpage, 2018). Further, a study conducted in Pakistan found that citizens were more likely to believe conspiracy theories when they were allegedly endorsed by the party they supported (Siddiqui, 2020). Exposure to partisan conspiracy theories often activates competing implicit motives – accuracy motives and social motives – simultaneously (Duran et al., 2017). Depending on which motive takes priority, people come to different conclusions about the conspiracy theory. In other words, conspiracy theory beliefs emerge when social identity motives take priority over accuracy motives.

Partisan differences in conspiracy theory beliefs and distrust of the government shift based on which party holds power (see Morisi et al., 2019; Uscinski & Parent, 2014). For example, party identification did not predict people's anticipation of voter fraud before the

2012 US presidential elections. However, after the election (won by Democrat Barack Obama), Republicans were more likely to believe that voter fraud had occurred (Edelson et al., 2017). Likewise, after the 2016 US presidential elections (won by Republican Donald Trump), beliefs in conspiracy theories, such as the idea that the USA was run by a shadow government, increased among Democrats, but decreased among Republicans (Miller et al., 2016). Similarly, during the 2004 Taiwanese presidential elections, conspiracy theories about the attacks on the candidate of the Democratic Progressive Party were very popular among party sympathisers before, but less so after, the party's electoral victory was announced (Nefes, 2014). Adopting conspiracy theories may therefore help to maintain a positive image of one's political in-group when externally challenged.

The relationship between partisanship and conspiracy theory beliefs has serious consequences for society (see Sternisko et al., 2020). For instance, entertaining political conspiracy theories increased participants' willingness to take violent political action (Imhoff et al., 2021). Further, conspiracy theories are linked to political polarisation. Correlational data from the Europe and the USA links belief in conspiracy theories to political extremism and radicalisation (Bartlett & Miller, 2010; Krouwel et al., 2017; Van der Linden et al., 2020; Van Prooijen et al., 2015). A recent real-world example may be the conspiracy theory that the COVID-19 pandemic was exaggerated or fabricated by Democrats to politically hurt the Trump administration. This theory gathered popularity among high-ranking Republicans and conservative media outlets (Hawkins, 2020), threatening to seriously impede the containment of the disease. It is therefore not surprising that Republicans are more likely to hold such conspiracy theories about the pandemic (Sternisko et al., 2020).

Partisanship can be a key facilitator of dangerous conspiracy theory beliefs.

4.3.5 Voting Behaviour

Voting in government elections is inextricably influenced by both political belief and partisan identity. In the USA, voter turnout is one of the lowest of all OECD countries; those who do vote are more likely to be partisans (DeSilver, 2017; Johnston, 2006). However, many of the factors that influence an individual's decision to vote (i.e., moral convictions, negative partisanship, identity concerns) do not match political ideology (Mayer, 2017; Skitka et al., 2005). Rather, the strength of partisan identity and party identification on either side of the ideological spectrum seems to have the most influence on voting behaviour. Strength of party identification predicts intentions to vote for both liberals and conservatives over their more moderate party-mates (Greene, 1999; Morgan et al., 2010). Those who do vote in elections tend to have greater polarisation of their political identities, and those who hold moderate views on politics are the least likely to vote (Bartels, 2000). Individuals are far more likely to vote with their party and their partisan identity, and this party loyalty has been increasing since the 1970s.

While voting in elections appears to be one of the strongest and most important methods of voicing political support, voting in government elections makes little pragmatic sense rationally speaking, as the statistical probability of a single person's ballot making a meaningful difference in an election result is vanishingly small (Downs, 1957). In fact, when the irrationality of voting was made salient to people, they were less likely to actually vote on Election Day when compared to control groups (Blais & Young, 1999). Therefore, people who do get out and vote are likely motivated by non-pragmatic concerns, such

as identity validation or expression. In support of this idea, one study incentivised people to accurately answer questions that either validated or threatened their partisan identity (Robbett & Matthews, 2018). Depending on the condition, however, people either had to give their responses as individuals, or they were asked to 'vote' on an answer with other participants, in groups of 5 or 25. When a question threatened participants' partisan identities, those who answered individually were able to get the right answer, but those whose answers were aggregated answered incorrectly, choosing instead to cast their vote for the answer that aligned with their ideological beliefs. In other words, this type of 'expressive voting' suggests that people's accuracy goals were outweighed by their identity goals, and this occurred most strongly when voting on an answer with others rather than answering as an individual. Taken together, these findings illuminate a possible mechanism for why those with stronger partisan identities are more likely to vote. Specifically, participating in general elections may serve less as an expression of actual desires and instead as a proxy for identity signalling and expressive voting.

4.4 Conclusion

A burgeoning literature suggests that partisanship is a form of social identity with interesting and wide-reaching implications for our brains and behaviour. In some ways, the effects of partisanship mirror those of other forms of group identity, both behaviourally and in the brain. However, partisanship also has interesting biological antecedents and effects in political domains such as belief in fake news and conspiracy theories, as well as voting behaviour. As political polarisation rises in many nations across the world, partisanship will become an increasingly divisive

and influential form of social identity in those countries, thus highlighting the urgency to understand its psychological and neural underpinnings.

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5 The Personality Basis of Political Preferences

Christopher M. Federico

Why do individuals differ in their political preferences? Answers to this question have often focused on the *social contexts* individuals find themselves living in. At the broadest level, people are assumed to adopt positions that reflect the interests, identity, or values of the groups they belong to (Mason, 2018) and to shift their beliefs in response to situations (e.g., recession or growing inequality) that arise at particular times. Political preferences are also generally thought to be learned in the context of various *social relationships*. One example of this is the tendency for people to acquire the political identities and preferences held by their parents (Jennings & Niemi, 1981; Sears & Levy, 2003) or others in their social networks (Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Newcomb, 1943). In the study of mass belief systems, an even more important example is the phenomenon of top-down ‘elite opinion leadership’ in which citizens who identify with particular parties or ideologies adopt the sets of beliefs and issue attitudes modelled by leaders who share their partisan and/or ideological affiliations (Converse, 1964; McClosky & Zaller, 1984; Zaller, 1992; see also Abramowitz, 2010; Levendusky, 2009).

Recently, researchers have pointed towards a different answer: the bottom-up consequences of personality differences. A burgeoning literature suggests that individual differences in

psychological traits, needs, and motives reliably predict variance in political preferences (e.g., Federico & Malka, 2018; Gerber et al., 2011; Hibbing et al., 2014; Jost, 2017; Jost et al., 2003, 2009; Mondak, 2010). As we shall see, a core finding is that individuals with traits that lead them to prefer certainty, security, and simplicity lean towards the right, whereas those whose traits are more tolerant of uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity lean towards the left (Federico, 2015; Hibbing et al., 2014; Jost et al., 2003, 2009, 2013).

This key pattern has led many observers to characterise the interface between personality and politics in terms of a ‘rigidity of the right’ model (Malka et al., 2017). Though this captures an important element of what the literature on personality and politics can tell us, recent work suggests a more nuanced picture. In this chapter, I review current research on the relationship between personality and political preferences, with an eye to its complexities and the ways in which it is conditioned on other variables – including the contextual factors mentioned at the outset. To provide context, I briefly review research on the structure of political preferences. Next, I summarise a now-substantial body of work suggesting a relationship between rigidity in personality and right-wing political preferences, and then describe moderators of and boundary conditions to this relationship. Finally, in an effort to reconcile increasingly varied findings on political differences in cognition and motivation, I offer an integrative perspective on when the relationship between

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rigidity and political differences will be ideologically asymmetric and when it will be symmetric.

5.1 The Structure of Political Preferences

5.1.1 The Left-Right Dimension

In making sense of the relationship between personality and politics, it is first necessary to look at how political preferences are themselves organised (see Chapter 6 of this volume for a more thorough review). The most-common organising principle is the *left-right* ideological dimension (Jost et al., 2009). This dimension discursively organises preferences around a conflict between left-wing preferences for greater equality and change and right-wing preferences for greater social hierarchy and less social change (Bobbio, 1996; Federico, 2015; Jost et al., 2003; Lipset, 1960). The left-right divide structures political conflict in many nations (Benoit & Laver, 2006; Kitschelt et al., 2010; Knight, 1999; McCarty et al., 2006). At the same time, it may have limited reach as an organising principle in mass publics (Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017). Research suggests that most citizens do not fully understand or think in terms of the left-right distinction and do not hold ideologically consistent issue positions (Baldassari & Gelman, 2008; Converse, 1964; Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017). Though the left-right divide organises the preferences of political elites (at least in Western nations; see Malka et al., 2019), it shapes the views of everyday citizens mainly among the relatively few who are interested in and informed enough to absorb elite cues about ‘what goes with what’ ideologically (Converse, 1964; Federico, 2015; Sniderman et al., 1991; Zaller, 1992). From this perspective, ideology in the left-right sense is not wholly intrinsic to how humans think about politics. Rather, it is socially constructed by

competing political leaders who do the creative work of assembling different values, beliefs, and positions into ideological packages (Converse, 1964; Noel, 2013; Sniderman & Bullock, 2004), and it diffuses (only partially) to the mass public in a top-down fashion.

5.1.2 Multidimensional Models of Political Preferences

Though the left-right dimension has somewhat limited reach, political preferences have some level of bottom-up psychological structure. Research suggests that attitudes are structured by two spontaneously emergent (but not always correlated) value dimensions corresponding to (1) preferences for less versus more equality and (2) preferences for tradition and order versus openness to change and cultural diversity (Braithwaite, 1997; Duckitt, 2001; Schwartz, 1992; Stangor & Leary, 2006). This bidimensional structure is mirrored in research suggesting that attitudes towards economic issues (e.g., redistribution) and towards social issues (e.g., immigration) reflect separate dimensions (Carmines et al., 2012; Feldman & Johnston, 2014; Fleishman, 1988; Knoke, 1979; Shafer & Claggett, 1995; Treier & Hillygus, 2009). Reinforcing the functional relevance of the two value dimensions, the economic dimension is more strongly linked to preferences regarding equality, whereas the social dimension is more closely tied to preferences regarding tradition versus change (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). Preferences on each of these two dimensions appear to have unique personality correlates as well, suggesting a partial psychological basis for attitude coherence *within* the economic and social domains (Federico & Malka, 2018).

The nature of the correlation between these two dimensions varies across political contexts and individuals (Malka et al., 2019; Petersen, 2015). In some nations, the traditional left-right organisation of the dimensions prevails (e.g., Western Europe and the United States;

Malka et al., 2019), especially among political elites and members of the mass public who are attentive to elite discourse that packages right-wing economic views with cultural conservatism (Feldman & Johnston, 2014; Jennings, 1992; Layman & Carsey, 2002). At the same time, the left-right pattern of constraint is relatively uncommon at the global level; if anything, there are more nations in which right-wing economic views correlate slightly *negatively* with cultural conservatism than nations where left-right constraint prevails (Malka et al., 2019).

In sum, findings suggest that sociopolitical attitudes are psychologically organised into two basic content dimensions, as opposed to being strictly unidimensional in the left-right sense. To the extent that the traditional left-right organisation of preferences across the two dimensions prevails, it is because political elites in a given context package left-wing (versus right-wing) positions in one domain together with left-wing (versus right-wing) positions in other domains and provide mass publics with clear cues about what belongs with what. As later sections of this chapter will suggest, the multidimensional nature of political preferences is crucial for understanding how different kinds of personality characteristics relate to different kinds of political attitudes.

5.2 'Rigidity' in Personality and Left-Right Differences

Research on the link between personality and political preferences has a long history in the social and behavioural sciences (Jost et al., 2009). Sociologists like Max Weber noted early on that different kinds of people were attracted to different political positions (Weber, 1948; see also Gerth & Mills, 1953; Lasswell, 1948), and the rise of totalitarianism in the 20th century inspired many to examine the traits that attract people to different world

views and movements. The first wave of research on personality and politics focused especially on isolating the traits that predisposed individuals to fascist and racist ideologies (Adorno et al., 1949; Allport, 1954; see also Chapters 11 and 12) or general ideological extremism (Eysenck, 1954; Lipset, 1960; Rokeach, 1960; see also Chapter 26), but it also examined the antecedents of left-right variation among non-extremists (McClosky, 1958; Tomkins, 1963; Wilson, 1973).

After lying fallow for some time, this area of research was reinvented near the beginning of this century and remains an active topic of inquiry (Jost et al., 2003, 2009). Though there are a variety of needs, traits, and motives that predict political preferences, both past and present work on personality and politics has focused heavily on dispositions related to *existential concerns* about security and safety in the face of threat and *epistemic concerns* about attaining certainty and closure (Federico & Malka, 2018; Jost, 2017; Jost et al., 2003, 2009, 2013). On the dependent-variable side, this literature typically focuses on simple left-right differences in preferences. Its key take-home message is that individuals whose traits incline them to more (versus less) strongly emphasise security and certainty are more likely to hold right-wing (versus left-wing) preferences (Federico, 2015). In other words, it suggests an association between 'rigidity' in personality (i.e., strong needs for security and certainty) and conservatism – the so-called *rigidity-of-the-right* pattern (Malka et al., 2017).

On the independent-variable side, a number of individual psychological differences have been highlighted (see Federico & Malka, 2018; and Jost, 2017, for reviews). For example, among traits related to existential needs for security and safety, perhaps the oldest and most theoretically important is *authoritarianism* (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1998; Duckitt,

2001). Authoritarianism is a tendency to value deference to group authority and conventional in-group norms, along with a propensity to respond with hostility to those who depart from said norms (Altemeyer, 1998; see also Duckitt & Bizumic, 2013; Stenner, 2005; Chapter 11). Individuals who are high in authoritarianism are especially sensitive to threat and danger (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010; Feldman, 2003; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009; Lavine et al., 1999, 2002), and they gravitate towards conservatism in an effort to seek the clarity and security provided by established forms of political order (Federico et al., 2011; Federico et al., 2009; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009; Jost et al., 2009).

Similarly, among traits related to epistemic needs for certainty and clarity, a key construct is the *need for cognitive closure* (Jost et al., 2003, 2009). Individuals with a high need for closure avoid uncertainty by ‘seizing’ more strongly on available information to reach firm conclusions about the world and by ‘freezing’ on those conclusions even when faced with contrary information (Kruglanski, 2004; Kruglanski et al., 2006; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). A high (versus low) need for closure consistently predicts right-leaning (versus left-leaning) political preferences, both in terms of identification (e.g., partisanship and ideology) and social-issue positions (Federico et al., 2012; Federico & Goren, 2009; Jost et al., 2003; Van Hiel et al., 2004, 2010).

Analogous patterns have been found for general dimensions of personality linked to rigidity (McCrae, 1996). In this vein, two factors from the ‘Big Five’ model of personality – *Conscientiousness* and *Openness to Experience* – have especially robust relationships with political preferences, and both of them include content that is relevant to needs for security and certainty. Conscientiousness reflects an inclination towards self-discipline and attention to duty (i.e., motives which seek

to avoid insecurity by stabilising social relations), whereas Openness to Experience incorporates a comfort with novelty and aesthetic complexity that implies stronger tolerance of uncertainty (McCrae & Costa, 2003). Consistent with the content of each trait, Conscientiousness predicts right-wing political preferences, while Openness to Experience predicts relatively liberal preferences (e.g., Carney et al., 2008; Gerber et al., 2010, 2011; Mondak, 2010).

Finally, the rigidity-of-the-right pattern emerges in research on values and moral intuition (Goren, 2012; Haidt, 2012). For example, Schwartz’s (1992) influential model of human values identifies a set of *conservation values* (i.e., tradition, conformity, and security) and a functionally opposed set of *openness values* (i.e., stimulation and self-direction). A preference for conservation values over openness values in this model reflects a concern for security and certainty over social exploration and change (Malka et al., 2014). More importantly, preferring conservation over openness reliably predicts conservatism (Caprara et al., 2006; Goren, 2012; Malka et al., 2014; Schwartz, 2007; Thorisdottir et al., 2007). Similarly, individuals who prioritise *binding moral concerns* linked to in-group loyalty, respect for authority, and the maintenance of moral purity – all of which reflect a desire for the security and certainty provided by cohesive social relations – are more likely to adopt conservative political identities and socially conservative issue positions (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt, 2012; Koleva et al., 2012).

These patterns for specific rigidity-linked psychological constructs are reinforced by meta-analytic examinations of the literature on relationships between existential and epistemic variables and political preferences (Jost, 2017). In the case of existential variables, Jost, Stern, et al. (2017) aggregated findings from 134 studies incorporating 369,525

individual observations and found modestly sized correlations between sensitivity to and awareness of fear and threat and right-wing preferences. Similarly, in the case of epistemic variables, Jost, Sterling, and Stern (2017) examined data from 181 samples incorporating 133,796 individual observations. They found reliable links between the need for closure, the need for structure, intolerance of ambiguity, and rigidity, and right-wing preferences (on one hand) and between integrative complexity, stronger inclinations to analytic thinking, a high need for cognition, and greater uncertainty tolerance and left-leaning preferences (on the other hand). In sum, individuals with more-rigid personalities tend to lean to the right politically, whereas those with less-rigid personalities often lean to the left.

5.3 Is Rigidity in Personality Always Associated with Right-Wing Preferences?

Though the rigidity-of-the-right pattern is prominently emphasised in both academic (Jost, 2017) and popular (Mooney, 2012) synopses of research on personality and politics, recent work suggests a more complex picture of how traits related to rigidity correlate with political preferences. In this vein, studies increasingly suggest that the relationship between needs for security and certainty and political preferences is subject to a number of boundary conditions. In this section, I review three of these conditions: *ideological domain*, *discursive context*, and *type of personality measure*.

5.3.1 Ideological Domain

As noted above, political preferences cannot always be characterised in terms of a simple left-right divide. While unidimensional left-right ideological constraint is rare, there is evidence that political attitudes and beliefs exhibit a two-dimensional structure corresponding to economic preferences and sociocultural preferences (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). Importantly, most research in this area suggests that traits indicative of needs for security and certainty are more strongly and consistently related to right-wing preferences in the sociocultural domain than in the economic domain (Federico, Johnston, & Lavine, 2014; Johnston et al., 2017; Malka & Soto, 2015; for a review, see Federico & Malka, 2018). This difference across ideological domains is found with respect to numerous rigidity-related traits, including authoritarianism (e.g., Cizmar et al. 2014; Federico et al., 2011; Feldman & Johnston, 2014), need for closure (e.g., Chirumbolo et al., 2004; Federico, Ergun, & Hunt, 2014; Kossowska & Van Hiel, 2003; Van Hiel et al., 2004; Yilmaz & Saribay, 2016), and support for conservation versus openness values (Duckitt, 2001; Duriez et al., 2005; Malka et al., 2014). The Conscientiousness and Openness dimensions of the Big Five also appear to be more strongly related to sociocultural attitudes than economic ones, though the pattern is less clear-cut in this case (Carney et al., 2008; Mondak, 2010; but see Clifford et al., 2015).¹

What accounts for this asymmetry? One factor is the difficulty of the judgements demanded in each domain (Carmines & Stimson, 1980). In this respect, social issues are relatively 'easy' to form opinions about, given the symbolic, emotive nature of issues relating to traditional morality, religion, and ethnic and national identity (Malka & Soto, 2015). Economic issues, in contrast, are 'hard' issues. They deal with technical matters that

¹ For differing perspectives on the limits to this pattern of asymmetry, see Federico and Malka (2018) and Jost, Sterling, and Stern (2017); see also Azevedo et al. (2019) and Hennes et al. (2012).

many citizens do not have a firm grasp on, and they often do not have a clear symbolic meaning apart from the ones imparted to them by political leaders (Johnston & Wronski, 2015). While one can draw a clear, intuitive link between needs for security and certainty and the preservation of traditional values, beliefs, and identities in the social domain, the same is not true with respect to judgements about redistribution and government intervention in the economic domain (Johnston et al., 2017). A second, related factor has to do with the unique characteristics of opinion formation in the economic realm. As I discuss in more detail in Section 5.3.2, a growing body of research suggests that the relationship between rigidity in personality and preferences in the economic domain may vary in some nations as a function of political engagement, such that needs for security and certainty are associated with right-wing economic views among those high in political engagement and left-wing economic views among those low in engagement (Federico & Malka, 2018). These opposing effects cancel out in full samples, leading to a weaker zero-order relationship between rigidity and economic preferences.

If the relationship between rigidity and economic preferences is weak and inconsistent, then are there meaningful personality correlates of preferences in the economic realm? Among other things, the dual-process model of ideology and prejudice suggests that attitudes in the economic and sociocultural domains may have different motivational bases (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). Whereas conservative sociocultural preferences are driven by needs for security and certainty in social life, right-wing economic preferences are driven by a need to establish competitive dominance. Thus, right-wing economic preferences should be associated with traits reflecting dominance, competitiveness, and tough-mindedness (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). Consistent with this

prediction, studies suggest that individuals who score low on the Agreeableness dimension of the Big Five – who are less inclined to prosocial behaviour – are more likely to hold right-wing economic attitudes (Bakker, 2017; Bardeen & Michel, 2019; Gerber et al., 2010). Similarly, individuals who are prone to anger (an emotion associated with self-enhancement goals) are more economically right-wing, a relationship that is mediated by competitiveness (Kettle & Salerno, 2017). Finally, dispositional sadism is associated with right-wing economic preferences, as in the trait of Machiavellianism (especially those who are low in social conservatism in the latter case; Bardeen & Michel, 2019).

5.3.2 Discursive Context

Much of the literature on personality and politics has assumed that the ‘elective affinities’ linking psychological traits and motives to different political orientations are intuitively obvious to the average person (e.g., Jost, 2006; Jost et al., 2003). This may be relatively true of the relationship between rigidity and social conservatism; there is a clear conceptual kinship between desires for security and certainty and traditional values and conventional norms (Johnston et al., 2017; Malka & Soto, 2015). However, research suggests that the symbolic meanings of other kinds of preferences are less intuitively clear and must be socially constructed to a greater extent in the context of discourse in specific political contexts (Federico, 2020; Federico & Malka, 2018). This is the case not only for economic preferences, but also for broad affinities like partisanship and ideology.

In this vein, even if they reliably correlate with trait dimensions common to all humans, ‘ideologies are not facts of nature’ (Federico & Malka, 2018, p. 23). Ideological belief systems do not arise on the basis of inherent logical consistency between the sets of positions

associated with labels like liberalism, conservatism, or socialism (Converse, 1964). Moreover, the symbolic reputations and agendas of different parties are not givens. Rather, ideologies and partisan affiliations acquire much of their content and meaning from the histories of the societies in which they exist – and from the creative discursive activity of a relative narrow spectrum of ‘political elites’ (i.e., party leaders, elected officials, and pundits; Campbell et al., 1960; Kinder, 1998; Zaller, 1992; see also Noel, 2013). The same is true for preferences in ‘harder’ issue domains like economics (Johnston et al., 2017). Thus, the extent to which rigid traits predict various political positions may also depend on how well the meanings those positions acquire in specific discursive contexts align with individual needs for security and certainty.

This is illustrated by cross-cultural differences in the relationship between needs for security and certainty and political identity (see Federico & Malka, 2018, for a review). Though traits related to needs for security and certainty are reliably associated with right-wing ideological identification in Western nations where the ‘left’ has historically been associated with social change (Jost et al., 2003), this pattern disappears or even reverses in post-communist nations with relatively recent histories of governance by authoritarian-left parties that emphasised both economic security and social conformity. In these nations, the left as well as the right can claim the symbolism of ‘tradition’ and order, resulting in a pattern where rigidity is unrelated to ideology or associated with a preference for the left. This pattern has been found with respect to a number of variables, including desires for security, order, and conformity (Malka et al., 2014, 2019; Piurko et al., 2011; Schwartz et al., 2014; Thorisdottir et al., 2007), need for closure (Kossowska & Van Hiel, 2003), and low Openness to Experience (Roets et al., 2014).

Similar cross-cultural differences appear when comparing nations where the alignment of the economic and social dimensions of ideology differs. Not all political cultures reliably package social conservatism together with right-wing economic preferences (Malka et al., 2019). The two dimensions are more likely to align not only outside the post-communist world, but also in nations that are high in economic development. In the latter countries, basic material survival is less of an issue, allowing a relaxation of traditional social restraints (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). This liberalisation is resisted more strongly by political factions with relatively conservative positions on other issues, leading to an alignment of economic and social conservatism in wealthier countries (Benoit & Laver, 2006; Lefkofridi et al., 2014). Given the strong intuitive link between needs for security and certainty and social conservatism, the grafting of social-issue differences onto existing divides makes it easier for individuals varying in dispositional rigidity to sort into different ideological and partisan camps in these nations. As a result, needs for security and certainty predict conservative identification more strongly in highly developed nations where sociocultural preferences have become a more visible topic of disagreement among ideologically opposed elites and parties (Federico & Malka, 2018; Malka et al., 2014, 2019). Parallel results have been found for the relationship between authoritarianism and partisanship and voting in the United States, where authoritarianism has become more strongly predictive of support for the (conservative) Republican Party and its candidates as the Democratic and Republican parties have diverged in their views on sociocultural issues (Cizmar et al., 2014; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009).

Even within single nations, citizens vary in the extent to which they receive signals about (1) the symbolic reputations of different

ideological labels and parties and (2) 'what goes with what' politically (Converse, 1964; Federico, 2015). The menu of political options on offer in any society and the content associated with those menu options are predominantly the work of political elites (Sniderman & Bullock, 2004), but not all members of the mass public pay attention to what those elites have to say. Some citizens are politically informed and interested enough to learn what it means to identify with a specific party or ideological label (Converse, 1964; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Kalmoe, 2020; Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017; Sniderman et al., 1991) and to care what their preferences say about who they are (Kahan, 2015). But many are not. This implies that rigidity in personality may predict political preferences more strongly among those aware of enough of elite political discourse to know how well different stances align with their underlying traits.

Consistent with this prediction, a wide variety of studies suggest that high (versus low) dispositional needs for security and certainty are more strongly related to conservative (versus left-wing) political preferences among those high in political engagement. This is especially the case with respect to broad political identifications like ideological and party identification, at least in nations where political elites and parties differ in the sociocultural views that are most strongly associated with rigidity-related traits (Federico, 2020; Federico & Malka, 2018). This pattern has been demonstrated for the relationships between authoritarianism and identification with the Republican Party in the United States (Federico & Reifen Tagar, 2014; Johnston et al., 2017) and authoritarianism and ideology (Federico et al., 2009; Johnston et al., 2017). Similar patterns have been found for partisanship and ideology with respect to the need for closure (Federico & Goren, 2009; Johnston et al., 2017; see also Federico &

Ekstrom, 2018), endorsement of conservation (versus openness) values and binding moral concerns (Johnston et al., 2017; Malka et al., 2014, 2019), and the Openness to Experience and Conscientious dimensions of the Big Five (Johnston et al., 2017; Osborne & Sibley, 2012, 2015).

This moderating effect of political engagement takes an especially interesting form with respect to economic preferences. As noted previously, zero-order relationships between rigidity and economic preferences tend to be weak and/or inconsistent (Johnston et al., 2017). Recent work suggests that this is because the direction of the relationship between needs for security and certainty and economic attitudes *reverses* across engagement levels, with the opposing effects cancelling each other out at the population level. Recall that economic issues tend to be 'hard' issues, with technical content that does not connect as easily with existential and epistemic needs as social issues do. This means that economic matters can more easily be assigned a symbolic or ideological meaning by political elites. In Western nations, support for redistribution and government intervention has historically been framed as 'left-wing' and congruent with a desire for social change, whereas free-market positions have represented the 'conservative' status quo (Malka et al., 2019). For this reason, we might expect those high in rigidity to support right-wing free-market positions in economics. However, this is most likely to be the case among those high in political engagement, who are most likely to have received elite signals that define market-oriented positions as 'conservative'. Among those low in engagement, this pattern should reverse. These individuals are less likely to have absorbed elite signals defining redistribution and government intervention as 'left-wing' or contrary to established ways of organising social life. Without these symbolic cues, left-wing

economic policies may be seen as a form of *protection* against economic exploitation and unavoidable risks. As a result, needs for security and certainty should (if anything) predict left-leaning economic preferences among the less-engaged.

A growing body of evidence provides support for this *reversal hypothesis*. In multiple American samples, Johnston et al. (2017) find support for it with respect to several variables indicative of trait rigidity, including authoritarianism, need for closure, dispositional risk aversion, conservation versus openness values, and the Openness and Conscientiousness dimensions of the Big Five. Among those high in engagement, needs for security and certainty were associated with right-wing economic preferences; among those low in engagement, needs for security and certainty were more often associated with left-wing economic preferences. Using cross-national data from 51 nations examined as part of the World Values Survey, Malka et al. (2014) replicate this pattern, finding that individuals who favoured conservation over openness values were more likely to hold right-wing economic positions if they were high in political interest and left-wing economic positions if they were low in political interest.

Consistent with the argument that the reversal effect depends on how economic positions are ideologically packaged by leaders, it is found only in political contexts where left-wing economic preferences for greater redistribution and government intervention are conventionally regarded as a challenge to the status quo and where they are packaged together with socially liberal positions. In this vein, the reversal effect is weaker in post-communist nations (where communism was the status quo for a long time) and nations where elites do not consistently pair left-wing economics with social liberalism (Malka et al., 2014, 2019). Similarly, Czarnek and Kossowska (2019) find

that the reversal effect is weaker in nations where high levels of welfare provision by the state are normative and unlikely to be seen as a challenge to the status quo even among engaged citizens with high needs for security and certainty (e.g., in Nordic and Eastern European nations).

5.3.3 Type of Personality Measure

The observed relationship between trait rigidity and political preferences also varies as a function of whether personality is assessed using *subjective* or *objective* measures. Subjective measures rely on self-reports and require respondents to explicitly indicate how well various declarative statements describe them (e.g., ‘I don’t like situations that are uncertain’; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), whereas objective measures of rigidity rely on behavioural responses to tasks aimed at assessing flexible, integrative responses to various stimuli (Van Hiel et al., 2010). In a series of meta-analyses, Van Hiel and colleagues (Van Hiel et al., 2010, 2016) find that subjective self-report measures of rigidity are more strongly related to right-wing political preferences than objective behavioural measures are. This finding is reinforced by recent large-N studies that have failed to find reliable correlations between objective physiological measures of threat sensitivity and political conservatism (e.g., Bakker et al., 2020; Osmundsen et al., in press; Smith & Warren, 2020), shedding doubt on earlier findings that had suggested such a relationship (Oxley et al., 2008).

What is the reason for this asymmetry between subjective and objective measures? One possibility is that objective measures of rigidity and standard measures of political attitudes may elicit responses that are relatively unmatched in terms of compatibility (Federico, 2020). Subjective measures – like most self-report measures of political

preferences – present respondents with semantic, evaluatively laden content with which they must explicitly agree or disagree. Objective measures, in contrast, usually take the form of tests or tasks that require introspection or an explicit evaluative judgement (Van Hiel et al., 2016). Given that subjective measures of needs for security and certainty and most self-report measures of political attitudes are similar in their reliance on explicit semantic judgements, it may simply be easier for people to connect self-perceptions of personality to self-perceptions about one's political preferences, especially if they regard their political attitudes, values, and beliefs as an important part of the self-concept (Federico & Ekstrom, 2018). However, another explanation centres on the lower reliability of objective psychological measures compared to self-reports. Whereas subjective measures of personality are usually designed to maximise between-person variance and minimise within-person variance across situations, the opposite is true of objective measures (which are usually designed to detect changes resulting from experimental manipulations; see Dang et al., 2020). Since the reliability of a measure increases with its ability to tap between-person differences, this difference typically reduces the reliability of objective measures compared to subjective ones. In turn, this reliability difference may attenuate the correlation between objective measures and other constructs (such as political preferences). Whatever its cause, the objective/subjective asymmetry requires further study.

5.4 The Limits of Ideological Asymmetry

Thus far, this chapter has painted a fairly *asymmetric* picture of the relationship between rigidity and political preferences. This focus on the 'rigidity of the right' is not without

justification: even with the qualifications described above, a great deal of research indicates that traits related to rigidity are more likely to be found among those with right-wing political preferences (Jost, 2017). That said, other lines of work suggest that the relationship between some forms of psychological rigidity and political preferences may be symmetric rather than asymmetric – and that rigid, defensive, or intolerant behaviour in the context of politics may not always boil down to differences in traits. Importantly, most of the research reviewed in this chapter has focused on *dispositional* rigidity – that is, stable, global individual differences in needs for security and certainty (Federico, 2020; Federico & Malka, 2018). However, rigidity can be *situational* as well as dispositional: it may manifest itself as a contextual *reaction* to perceived challenges to one's political identities or attitudes (Brandt & Crawford, 2020; Harper, 2020). Rather than being stable individual differences, rigidities of this sort can be thought of as the *result* of holding self-relevant political commitments (Federico, 2020).

A careful look at emerging findings suggests that the ideological-asymmetry model may be most applicable to the relationship between dispositional rigidity and political preferences, whereas the relationship between situational forms of rigidity and political preferences may be more symmetric in nature (Ditto et al., 2019; Federico, 2020; Harper, 2020). In this vein, there is considerable evidence that individuals on both the left and the right are motivated to 'rigidly' defend their political commitments and view the political world in a 'rigid' us-versus-them fashion (see Chapter 26). For example, an extensive programme of research on world-view conflict suggests that both liberal and conservative identifiers show greater prejudice towards those in political out-groups (see Brandt & Crawford, 2020, for a review; see also van

Prooijen & Krouwel, 2017; van Prooijen et al., 2015). Moreover, recent meta-analytic work indicates that individuals with ideological and partisan commitments on both sides of the spectrum exhibit motivated reasoning in defence of their world views when challenged (Ditto et al., 2019; see also Cohen, 2003; Washburn & Skitka, 2017) – a tendency that might even increase with knowledge (Kahan, 2015). Similarly, both conservatives and liberals avoid opinions that diverge from their own (Collins et al., 2017; Frimer et al., 2017; but see Nam et al., 2013, and Rodriguez et al., 2017, for evidence that this tendency is somewhat stronger on the right).

This symmetry extends to other forms of motivated rigidity as well. Extremists of both the right and left tend to be overconfident. Compared to those with more moderate views, those with extreme opinions are more likely to claim knowledge that they do not actually possess (van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2019) and to prefer simple solutions to problems and feel more judgemental certainty about those solutions (van Prooijen et al., 2018). Finally, both right and left extremists are more likely to cognitively represent the political world in a simple, undifferentiated fashion. This pattern can be seen as far back as Tetlock's (1984) classic work on integrative complexity in the political reasoning of ideologically diverse British parliamentarians, and it is reinforced by recent results suggesting that individuals on both extremes of the political spectrum are more likely to rigidly categorise political stimuli (Lammers et al., 2017).

Thus, when rigidity is conceptualised as a defensive outcome of holding a particular set of political commitments, ideological symmetry often prevails. Given that politics is organised around social identity and competition between identity groups, we should not be surprised by this (Huddy, 2001). As social identity theory has long emphasised, group

identities become an important part of the self, motivating group members to see the in-group in the most positive terms possible (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). These social identity processes are central to identifications like partisanship and ideology (e.g., Green et al., 2002; Mason, 2018; Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018; see also Campbell et al., 1960; Kahan, 2015). Similarly, there is abundant evidence that other kinds of preferences that become central to the self (beyond social identities) are defended more strongly in the face of attack (e.g., Krosnick, 1988; Kunda, 1990; Lodge & Taber, 2013). There is no reason to expect that these motivations will operate on only one side of the political spectrum – even if there are left-right differences in *dispositional* rigidity (Cohen, 2003; Huddy et al., 2015). Indeed, crystallised political identities may even condition the effect of dispositional needs for security and certainty. Once a particular political identity has become an important part of the self, evidence suggests that trait measures of need for closure and cognitive inflexibility are associated with greater strength of partisan identification among members of parties on both the right and the left (Luttig, 2018; Zmigrod et al., 2020).

The possibility that social-identity processes and motivated-reasoning tendencies may elicit political symmetries in situational rigidity alongside equally significant asymmetries in dispositional needs for security and certainty points raises another important question: can all observed political asymmetries in rigidity be chalked up to underlying personality differences? Though this is often implied (Mooney, 2012), it has only rarely been tested. One recent exception is a study by Eichmeier and Stenhouse (2019) who examined the relationships between various dispositional measures of rigidity, partisanship, and the extent to which respondents dismissed the strength of evidence opposed to their issue positions.

Confirming the usual ideological-asymmetry finding, their results indicated that individuals high in dispositional rigidity were more likely to identify as Republicans (versus Democrats). However, they also found that these differences in dispositional rigidity explained little of the partisan divergence in ratings of the strength of counter-attitudinal messages. Though the question requires further investigation, this finding reinforces the aforementioned distinction between dispositional and situational variance in rigidity, and it also implies a need to be cautious about attributing political asymmetries in rigidity solely to personality differences.

5.5 Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, I have provided an overview and integration of various strands of research on the connection between personality and political preferences. As we have seen, a core finding in this literature is that personality traits indicative of rigidity are associated with right-wing preferences. However, a careful examination of this burgeoning literature suggests that the personality/politics nexus cannot simply be boiled down to this rigidity-of-the-right finding. The structure of political preferences is complex, and not all individuals have views that can be characterised in simple left-right terms. Belief systems also vary considerably as a function of both culture and level of attention to elite political signals (Federico & Malka, 2018). In turn, the link between 'rigid' personality traits varies across issue domain, political cultures, and political engagement. In addition, not all individual differences in rigidity reliably predict political preferences; the relationship is notably stronger with respect to subjective self-reports of personality, as opposed to objective measures of rigid thinking. Finally, while the ideological-asymmetry model provides a good account

of how *dispositional* rigidity (i.e., individual differences in needs for security and certainty) relates to political preferences, the relationship between *situational* forms of rigidity (e.g., motivated defence of political identities and attitudes) and political preferences appears to be more symmetric in ideological terms.

Given the complexity of these findings, researchers should think carefully about the precise functional role of individual differences in personality in the structuring of political preferences. Though the link between the traits most commonly examined in this literature – those related to individual differences in rigidity – and right-wing preferences is relatively clear, it is also clear that this link is not universal and that individuals on both the right and left can exhibit situational forms of psychological rigidity when challenged. Perhaps the best way to understand the role of dispositions is that they provide a basis for *sorting* into different political identities. Partisan and ideological identities vary in their attractiveness to those differing in needs for security and certainty, and individuals may follow these elective affinities if they are attentive enough to politics to receive signals from political elites indicating which identities are most symbolically congruent with their own dispositions (Federico, 2020; Federico & Malka, 2018). In turn, individuals who dispositionally sort into different political identities may take cues about what to believe about other matters and how to approach politics from leaders who share those identities (e.g., Johnston et al., 2017). This account, while in need of further exploration, does comport with a more general line of thought in personality psychology suggesting that people select situations that match their dispositions, and that those situations then influence people in ways that bring out their basic traits (e.g., Funder, 2010).

This perspective also implies that left-right differences may not always flow *directly* from underlying personality differences. Specifically, the actual genesis of some partisan and ideological differences may be institutional and top-down in nature, *conditional* on prior personality-based political sorting. To reiterate an earlier point, there is much evidence that partisan and ideological differences in attitudes in the mass public are shaped by disagreement among competing political elites. When leaders of different parties diverge more in their views, those views diffuse to the public at large in the form of greater polarisation – especially among the politically engaged (Abramowitz, 2010; Levendusky, 2009; Zaller, 1992). To the extent that opposed partisan elites differ in their explicit or implicit endorsement of rigid, black-and-white ways of relating to the political world, those tendencies may spread to partisans in the mass public for reasons not *directly* connected to personality. This may be especially relevant in the American context, where most analyses suggest that the Democratic and Republican parties are institutionally different creatures. The Democratic Party is best understood as a congeries of diverse interest groups that need to cooperate to achieve power, whereas the Republican Party is organised around a demographically homogenous right-wing ideological movement that identifies itself in insurgent contrast to many social institutions (e.g., the media, the civil service, and so on; see Grossmann & Hopkins, 2016; Mason & Wronski, 2018). In other words, the relatively strong emphasis in the Republican Party on uncompromising pursuit of ideological goals may send a top-down message that rigidity is normatively appropriate for conservative Republicans, thereby bringing out the implications of underlying personality differences. This broad question, along with others, awaits further investigation.

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6 The Structure, Prevalence, and Nature of Mass Belief Systems

Bert N. Bakker and Yphtach Lelkes

Ideology is a central concept in political psychology. Since no book chapter could give the volumes of pages written on ideology its due justice, we attempt to give an overview of the scholarly debate's major themes. We have privileged breadth for depth, and, necessarily, miss some nuance – for examples of reviews of specific factors shaping ideology, see recent work by Bullock (2021) and Federico and Malka (2018).

Here, we first examine the ways in which ideology has been operationalised and discuss its distribution in the mass public. This is followed by a discussion of the top-down and bottom-up forces that shape citizens' ideology. Finally, we outline a selection of steps that we would welcome in the next generation of research on political ideology.

6.1 The Structure of Ideology

The meaning of ideology varies tremendously across time and field (Gerring, 1997; Knight, 2006). While there is a broad range in definitions of ideology across these writers and disciplines, modern political psychology generally adopts a definition similar to that of McClosky (1964) or Converse (1964): Ideologies are 'systems of belief that are elaborate, integrated, and coherent, and justify the exercise of power, explain and judge historical events, identify political right and wrong, and set forth interconnections (causal and moral) between politics and other spheres of activity' (McClosky, 1964, p. 362) or a 'configuration

of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence' (Converse, 1964, p. 207).

Measuring such a system of beliefs is no easy task, however. The most common measure of political ideology is, by far, self-reported placement on a single left-right, or, in the US context, liberal-conservative scale. Defining ideology as a continuum from left to right dates back to the French Revolution, when members of the national assembly who supported the Ancien Régime sat to the right of the president, and revolutionaries sat to the left. These single-item scales have appeared on public opinion surveys since at least the 1950s (Converse, 1964) and grew in popularity after Downs (1957) used a variant to explain spatial distance in his *Economic Theory of Democracy*.

However, self-reported ideology is an imprecise measure of ideology qua a system of beliefs for at least three reasons. First, responses to this measure may represent symbolic attachments rather than a system of belief (Conover & Feldman, 1981; Malka & Lelkes, 2010). Malka and Lelkes (2010), for instance, find that people identifying as a liberal or a conservative behave in a manner consistent with social identity theory: they are susceptible to normative (rather than informational) social influence as a result of group cues.

Second, there are substantial individual and contextual differences in the interpretation of

the standard left-right or liberal-conservative scale, leading to low interpersonal comparability. For instance, Dalton (2010, p. 107) writes, ‘to a German blue-collar worker, left may still mean social welfare policies; to a young German college student it may mean environmental protection and issues of multiculturalism’.

A third criticism of the left-right scale is that ideology is a multidimensional construct. Traditionally, the unidimensional left-right scale is meant to capture both support or opposition to social change and support or opposition to government intervention (Jost et al., 2003). While it is true that a unidimensional measure would capture the belief systems of politicians and political activists, at least in the United States (McCarty et al., 2016) and in Europe (Van der Brug & Van Spanje, 2009), the two dimensions are only weakly correlated in the mass public around the world (Malka et al., 2019).

An alternative approach to measuring ideology is to use policy positions as indicators of a latent ideology (see bottom of Figure 6.1). That is, we work backward, starting with the outputs of ideology to infer its structure. Using this approach, researchers have found that, for most people, ideology consists of (at least) two dimensions (Hillygus, 2011): one for cultural policies and one for economic policies. Malka et al. (2019) show that the correlation between these two dimensions varies greatly across countries. In most countries, economic and social conservatism are negatively correlated.

Furthermore, the strength and direction of this correlation are contingent on the information environment. For instance, in post-communist countries, where elites tend to group socially conservative with economically liberal attitudes, the correlation between these two dimensions is negative (Malka et al., 2019). In the United States, where political

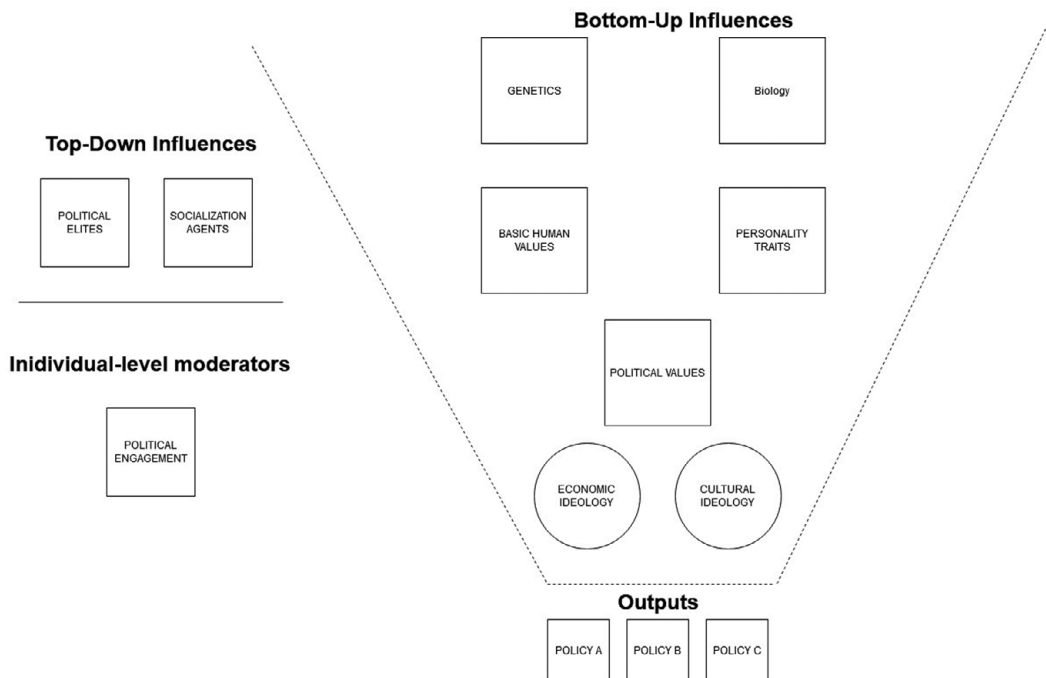


Figure 6.1 The funnel of ideology

coalitions between economically conservative and socially conservative groups formed in the middle of the 20th century, the correlation is weakly positive.

Others have argued that two dimensions do not fully capture the structure of ideology. In particular, several studies claim that attitudes towards immigrants and national identity make up a third dimension of ideology in Europe and the United States (e.g., Kitschelt & Rehm, 2014). Across Western European countries, Caughey et al. (2019) find that immigration and cultural ideology are very highly correlated ($r = 0.83$), and that social and economic ($r = -0.13$) and immigration and economic ideology ($r = -0.10$) are only weakly correlated. The high correlation between immigration and cultural ideology indicates that immigration and nationalism attitudes can likely be subsumed into the cultural dimension.

The structure of ideology outside of Western Europe and the United States is relatively unknown. While Malka et al. (2019) examine the correlation between two possible dimensions in countries around the world, the analysis does not tell us whether two dimensions accurately and exhaustively describe the belief systems in those countries. One recent exception is an analysis among the Chinese public (Pan and Xu, 2018, pp. 254–255), which finds that ideology is structured by three dimensions: (1) preference for authoritarian institutions and conservative political values versus preference for democratic institutions and liberal political values; (2) preference for pro-market economic policies and non-traditional social values versus preference for state intervention in the economy and traditional social values; and (3) preference for nationalism.

While most research that attempts to measure ideology using policy positions either sums across policy positions or utilises a factor analytic technique, researchers have begun

adopting the tools of social network analysis to understand the structure of ideology (Boutyline & Vaisey, 2017; Brandt et al., 2019). This methodology allows us to understand which political attitudes and identities (or nodes, in network analytic terms) ‘tie components from disparate regions of the belief system together and influence the network as a whole’ (Brandt et al., 2019, p. 1353). For instance, both Boutyline and Vaisey (2017) and Brandt et al. (2019) find that symbolic identities are more central to belief systems than operational beliefs. While the network-based approach towards ideology is still in its infancy at the time of writing this chapter, we think it is a fruitful approach.

6.2 The Distribution of Ideology

Before delving into the nature of ideology, it is perhaps important to determine whether ideology exists in the heads of the public or only in the heads of the social scientists who study them.

A long tradition in political psychology holds that people are generally ‘innocent of ideology’. In his agenda-setting work, Converse (1964) found that most Americans did not think in ideological terms and that most people did not hold a coherent set of policy attitudes. For instance, a person’s attitudes on the government’s role in health insurance only weakly predict their attitudes on the government’s role in giving aid to the poor. Furthermore, a person’s attitudes on an issue at one time point are not strongly correlated with their attitudes at a future time point. Recent work has replicated and extended much of Converse’s findings. For instance, the majority of Americans who hold liberal policy views identify as conservative. Kalmoe (2020) finds that only the top-third most politically knowledgeable Americans hold ‘polar, coherent, durable, and potent’ belief systems.

Relatedly, people also do not appear to exhibit ‘dynamic constraint’. That is, there is not, in Converse’s words, ‘functional interdependence’ between attitudes. In a series of experiments, Coppock (2019) shows that shifting attitudes on one policy to the right does not shift attitudes on another policy to the right.

There has been significant pushback against Converse’s conclusions. They argue that instability in attitudes is a result of measurement error rather than true opinion instability (Ansolabehere et al., 2008; Freeze & Montgomery, 2015). In line with the measurement error hypothesis, using multiple items to create scales (Ansolabehere et al., 2008) or multi-trait multi-method confirmatory factor analysis yields (Freeze & Montgomery, 2015) far more stable attitudes. For instance, while the correlation between any pair of issue attitudes is low ($r = 0.20$ or so), the correlation between issue batteries that purge measurement error by incorporating multiple questions on the same policy is quite high ($r = 0.80$ or so). Furthermore, the correlation between issue batteries and voting is relatively strong, demonstrating the power of ideology.

By far, most of the analysis of the ideological capacity of mass publics has focused on Americans. Linzer (2008) finds that in no country (out of the 44 he examined), do more than 5% of respondents give perfectly ideologically consistent responses to a set of six questions. However, we should not expect even the most ideological person to hold left-right consistent positions in all nations – rather, the correlation between issues depends on the political information environment. For instance, in post-communist countries, left economic policies go hand in hand with right cultural policies (Malka et al., 2019). While a comparative study of ideological reasoning is sorely needed, what should be held up as evidence (or not) of ideological reasoning should vary across context.

Although the ideological innocence debate is still ongoing, Americans seem increasingly constrained. One piece of evidence Converse (1964) used to defend his claim of ideological innocence was coding of the open-ended questions which asked respondents what they liked or disliked about various targets, for example Democrats and Republicans, on the American National Election Study (ANES). Converse (1964) derived a ‘levels of conceptualisation’ typology that categorised whether respondents gave ideological responses to these questions, finding that only 12% of the US electorate did so. Recently, Wattenberg (2019) demonstrated that, first, many respondents demonstrate a clear belief system in their responses, but don’t use the terms ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’. These respondents would not have been categorised as ideological by Converse, but, Wattenberg (2019) shows, these respondents are as politically knowledgeable, constrained, and stable in their policy attitudes as those who do use the labels. Hence, Converse likely underestimated the percentage of Americans that think in ideological terms. Furthermore, Wattenberg (2019) finds that the percentage of the population that talk about politics in ideological terms has greatly increased. Today, 29% of ANES respondents use ideological concepts, and roughly 40% of respondents either use ideological concepts or show evidence of a belief system in their open-ended responses.

Additionally, recent studies demonstrate that ideological constraint has increased substantially since the 1970s (DellaPosta, 2020; Freeze & Montgomery, 2015) and particularly after 2004 (Kozlowski & Murphy, 2021). The rise in ideology in American mass publics is likely an elite-driven phenomenon (Levendusky, 2010). As political elites have become more polarised and provided clearer cues about ‘what goes with what’, the mass public necessarily becomes more consistent and ideological.

6.3 The Origins of Ideology

Traditionally, political science research has emphasised how cultural, social, and environmental forces shape political ideology. Political psychologists have also studied bottom-up influences – such as genes, personality, and values – on ideology. We discuss both top-down and bottom-up influences on ideology and the possible interaction between the two. Figure 6.1 provides a stylised theoretical model of the top-down influences and bottom-up influences on ideology. We imagine the bottom-up influences as a funnel of causality and review both proximate and distal causes. We acknowledge that we discuss only a subset of all possible top-down and bottom-up factors.

6.4 Top-Down Factors Shaping Ideology

6.4.1 Political Elites

The most prominent top-down factor shaping ideology is by far the cues people take from political parties. Ever-expanding literature has shown that people in America and Europe rely on political parties to tell them which political positions to take (Aarøe, 2012; Bakker et al., 2020; Slothuus, 2010). For instance, since Donald Trump frequently shifted his political positions during the 2016 election, researchers were able to examine the effect of party cues in an ecologically valid way (Barber & Pope, 2019). Trump supporters grew more favourable towards minimum wage increases when told that the candidate was also in favour, but less favourable when told he did not support such an increase.

Political elites may also shape ideology by making different attitudes salient. That is, elite influence may occur through priming – not persuasion. People may hold several

considerations that could potentially affect belief systems (Zaller & Feldman, 1992). By stressing certain policies, political elites strengthen the importance of an attitude in a person's belief system, ultimately making it more accessible (Lavine et al., 1996) and stable. For instance, while many conservatives likely held anti-immigrant attitudes before the 2016 election, that node likely did not heavily constrain other attitudes until it was primed by Donald Trump.

6.4.2 Socialisation Agents: Our Families, Old and New

An extensive literature, dating back several decades, has argued that belief systems are acquired early in a person's life (Jennings & Niemi, 1968). Much of this evidence rests on the empirical fact that the correlation between parents and children's political attitudes is fairly strong, especially if families are politically engaged (Jennings et al., 2009). Parents may influence their children's political belief through two routes: (1) directly exposing children through politics, for example by talking about politics around the dinner table or taking children to civic events or (2) by transferring their socio-economic status to their children, which carries with it class-specific beliefs.

However, as people age, the correlation between their attitudes and their parents' attitudes weakens. Ironically, those adolescents with the most politically engaged parents are less likely to share their parents' political beliefs (Dinas, 2013, p. 851), as 'those who are politically engaged are most likely to be exposed to new political stimuli in early adulthood'.

Recent evidence has shown that children also influence their parents' political beliefs. For instance, having a daughter versus having a son increases left-wing gender attitudes

among fathers (but not mothers) (Shafer & Malhotra, 2011). This relationship is not limited to parents and children: having a sister increases a brother's left-wing gender attitudes (Healy & Malhotra, 2013).

The impact of families is not limited to one's immediate family but can be traced back many generations. Lelkes (2020) examines the relationship between the ancestral kinship structure of a person's ancestors and political beliefs. Groups that practised medium- to large-scale agriculture required mechanisms to enforce cooperation and punish shirking. These groups adopted kinship structures such as endogamy, which produce in-group loyalty, and transmitted certain values, such as respect for elders, which ensure efficient cooperation (Enke, 2019). Alternatively, groups which were more reliant on hunting and gathering required far-flung networks in case of a local disaster and developed far weaker kinship structures (Enke, 2019). To ensure efficient cooperation with outsiders, groups less reliant on agriculture instilled certain values, such as openness. These values (respect for elders and openness) are similar to those that past studies find structure political beliefs. Indeed, Lelkes (2020) finds that people and countries with a stronger ancestral kinship structure tend to support left-wing economic attitudes and right-wing cultural attitudes. While this perspective focuses on the cultural evolutionary roots of ideology, another area of research looks at evolution, *per se* (see Claessens et al., Chapter 2 in this volume).

Family is certainly not the only agent of socialisation. Peers have a strong impact on political beliefs (Algan et al., 2015) as does schooling: secondary education increases right-wing economic ideology (Bullock, 2021) and left-wing cultural ideology (Garrido, 2020). Media exposure has a strong influence (e.g., Martin & Yurukoglu, 2017) as do

various traumatic events, such as the Vietnam War (Erikson & Stoker, 2011) or September 11 (Esses et al., 2002). Many actors and events potentially influence a person's political belief system. A book chapter can certainly not do justice to all the work that has been written.

6.5 Bottom-Up Factors Shaping Ideology

The bottom-up influences we outline in Figure 6.1 are ordered from more proximal (political values) to more distal factors (genes). The causal ordering is based upon our reading of the literature, but we acknowledge that this is a topic of debate. We start with the more proximal factors and work our way up to the more distal factors.

6.5.1 Core Political Values

Scholars have long held that 'values – which may take such diverse forms as economic efficiency, social equality, individual freedom, crime control, national security, and racial purity – function as the backstops of belief systems' (Tetlock, 2000, p. 247). Political values are durable, abstract principles about desirable political end states. For instance, the left privileges equality, while the right privileges freedom and moral traditionalism. There is, however, little agreement as to which political values are important. Subsequently, analyses have been conducted in a piecemeal fashion – focusing on one or two values rather than the universe of political values (Goren, 2020). Nonetheless, political values have been associated with attitudes towards a variety of political beliefs, including social welfare, racial equality, and abortion (for an overview, see Connors, 2020).

However, some have challenged the notion that political values are exogeneous to

ideology. First, Goren et al. (2009) showed that partisan cues influence political values. Connors (2020, p. 961) shows that political values are influenced by the social contexts and as such she concludes that “political values” may be reflections of individuals’ social contexts rather than values governing political behavior’.

Basic Human Values

While scholars have posited at least 20 different ‘core’ political values that predict policy preferences (Goren et al., 2016), some have argued that these political values are themselves ‘expressions, in the political domain, of more basic personal values’ (Schwartz et al., 2014, p. 899). These personal values are ‘transsituational beliefs about desirable end states and modes of conduct that can be rank-ordered in terms of personal importance’ (Goren, 2020, p. 1).

Schwartz (1994) derived 10 personal values, of which there are 4 superordinate dimensions, to satisfy both cognitive and motivational needs. In terms of the former, ‘Rather than evaluating every piece of information that matters for a choice, people fall back on diagnostic cues that perform as acceptable substitutes for complete information’ (Goren et al., 2016, p. 982). Rather than knowing the details of a policy, for instance, a person only needs to know if it is linked to a basic human value. In terms of motivational needs, core human values allow people to express their identities. These basic core values, Schwartz et al. (2014) find, constrain political values.

Goren et al. (2016) argue that two of the four value domains (self-transcendence and conservation) constrain political beliefs as they regulate ‘how one relates socially to others and affects them’ (Schwartz, 2012, p. 13). Openness to change and self-enhancement do

not, as they regulate ‘how one expresses personal interests and characteristics’.

6.5.2 Personality Traits

Earlier theories of political behaviour suggested that deeper-seated personality traits (or psychological needs) are relevant to understand political ideology (Campbell et al., 1960; McClosky, 1958). As much of this literature is reviewed by Federico (see Chapter 5), we refer readers to that chapter, and make a few notes here:

An ever-growing number of studies in both psychology and political science continues to provide evidence that the psychological dispositions are associated with political ideology (for a recent review, see Federico & Malka, 2018). Citizens adopt ideological positions that provide the best fit with the motives and needs rooted in their psychological dispositions (Jost et al., 2009). The association between psychological dispositions are theoretically a match between the content of the political issues and the motives and goals rooted in the psychological dispositions. Meta-analyses suggest that conservatives, who are more fearful, rigid, conventional, self-controlling, and orderly (Jost et al., 2003) resist changes and minimise insecurity. Liberals, who are more open-minded, imaginative, and impulsive, do not have this resistance to change and do not need to reduce insecurity to the same extent (Jost et al., 2003).

The association between personality and ideology might depend on the operationalisation of ideology (Bakker, 2017; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010; Feldman & Johnston, 2014). Generally, the associations that are reported between psychological traits and left-right ideology generalise to cultural conservatism. There is, for instance, pretty consistent evidence that Openness is negatively associated with

cultural conservatism, while Conscientiousness is positively associated with cultural conservatism (Bakker, 2017; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010).

When it comes to the psychological correlates of economic ideology, different perspectives exist. Hibbing et al. (2014, p. 340) conclude that ‘psychological and biological characteristics are less relevant to economic issues ... than they are to social issues’. There are at least two alternative perspectives: (1) engagement conditions the association between broad open versus closed trait and economic ideology and (2) some traits, like agreeableness and empathy, are directly correlated with economic ideology. Malka et al. (2014) theorised that those higher on the needs for security and certainty hold more left-wing economic ideology. But this association is weaker as engagement increases – for a similar argument see Johnston et al. (2017, p. 3).

Others find that Agreeableness – being caring, tender-minded, and trusting – (Bakker, 2017; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010) and dispositional empathy (Feldman et al., 2020) are positively associated with liberal economic policy positions.

Going forward, we hope to see more research that disentangles which traits are directly related to economic ideology and for which traits this association is conditional upon factors such as engagement.

6.5.3 Our Biology

A relatively new paradigm in political science and psychology suggested that ideology might also have a biological root. Groundbreaking work by Oxley et al. (2008) published in *Science* showed that citizens with a conservative ideology – in particular who expressed a preference for tradition, hierarchies, and clear group boundaries – experienced stronger physiological reactions to threatening stimuli than those with a liberal ideology. Extending

the paradigm, those with stronger physiological responses to disgust express more conservative policy attitudes (Aarøe et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2011). These studies suggest that ideology is associated with physiological responses to threat and disgust which Oxley et al. (2008, p. 1667) see as evidence that ideology has a ‘built-in, almost “automated” ... response’ which might suggest that conservative ideology is linked to a ‘negativity bias’ (Hibbing et al., 2014).

A large preregistered replication in the United States using the exact same stimuli and comparable procedures as Oxley et al. (2008), by Bakker, Schumacher, et al. (2020) found no evidence for the assumed positive association between physiological threat sensitivity and conservative ideology. In the same study, Bakker, Schumacher, et al. (2020) also found no evidence that conservatives have a stronger physiological response to disgust. The failure to replicate Oxley et al. (2008) does not stand on its own. Recently, Fournier et al. (2021) also found no consistent evidence for a positive association between threat sensitivity and conservatism across 17 countries in 5 continents.

The failure to find evidence for the link between conservatism and physiological sensitivity to threat or disgust does not mean that there is no biological root of ideology. But it does mean that physiological responses to threat or disgust are probably not directly linked to ideology. The next generation of research will have to disentangle if and how physiological – and other ‘biological’ responses – are linked to ideology (for a discussion, see Bakker, Schumacher, et al., 2020).

6.6 Our Genes

Social scientists have long posited that ideology is, in part, rooted in our DNA (for instance, Eaves & Eysenck, 1974). But when

Alford et al. (2005) showed – using data from the USA and Australia – that ideology is partly heritable, this was followed by a substantive number of studies addressing the extent to which ideology is heritable – for a review see Dawes and Weinschenk (2020). A meta-analysis by Hatemi et al. (2014) – using 12,000 twin pairs from 9 different samples – showed that relative genetic influence on ideology accounts for 40% of the total variation. The genetic influence is on par with unique environmental influences and twice as large as shared environmental influence.

The logical question that arises is what explains why ideology is heritable. One possibility is that personality is the missing link between genes and ideology. The few studies addressing this possibility show that there is a genetic overlap between personality and ideology (Hatemi & Verhulst, 2015; Kandler et al., 2015; Verhulst et al., 2012). But there is a debate about what the genetic overlap of personality and ideology means. It could mean that: (1) genes influence personality and personality influences ideology; (2) genes could also influence ideology and ideology could influence personality; (3) it could also suggest a reciprocal relationship whereby personality and ideology are both cause and consequence of each other; or (4) the same genetic component influences personality and ideology but this is happening largely independent from each other (Dawes & Weinschenk, 2020). We agree with Dawes and Weinschenk (2020, p. 175) that ‘additional research is needed in order to develop a better understanding of the pathways that connect genes to political ideology’.

6.7 Next Steps in This Research Agenda

Here we outline some open-ended questions in the study of ideology and conclude with a call

for the adoption of open science practices in the study of ideology.

Question 1: How Do Top-Down and Bottom-Up Factors Interact?

A lot of the research on ideology – including our own – has focused on isolating one particular argument (or variable) in explaining ideology. We welcome more research that studies the interaction within bottom-up factors and interactions between bottom-up and top-down factors. There are promising examples within the bottom-up perspective exploring the interplay between genes, personality, and ideology (see Dawes & Weinschenk, 2020). Similarly, work on the individual-level moderators of elite cues provides good examples of the interplay between top-down and bottom-up factors (Arceneaux & Vander Wielen, 2017; Bakker et al., 2020).

Question 2: Are Deeper-Seated Traits Causing Ideology?

Most of the research on the psychological roots of ideology that we discussed relies upon cross-sectional studies, wherein self-reported personality (or values) is correlated with self-reported ideology. Yet, there is not much research that disentangles the extent to which psychological dispositions are indeed causing ideology. That said, there is a growing body of research that questions whether deeper-seated personality traits are indeed *causing* ideology.

One potentially powerful piece of evidence that personality is causing ideology is to provide proof that childhood personality is associated with ideology in adulthood. Block and Block (2006) found that children that were anxious, fearful, sensitive to guilt, and rigid in childhood were more likely to be self-reported conservatives in adulthood, while children that were expressive, autonomous,

and self-reliant in childhood were more likely to be self-reported liberals in adulthood. Using a comparable design, Fraley et al. (2012) conclude that liberal adults (at age 18) were more active and restless in childhood (at age 3.5), whereas conservative adults were more fearful in childhood. Yet, recent conceptual replications by Fasching et al. (2021) using two large cohort panels – one preregistered – from the United Kingdom, find no evidence that childhood personality is systematically associated with conservatism in adulthood. As such, the evidence of whether childhood personality is causing ideology is mixed.

One of the downsides of correlating childhood personality with ideology is that it is unlikely that ideology ‘appears’ in adulthood. Studies that track both personality and ideology over a longer time are scarce. Osborne and Sibley (2020) conclude that Openness does not cause ideology in a 9-year panel in New Zealand. Yet, Osborne and Sibley (2020) only focuses upon Openness but not Conscientiousness: the other trait within the Big Five framework consistently associated with conservatism. In a recent, preregistered, study, Bakker et al. (2021) test the claim whether ideology is causing personality. Longitudinal data from the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States showed that personality causes ideology – as decades of personality-ideology has assumed. However, Bakker et al. (2021) also find that ideology causes personality. As people become more conservative, they also self-report a more closed personality, broadly defined. In the same study Bakker et al. (2021) prime politics (vs a placebo control) in two two-wave survey experiments and find that the association between previously assessed ideology and self-reported personality traits becomes stronger. The findings by Bakker et al. (2021) align with other findings that egalitarian political ideology caused increases in empathy

(Sidanius et al., 2013) and findings that political ideology exerted a causal influence on binding moral foundations (Hatemi et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2017). As such, a small body of studies suggests that personality does not only cause ideology but also that it is reciprocal.

To conclude, there is overwhelming evidence that self-reported psychological traits correlate with self-reported ideology. Yet, the extent to which deeper-seated personality traits actually *cause* ideology is an open-ended question. In fact, some work suggests that the relationship is not as one-directional as we have assumed it is. A more dynamic conceptualisation whereby personality influences ideology and ideology also influences personality would challenge many of the assumptions of the political psychology of ideology.

6.7.1 Methodological Improvements

Much of the ideology literature relies on publicly available omnibus surveys like the ANES. Yet, time is costly in these surveys, and as a consequence, space is scarce. Therefore, survey designers utilise highly abbreviated indices of critical variables. However, this trade-off may have implications for the conclusions we draw. For instance, Bakker and Lelkes (2018) showed that highly abbreviated measures of personality lead to an underestimation of the association between personality and ideology. Going forward, we urge researchers not to sell themselves short and ideally invest in measures of ideology – and other constructs of interest – that have acceptable psychometric properties. If this is not possible – which we understand – then we urge researchers to carefully consider whether measurement of ideology and related constructs could affect the conclusions they reach about the structure and nature of ideology (Ansolabehere et al., 2008; Bakker & Lelkes, 2018).

There is increasing evidence accumulating that raises doubt whether ideology is *caused* by underlying deep-seated psychological traits, which raises serious questions about the bottom-up explanations of ideology. We welcome more, not less, research on this question. In particular, we welcome sufficiently powered, preregistered studies. Moreover, replications of seminal findings will be important as replications are a crucial part of theoretical development (Chambers, 2019).

In general, we think it is important to replicate and preregister studies that test both the bottom-up and top-down forces shaping ideology. For instance, omnibus surveys like the ANES include many potential items to measure ideology and an increasing number of psychological dispositions – such as, but not limited to, authoritarianism, need for cognition, and the Big Five. Chambers (2019) documented that there is a ‘pressure’ for researchers to report meaningful (i.e., statistically significant) effects. Preregistering hypotheses and modelling strategies – ideally in registered reports – might help researchers to publish studies where they expected but failed to find an association between personality and ideology. Templates to preregister secondary data have become available (Van den Akker et al., 2019) and have been applied in the study of political ideology (Bakker et al., 2021).

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7 The Psychology of Public Opinion

Lauren C. Howe and Jon A. Krosnick

7.1 Introduction

Both the measurement and scholarly study of public opinion have a long history. Almost two centuries have passed since the publication of the first public opinion poll: the *Harrisburg Pennsylvanian* newspaper's coverage of voters' opinions in the 1824 presidential race between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson (Madonna & Young, 2002). Over eight decades have elapsed since the journal *Public Opinion Quarterly*, devoted to research on public opinion, was founded. Today, polls are used to measure public opinion on sociopolitical issues in more than 90% of all countries (Frankovic et al., 2017). In any democracy, public opinion plays a central role, and understanding how these opinions are formed and how they shape people and politicians' actions is of vital importance.

But what is public opinion? Susan Herbst (1993) called it 'one of the most widely used yet least understood constructs' (p. 438). Accordingly, a review of research on public opinion must begin by considering what exactly public opinion entails. This can be challenging, given that different participants in the political process may define public opinion in different ways (Herbst, 1998). For example, a person may define public opinion as an aggregate of individual opinions, as it is measured in polls. But public opinion could also be defined as the majority opinion on a topic, or as the general societal consensus on an issue (Herbst, 1993). Others argue that

public opinion does not exist at all, but is merely a projection of the political elite or the media leveraged for self-interested purposes (Lippmann, 1922).

When defining public opinion, identifying the kinds of opinions that may be held among the public as public opinion is critical. After all, studies of public opinion do not concern themselves with any attitude or belief held among the public. It is not a matter of public opinion whether people believe that the sky is blue. Instead, the study of public opinion is restricted to studying issues that are matters of public debate, or where there is uncertainty regarding public consensus on an issue. Notably, there may be a lack of public consensus on issues where there is in fact consensus among other sub-groups in society (e.g., among scientists), such as when it comes to opinions about climate change or the hazards of vaccination. The hallmark of public opinion is that, among the general public, there is uncertainty regarding the consensus on the issue.

But being a matter of public debate is not the only criterion for issues of public opinion, as there are issues on which there may be public disagreement, but where the issue does not hold serious enough societal consequences to be deemed a matter of public opinion. For instance, it is not a matter of public opinion whether people prefer chocolate to vanilla ice cream. Instead, the study of public opinion is restricted to issues that hold significance for society. For example, whether people like a

presidential candidate's outfit might not be a matter of public opinion, unless people expected that the candidate's manner of dress influenced matters of importance in society, such as the potential future president's ability to impress foreign diplomats or to be taken seriously by other politicians.

Accordingly, we define public opinion as *opinions on matters of public debate that have significant implications for society*. Defined in this way, public opinion could entail both opinions with a positive or negative valence, or 'attitudes' as they are defined in the social psychological literature (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), and beliefs that link an object to a particular attribute (e.g., capital punishment deters crime). In the current review, we focus primarily on valenced opinions or attitudes. In past decades, studying how people form beliefs on sociopolitical topics may have been less relevant than studying attitudes. However, we note that, in recent years, how people form accurate or non-accurate non-valenced beliefs has become a centrepiece of public debates. For instance, it is a matter of public discussion today whether people believe that the planet is warming or not, that a politician said outlandish statements or not, and whether news is 'real' or 'fake'. Non-valenced beliefs, such as whether the sky is blue, could thus constitute matters of public opinion, as long as the public debated the issue and viewed the issue as socially significant. Thus, the study of how people form particular beliefs could increasingly become part of discussions of public opinion in the future.

This chapter provides an overview of key developments in three central topics in research on public opinion: *opinionation*, or whether a person forms an opinion on an issue or not, *directionality of opinion*, or whether a person forms a particular kind of opinion (e.g., favourable or unfavourable) on an issue, and the *consequences of public opinion*, or how

opinions shape action. Since public opinion is primarily connected with matters of politics, we focus on public opinion when it comes to sociopolitical issues.

7.2 Psychological Antecedents of Opinionation

People vary in whether they have an opinion about a sociopolitical topic or whether they hold no opinion about a politician, institution, or policy. This section summarises research on factors that shape opinionation: when and why does a person form an opinion on a political topic?

7.2.1 Number of Opinions

The following factors have been shown to predict the total number of opinions a person holds on sociopolitical issues:

Need to Evaluate. Jarvis and Petty (1996) identified an individual difference called 'need to evaluate', which is defined as a person's tendency to automatically evaluate the positive and negative qualities of encountered objects. Someone high on the need to evaluate would be likely to agree that they pay a lot of attention to whether things are good or bad, form opinions about everything, and have more opinions than the average person. People with higher levels of this personality trait are thought to automatically recognise the positive or negative qualities of most objects they encounter, and thus to spontaneously form attitudes towards a given object. Conversely, people low on the need to evaluate can observe an object and note its existence without evaluating it, and thus are thought to have fewer attitudes stored in memory than people who have a high need to evaluate. Consistent with this reasoning, Jarvis and Petty (1996) showed that people higher in the need to evaluate were much less likely to say

that they had no opinion to questions measuring their attitudes towards a range of social and political issues (e.g., the environment, abortion, capital punishment).

Education. Krosnick and Milburn (1990) found that American adults who had more formal years of education tended to express more opinions about various government policy issues. This suggests that people with more cognitive skills are more likely to form opinions on political topics. In part, education appeared to increase opinionation because education increased people's knowledge about politics.

Political Knowledge. The amount of knowledge an individual has stored in memory about politics predicts forming an opinion on political issues. In a study of American adults, people with higher levels of objective political competence (e.g., factual knowledge about political history and current events, as well as exposure to political information) expressed more opinions about government policy issues (Krosnick & Milburn, 1990). However, subjective political competence, or one's own impression that one understands politics, did not predict people's tendency to express opinions about government policy.

Importance of Opinions. The perception that one's opinions are impactful in the political process also increases opinionation. In one study, American adults who agreed that government is responsive to public opinion expressed more opinions about government policy issues (Krosnick & Milburn, 1990).

7.2.2 Reporting Having an Opinion versus Having No Opinion

Research has also examined the inverse of opinionation, or what causes individuals *not* to form an opinion on a topic. Insights on this come from the literature on questionnaire design, which has studied the factors that

cause people to report that they have no opinion when they are asked about a political issue. Experimental studies manipulate whether the option to report 'no opinion' is present or absent in a questionnaire, and then assess what characteristics lead individuals to be most attracted to this response option. These studies suggest the following characteristics correlate with the tendency to lack an opinion on a topic:

Education. Respondents with the lowest levels of formal education tend to be more likely to report that they have no opinion on topics such as government policies when the option to report no opinion is available (Bishop et al., 1986; Krosnick et al., 1996, 2002).

Interest and Importance. People who consider a particular issue to be of less personal interest or importance are more likely to report that they have no opinion on a topic (Bishop et al., 1980; Schuman & Presser, 1981).

Being Interviewed about a Topic. By provoking thought and conversation, interviewing people may increase their interest in the topic and inspire them to think and learn more about it, ultimately resulting in opinionation. Experiments have shown that when a person is interviewed twice on the same topic (e.g., policy issues), this person is less likely to report that they have no opinion in the second interview, compared to the first one (Crespi, 1948; Waterton & Lievesley, 1987). This is consistent with the idea that asking people for their opinion in a first interview prompts them to think about and form an opinion on a topic, which they then report in a second interview.

Perceived Demand for Opinionation. People may report opinions because of perceived social pressure to hold an opinion on a given topic. Krosnick et al. (2002) tested this question by varying whether respondents were allowed to report their opinions about a proposed environmental clean-up plan by writing them confidentially on a piece of paper and

depositing the paper in a sealed ‘ballot box’, or were required to state their answer out loud to the interviewer. They found that more respondents reported having no opinion about the plan when they could express this privately than when they were asked to express their opinion publicly to interviewers. This was especially true among respondents with the lowest levels of formal education, suggesting that this group may be particularly susceptible to social pressure to form opinions.

7.3 Directionality of Opinion

The next two sections provide an overview of factors that shape the direction of public opinion, such as holding a positive or negative attitude on a sociopolitical topic. The first section reviews insights regarding opinion directionality drawn from the psychological literature on attitude formation, with a particular focus on how these insights apply in the context of public opinion on political issues. The second section reviews additional key antecedents drawn from the literature on public opinion.

7.3.1 Research on Attitude Formation

Genetics. Political attitudes may in part be heritable (see also Chapter 3). Research has found that genes contribute to the variation in conservative and liberal political attitudes (Hatemi et al., 2011), as well as attitudes on specific political issues (e.g., the death penalty, disarmament) (Alford et al., 2005), political parties, and party identification (Bell et al., 2009). Generally, sociopolitical attitudes that appear the most heritable are those that are rooted in morality (e.g., attitudes towards the death penalty, punishment for sex offenders, and birth control; Brandt & Wetherell, 2012).

Studies suggest possible pathways through which genes may influence political attitudes.

One study indicates that political attitudes are transmitted in part because of their link to personality traits that are passed on from parents to their offspring (Kandler et al., 2012). As an example, agreeableness correlates negatively with acceptance of inequality, so offspring who inherit this personality trait from their parents are likely to similarly reject inequality. Another study suggests that genetics predict greater shared cognitive ability, and level of cognitive ability tends to predict political orientation (Oskarsson et al., 2015).

Mere Exposure. Being exposed to a particular object (e.g., a person) increases its familiarity and thus positive attitudes towards this object (Zajonc, 1968, 2001). For example, brief exposure to information about transgender individuals (e.g., a definition of the term ‘transgender’) improved people’s attitudes towards transgender individuals (Flores et al., 2018). Exposure to a persuasive political message can also increase one’s tendency to act in line with that message. In a study of undergraduate students, those exposed to posters with an appeal to reduce foreign aid had less positive attitudes towards foreign aid and were more likely to volunteer to help organise a protest on the topic (R. L. Miller, 1976), though overexposure to persuasive political messages may elicit reactance and/or counter-arguing (Cacioppo & Petty, 1979).

Classical and Operant Conditioning. Classical conditioning is the process of pairing a neutral object with an object that produces positive or negative affect. By pairing the previously neutral object with affectively charged objects, a person develops a positive or negative association with the object. Research shows that classical conditioning can shape attitudes (Staats & Staats, 1958). Similarly, operant conditioning, or a process through which reinforcements enhance behavioural tendencies and punishments diminish them (Skinner, 1957), can shape the direction of

attitudes. For example, one study showed that attitudes towards university policies became more positive when students received positive reinforcement (e.g., verbal indicators of agreement) from an interviewer asking for their opinion on this topic (Hildum & Brown, 1956; see also Insko, 1965).

Modelling and Identification. Attitudes are shaped by the influence of liked people and groups (Kelman, 2006). Through the process of identification, a person may adopt attitudes in order to establish or maintain a positive relationship with a liked individual. One example of this is the process of modelling whereby a person adopts an attitude consistent with a desirable role model. As one study showed, when an African-American student with admirable qualities (e.g., someone who was high-status and respected) reported their opinion about the 1954 Supreme Court decision to desegregate schools, fellow African-American students were more likely to report attitudes that were similar to this person's stated opinions, even when those opinions were not particularly popular among African-American students in general (Kelman, 1958).

Conformity to Perceived Norms. People adjust their opinions in light of what others believe (e.g., they conform to a majority opinion, Asch, 1951; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Sherif, 1936). This influence can extend to people who are outside of a person's social contacts (e.g., close friends and family) to include anonymous others, such as those whose opinions are depicted in mass media (Mutz, 1992). This form of social influence has been given much attention in the literature on the 'bandwagon effect' (Gallup & Rae, 1940; Simon, 1954).

The bandwagon effect suggests that voters who think a particular political party or candidate will win succumb to social influence and vote for the party or candidate preferred by the majority (for a review of studies, see Grillo,

2017). Recently, a natural experiment in France tested for the presence of bandwagon effects by studying changes in voting patterns after reform to voting legislation in 2005 (Morton et al., 2015). For French western overseas territories, voting was changed so that they voted the day before the mainland, rather than the day after. Thus, people in these territories would no longer have knowledge of the mainland population's choices. Results indicated that knowledge of the other voters' choices increased bandwagon voting. Similarly, an experiment that presented US adults with polls showing different levels of support for various policies (e.g., reducing troops in Afghanistan, free trade agreements) found evidence for bandwagon effects (Rothschild & Malhotra, 2014), as did a study of electoral support for political parties in Denmark (Dahlgard et al., 2017).

7.3.2 Research on Public Opinion

The literature on public opinion offers suggestions for additional antecedents that should be considered (e.g., Kinder, 1998) and which are reviewed below.

Values and Principles. Underlying values and principles predict political attitudes. For example, people's commitment to equality predicts their attitudes towards welfare programmes, government provision of jobs, and an acceptable standard of living (Feldman, 1988). Values of egalitarianism, moral traditionalism, and religiosity predict people's views of transgender people and support for their rights (Jones et al., 2018). Furthermore, the priority that an individual places on a particular value predicts attitudes towards policies. For example, one study showed that the more that people prioritised freedom over national security, the more strongly these individuals opposed domestic CIA surveillance (Tetlock, 1986).

Personality Traits. Specific personality traits predict political attitudes (see also Chapter 5). For example, authoritarianism correlates with attitudes towards policies related to drug use and disease, environmental conservation, and homelessness (Peterson et al., 1993). Social dominance orientation, an individual difference measure of the preference for group-based hierarchy, predicts policy preferences including support for gay and lesbian rights, women's rights, military programmes, and environmental conservation (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius et al., 2006). Personality traits also predict approval ratings of politicians; for example, citizens who are high in conscientiousness and emotional stability and low in openness to experience are more likely to approve of Republican presidents (Gerber et al., 2008).

Group Memberships. Political attitudes are influenced by membership in particular social groups. For example, even among citizens who are sympathetic to the plight of working women, women who belong to and identify with the group of 'working women' express more consistently pro-women policy preferences than do people who do not belong to this group (Conover, 1988). Group memberships need not necessarily be current in order to influence attitudes. In an experiment that varied whether a politician used Christian references when making a political appeal (i.e., quoting the Bible), people who either currently or previously identified as Christian had more positive implicit attitudes towards this politician and were more likely to say that they would attend a speech given by them (Albertson, 2011).

Costs and Benefits. Sometimes the positivity and negativity of an attitude is influenced by the relative costs and benefits with which an attitude object is associated. For example, people form more positive attitudes towards policies that benefit groups they like and form

more negative attitudes towards policies that will benefit groups they *dislike* (e.g., Gilens, 1996; Sniderman et al., 1986). Societal costs affect support for political policies and actions, such that more costly endeavours tend to spark more negative attitudes. For example, Mueller (1973) demonstrated that approval of war was largely a function of the number of casualties involved in the war; higher costs embodied in a larger number of casualties resulted in less approval. Subsequent research suggested that the public weighs costs and benefits when it comes to war. For example, during the 2003–2004 US war in Iraq, researchers found that the public approved of the war despite the casualties (i.e., costs) it incurred as long as they believed that the initial decision to launch the war was right and that the war was likely to be successful (i.e., they perceived benefits; Gelpi et al., 2006).

7.4 Consequences of Public Opinion

There is a wealth of research on how opinions influence thought and action, which cannot be covered in full in this chapter. Thus, this review focuses on a central concern in the study of public opinion: how public opinion influences the political behaviour of individuals and political figures.

7.4.1 Voting

One of the most well-studied behaviours when it comes to how opinions translate into action focuses on voting. Opinions about both policy and political candidates can motivate voting.

Policy-Based Voting. Policy-based voting is a process in which citizens vote based on their perceptions of the positions that candidates take on policy issues. In this literature, it has been theorised that citizens make their decisions in a pattern called proximity voting: the candidate whom a citizen perceives to be closer

to the citizen in terms of their stance on policy issues is thought to gain appeal from this proximity (Downs, 1957). Experimental studies presenting participants with descriptions of hypothetical candidates have found evidence for proximity-based voting (Claassen, 2007, 2009; Lacy & Paolino, 2010; Tomz & Van Houweling, 2008). However, there is a caveat to the finding that candidates' policy positions predict votes. To cast a vote based on a policy issue, a voter must perceive the competing candidates as taking clear and different positions on the issue (Brody & Page, 1972; Krosnick, 1988). Thus, candidates must be distinguished from one another in terms of their policy positions for policy opinions to have an impact on the public's voting decisions.

Further, the literature on attitude strength has added a valuable nuance to the research on policy-based voting, suggesting that not all policy opinions will shape voting behaviour. The literature on attitude strength shows that attitudes can vary in the degree to which they are resistant to change, stable over time, influential on cognition, and influential on action (Krosnick & Petty, 1995). A variety of features of attitudes may lead them to be stronger than others, including the importance of the attitudes, or the degree to which an individual attaches significance to an attitude (Howe & Krosnick, 2017). Thus, policy opinions may drive behaviour (e.g., candidate choice) only when they possess the features of strong attitudes (e.g., they are personally important).

Supporting this idea, people vary in the amount of personal importance they attach to their attitudes on policy issues (Anand & Krosnick, 2003). This literature identifies citizens who attach the highest level of personal importance to an issue as that issue's *issue public* (Converse, 1964), or 'groups of people with highly important attitudes toward specific policy options' (Krosnick, 1990, p. 81).

Indeed, the personal importance of a policy issue affects people's likelihood of voting on this issue. The more importance people attach to their opinion on a political policy, the better their opinion on that issue predicts their vote choices (Anand & Krosnick, 2003; Bélanger & Meguid, 2008; Fournier et al., 2003; Krosnick, 1988; J. M. Miller, Krosnick, & Fabrigar, 2016; Visser et al., 2003). Some studies shed light on how the importance of policy opinions shapes other behaviours that underlie voting. For example, people who are part of an issue public tend to selectively seek out information about policies that they care about on the web, and this both further strengthens their policy attitudes and shapes their issue voting patterns (Kim, 2009). Holding more policy positions also predicts turnout in general. The more policy issues that citizens attach personal importance to, the more likely they are to vote (Visser et al., 2003). Thus, people who attach high importance to their opinion on political issues seem especially motivated to vote and base their decisions to vote on these policy opinions.

Candidate-Based Voting. Candidate-based voting is a process through which a person's attitude towards a particular political candidate motivates voting for that candidate. The literature suggests that such voting emerges mostly when a person has a strong preference for one candidate over another. When a person has a much more positive attitude towards one candidate compared to another (e.g., they dislike one candidate, or they dislike both candidates but dislike one more strongly than another), then this person is much more likely to vote than if they like both candidates (Holbrook et al., 2001).

7.4.2 Civic Activism

Research has also considered when public opinion causes civic activism. Recent years

have seen examples of regime changes where public opinion erupts into protest and causes dramatic shifts in governance. Yet in other cases, a clear majority may not approve of a politician and their policies, and yet the population refrains from protest and does not take drastic action to remove a politician from office.

One general principle is that public opinion prompts civic activism the most when people are dissatisfied with their current life circumstances and want to take action to change them (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; see also Chapter 31). For example, dissatisfaction with life circumstances can lead people to join activist groups that they believe will help address these issues (Hansen, 1985). However, it is not necessary for life circumstances to actually take a turn for the worse in order for them to spark activism. The simple appearance that things may become worse in the future can also inspire activism. For example, when women who were in favour of legalised abortion received a letter stating that politicians were working to pass undesirable policies (e.g., increasing restrictions on abortion), these women were more likely to make financial contributions to an organisation that promised to work to prevent these policy changes (J. M. Miller & Krosnick, 2004). Interestingly, in this study, the threat of undesirable policy changes (i.e., that would restrict people's rights) was more likely to provoke activism than the opportunity to become involved in desirable policy changes (i.e., that would help people gain additional rights). As with policy voting, the perceived importance of a policy issue moderates these effects. People who perceive a policy issue as personally important are particularly likely to mobilise in response to the threat of undesirable change (J. M. Miller, Krosnick, Holbrook, et al., 2016).

7.4.3 Government Attention and Action

Moving beyond the influence of public opinion on individual behaviour, another critical question is whether people in government pay attention to public opinion, and whether public opinion shapes their judgements and behaviour accordingly.

Research generally indicates that public opinion affects public policy. When public opinion shifts, policy often changes in response (Page & Shapiro, 1983). For example, state governments in the USA were highly responsive to public opinion on LGBTQ rights over the past decades in terms of enacting relevant policies (e.g., non-discrimination laws; Lax & Phillips, 2009). Public opinion has a particularly strong influence when issues are salient to the public, and can even outweigh pressure from interest groups (Burstein, 2003).

Another example of government responsiveness to public opinion comes from research on issues that the public deems of high national importance. Generally, this research indicates that the issues that the American public prioritises receive greater recognition from politicians. For example, judgements of the national importance of an issue affect candidates' campaign strategies, such as the attention devoted to these issues during campaign speeches (Burden & Rice Sanberg, 2003). Politicians also tend to shift their stated positions to move closer to the position of the public when an issue is given greater national importance (Campbell, 1983). It is unclear whether politicians' decisions are a direct response to the public's ratings of national importance (e.g., from viewing the results of polls on this topic), or whether they would have prioritised these issues because of other factors. Nevertheless, it is clear that public opinion can influence politicians' agendas.

7.5 Emerging Questions in Research on Public Opinion

Finally, we consider some emerging questions regarding public opinion that can inspire future research directions.

7.5.1 (Mis)perceiving Public Opinion

A handful of recent studies investigate whether people perceive public opinion on key issues accurately and suggest that beliefs about public opinion may not always match reality. For example, some recent studies suggest that the public tends to underestimate the extent to which their fellow citizens believe that global warming is happening (Abeles et al., 2019; Ehret et al., 2018; Leviston et al., 2012; Mildenerger & Tingley, 2019; see also Chapter 34). Future research could explore the extent to which (mis)perceptions of public opinion regarding various attitudes and beliefs shape people's support for policies and political participation, as well as how misperceptions can be corrected and the consequences of correcting these misperceptions.

7.5.2 Motivated Reasoning in Public Opinion Processes

Research on motivated reasoning, or the motivation to arrive at a personally desirable conclusion (Kunda, 1990), suggests that people's existing opinions on topics can prompt them to process information (e.g., scientific evidence) in a biased manner. Much of the research suggests that once a person has an opinion on a political topic, they are likely to disregard information that contradicts this pre-existing opinion. For example, people are less likely to read policy arguments that contradict a prior opinion on a political issue (e.g., gun control, affirmative action) than one that is congruent with their prior attitude, and

people spend more time producing counterarguments when an argument conflicts with a prior attitude (Taber & Lodge, 2006). Other research suggests that prior opinions on a policy issue can affect people's trust in public opinion polls, such that people find polls less credible when they report that the majority view conflicts with one's own view on a socio-political issue (Kuru et al., 2017). Thus, future research could examine how to encourage people and politicians to process information about public opinion in an unbiased manner.

7.5.3 Technological Advances in Measuring Public Opinion

Recent studies have explored ways to measure public opinion that leverage upon developments in technology (e.g., Big Data). For example, researchers conducted a sentiment analysis of Twitter messages about the presidential candidates in the 2008 US election by measuring the ratio of positive versus negative messages containing the keywords *Obama* and *McCain* (O'Connor et al., 2010). They found that the sentiment analysis correlated highly with people's reports that they would vote for Barack Obama or John McCain in 2008, as well as presidential approval ratings for Barack Obama in 2008–2009. Other research has used internet search trends to capture public attentiveness to different policy issues (e.g., healthcare, global warming; Ripberger, 2011).

At first glance, it might seem that these alternative methods could be used to assess public opinion in the future and reduce the costs, both time and monetary, of assessing and conducting research on public opinion. However, research on the importance of survey sampling suggests that collecting data from non-probability samples on the Internet could be problematic, resulting in a biased sample with particular characteristics (Chang & Krosnick, 2009). Thus, scholars

should be cautious when it comes to alternative methods of assessing public opinion that do not rely on probability sampling. In the future, research could consider other aspects of the role technology plays in public opinion, such as how technological advancements shape how polls are communicated to the public and the effects of these different methods of communication on public trust in – and acceptance of – polls.

7.6 Conclusion

Decades of research offer insight into why people form opinions on a political topic and the factors that shape the particular direction that these opinions take. Research also suggests that these opinions drive political participation and play a key role in the political process. Understanding how public opinion develops can help people and politicians alike to understand what underlies this potent motivator of political behaviour as well as how it can be influenced.

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8 Rational Choice and Information Processing

Dennis Chong and Kevin J. Mullinix

Rational choice is a normative and explanatory theory that applies to how individuals choose among alternatives to achieve their goals and objectives. Political scientists employ the theory to understand voting, collective action, party dynamics, legislative behaviour, and political institutions (classic works include Aldrich, 1993; Downs, 1957; Olson, 1965; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968; Weingast, 1979). In political psychology, the study of attitudes, beliefs, and information processing relies more heavily on psychological models, but rationality is often the implied standard against which decision-making is judged.

Some rational choice models assume perfect ‘economic’ or substantive rationality in which people have complete and coherent preferences, gather sufficient information, and, ultimately, make optimal decisions based on reliable information about alternative courses of action and their own goals and beliefs (e.g., Becker, 1976). Other scholars recognise that people are limited in their knowledge, time, capacity, and motivation, but can make boundedly rational choices given these constraints (Rubenstein, 1998; Simon, 1957). While rational choice is used to predict and explain individuals’ choices, the theory’s assumptions also provide normative benchmarks by which scholars evaluate the competence of decision-making.

For every assumption of rational choice, there are dozens of studies that highlight psychological biases that appear to violate these

premises. Such scholarship leaves the impression of a deep chasm between rational choice assumptions and the psychology of how people acquire and evaluate information and make political decisions. However, we think this is an inaccurate – or at least incomplete – portrayal of existing literature, as the divide between rational choice and the psychology of decision-making is not as pronounced as often assumed. For every deviation from rational choice, there are factors that constrain the operation of cognitive biases and promote rational decision-making.

In this chapter, we first describe the basic assumptions of rational choice theory. Then we review research in political psychology on information processing, focusing on studies of heuristics and cue-taking, motivated reasoning, and framing – three literatures that have been difficult to reconcile with rational choice. Heuristics are shortcuts that potentially lead to suboptimal decisions because of insufficient attention to detailed information. Motivated reasoning occurs when people resist contrary information and seek information that upholds their existing beliefs. Research on framing has shown a contrary bias of excessive pliability, resulting in arbitrary and contradictory preferences.

Our review shines a light on the evolution of these literatures and provides a more comprehensive portrayal of decision-making. Three themes flow throughout our chapter. First, there is systematic variation between individuals in the extent to which heuristics,

motivations, and framing lead them to make (un)reasonable political decisions. Second, alternative informational and social contexts provide different opportunities and incentives for people to use relevant information in political decision-making. Finally, we call attention to the inconsistent ways in which the concepts and findings in these literatures have been interpreted to arrive at different normative evaluations of decision-making. Providing a path forward, we offer suggestions for clarifying terminology and setting benchmarks for evaluating the extent to which a particular aspect of political behaviour is (in)consistent with assumptions of rational choice.

8.1 Assumptions of Rational Choice

Rational choice theory assumes that individuals have preferences that reflect their goals and that these preferences possess certain properties. An individual's preferences among a set of alternatives are ordered if they are complete (a is preferred to b , or b is preferred to a , or one is indifferent between a and b) and internally consistent or 'transitive' (if a is preferred to b , and b is preferred to c , then a is preferred to c). Whether an individual pursues self-interest, group benefits, social values, or other-regarding principles that improve the welfare of others is secondary to having a consistent set of goal preferences.

Because people have multiple goals and the actions taken to obtain them have costs, there are invariably trade-offs among the alternative courses of action. A student may face a choice between watching movies and studying. The goal of enjoying leisure is weighed against the goal of earning good grades. People regularly choose between such alternatives so they must possess an intuitive method for comparing them. The formal concept of utility allows comparisons between different kinds of costs and benefits by reducing them to a common

underlying scale. A utility function translates the goods that people seek into a value.

The relationship between alternative means and ends is often uncertain, so it is instrumentally rational to obtain information about the likelihood that different courses of action will achieve one's goals and to act in accord with one's beliefs. Outcomes are assigned a utility value and beliefs about the likelihood that an action will lead to the preferred outcome are assigned a probability. If choices led to outcomes with certainty, then the rational choice is a simple matter of selecting the alternative at the top of the preference ordering. When there is uncertainty about the consequence of actions, the expected utility of an action is calculated by combining the respective utilities of the possible outcomes of an action with their corresponding probabilities. Individuals are rational if they have coherent preferences and if their choices are logically derived from these preferences. However people define their goals, they select the best available means to satisfy their preferences based on their beliefs about the outcomes of alternative actions.

8.2 A Continuum of Decision-Making in Economic and Psychological Models

Economic rationality and bounded rationality make different assumptions about the information level and cognitive ability of individuals (Hogarth & Reder, 1987; Kahneman, 2003; Simon, 1995). Bounded rationality assumes there is individual and contextual variation in decision-making processes and outcomes (Conlisk, 1996; Gigerenzer & Goldstein, 1996; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998; Popkin, 1994; Simon, 1995). Individuals are not omniscient, but instead operate with limited time and resources. The analyst tries to understand the reasons for people's actions and allows that

there will be errors of choice even if people try to be instrumentally rational.

People, therefore, are not naturally or intuitively capable of making optimal choices in the more realistic psychology of bounded rationality. Rather, they sometimes choose poorly when compromising between effort and optimisation. Hirschman (1982) suggests that 'mistake making is one of the most characteristic of human actions, so that a good portion of the social world becomes unintelligible once we assume it away' (p. 81).

The idea behind 'satisficing' is that people establish an outcome that is adequate for their purposes and terminate their search when they find an alternative that achieves that standard (Simon, 1957; also see Redlawsk, 2004). This requires that they weigh the quality of the outcome they seek against the amount of effort they are willing to invest to achieve it. If, as a result, people are not universally rational, perhaps they are more likely to be rational when making decisions in some conditions (e.g., when decisions involve greater stakes). And if their choices are not optimal, perhaps they are reasonable within the bounds of their knowledge, capacity, and motivation.

The expectation that cognitive effort varies across decisions also underlies information processing models in psychology. In the study of persuasion, a voluminous literature is built upon dual process theories of attitude change such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (e.g., Petty & Brinol, 2012; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).¹ ELM assumes there are varying degrees of thought (i.e., elaboration) underlying judgements. When sufficiently motivated and able, people engage in effortful 'central' processing and evaluate the relevant arguments and information in a message. At

other times, people engage in 'peripheral' processing and rely upon information shortcuts, such as message source attributes and other heuristics, when forming judgements.

Central processing of information occurs only if the decision maker has the incentives and knowledge to engage in more thoughtful elaboration. Without motivation and capacity, superficial peripheral information processing is the rule. Acknowledging individual and contextual variation in decision-making processes shifts attention to explaining how people make decisions in different circumstances. It is a separate question whether the outcome of evaluations produced through either the central or peripheral route reflects a good decision by a particular standard. If we use a normative standard of rationality, the right preference towards policies and candidates is the position taken by a person who possessed sufficient information about the alternatives, analysed and weighed that evidence properly, and on the basis of that analysis chose the alternative that maximised their expected utility. Yet, figuring out how to operationalise these criteria has proved difficult.

Next, we discuss research in political psychology that reveals features of decision-making that appear to contrast with rational choice assumptions. We show, however, that in each of the areas we examine, there is research that highlights moderators of the processes that cause deviations from rational choice. Although people depart from perfectly informed economic rationality, many individuals make more reasonable political decisions under well-defined circumstances.

8.3 Heuristics and Cue-Taking

Despite the democratic ideal of an informed citizenry, the average individual cannot exert enough influence over political outcomes to warrant paying much attention to public

¹ See also Chaiken and Maheswaran's (1994) heuristic-systematic model.

affairs. The notion of ‘low information rationality’, however, suggests the consequences of being relatively uninformed may not be dire (Popkin, 1994). Citizens who devote little time to politics may learn enough to make reasonable choices by capitalising on politically relevant information available as a by-product of everyday routines (Downs, 1957; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998). They evaluate candidates using easily acquired data, such as economic trends, the partisanship of candidates, and interest group endorsements (Brady & Sniderman, 1985; Fiorina, 1981; Gerber & Phillips, 2003; Lau & Redlawsk, 2001; Sniderman et al., 1991). In so doing, voters draw conclusions without making a detailed study of the issues.

No one disputes that people use mental shortcuts to make political decisions. Such ‘heuristics’ allow individuals to fill in missing information about candidates and policies and to draw inferences about the relative merits of alternative choices (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Whether shortcuts allow people to make *good decisions* is the subject of much investigation.

Researchers use two common approaches to evaluate the utility of heuristics in political behaviour. One method compares the preferences of less informed individuals to the most informed members of the public, all else equal. If the effect of information is inconsequential, the two groups’ choices should be similar, suggesting that less informed citizens find shortcuts to the same decisions made by highly informed voters. This assumes, by definition, that highly informed voters make good decisions, so less informed voters do well to mimic them. A second approach evaluates whether voters who follow heuristics generally make decisions that align with their values and priorities, or if they are led astray by shortcuts.² These alternative standards do not always lead to the same normative judgements, an observation that is applicable not only to studies of

heuristics, but also to research on motivated reasoning and framing.

Virtually all studies that examine the effect of information on political choices find that possessing more information changes preferences, which suggests that less informed citizens are not making optimal choices (Althaus, 1998; Bartels, 1996; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Gilens, 2001). Differences between actual and fully informed public opinion imply that heuristics are unable to compensate for lower levels of information and, therefore, inattention probably results in worse choices. However, studies simulating how political information changes the preferences of voters do not actually observe low information voters’ using heuristics. Instead, these studies infer that, *if low information voters are employing heuristics*, those heuristics are not providing them with the relevant clues needed to vote like those who are highly informed.

In contrast, Lupia (1994) demonstrates the effectiveness of heuristics as a compensatory shortcut in California ballot initiatives. He finds that voters who know the endorsements of interest groups but not the details of initiatives regulating state auto insurance rates cast similar ballots as those voters who knew the particulars. Interest group endorsements therefore erase the preference gap between low and high interest voters. It is possible, however, that the preferences of the two groups coincided because both were similarly cue-driven; this would undermine the logic behind the group comparison, and prevent us from estimating whether one group’s cue-taking yielded the same outcome as the other group’s use of detailed information. Even if the highly informed voters did take account of detailed

² A less commonly used ‘expert’ standard compares heuristic decisions to a substantively rational decision that an expert would make using the best available evidence.

information about the initiatives, Kuklinski and Quirk (2000) question whether they should be credited with making a wise decision to support state regulation of insurance against the advice of policy experts at the time.

Lau and Redlawsk (2001, 2006) also compare the quality of decisions made by high and low information voters in mock elections that simulate how voters gather and evaluate information. Rather than a full information or substantive rationality standard, voters are judged as making 'correct' decisions if they support the candidate that most closely matches their priorities and values. Several results are worth highlighting. First, heuristics are used commonly by both political novices and knowledgeable voters, and play a greater role when choices are more difficult, such as in multi-candidate races, or when candidates' positions are ideologically similar. Second, voters use party, ideology, and endorsement heuristics to make accurate inferences about candidate positions when they do not directly obtain information about those stands. Third, sophisticated voters are better able to use heuristics and are more likely to employ them to improve their likelihood of voting for the candidate that most closely matches their values and priorities.

These results support the proposition that heuristics aid decision-making, but with the proviso that heuristics require sufficient political knowledge to be used effectively. Voters need to understand the significance of a cue, and be able to relate the implicit information in those cues to their own preferences. In the case of party affiliation, for example, voters have to know the party stereotypes, the partisanship of the candidates, and must have preferences that allow them to choose on the basis of the stereotypical information.

It follows from these observations that heuristics work best when there is a high correspondence between detailed information about

the alternatives and the heuristics that potentially stand for those details. Lau and Redlawsk presume that the party, ideology, and endorsement heuristics in their study are more often than not accurate in practice. But they also show that, when candidates are non-stereotypical and adopt policy positions that do not coincide with traditional party platforms, the use of the party heuristic by more knowledgeable voters *reduces* the rate of correct voting, as voters jump to the wrong conclusion using the shortcut.

Many experimental studies therefore focus on these non-stereotypical conditions to analyse the failure of heuristics and the possibilities for correcting mistaken choices. These experiments share a basic design in which respondents evaluate a policy or candidate using complementary or conflicting substantive information and partisan cues. By manipulating the substantive details and the heuristic, it is possible to determine the relative weight given to each factor, and specifically whether people follow party cues only when those cues correspond to stereotypical policies, or if the party cues are followed indiscriminately (and incorrectly) even when they are linked to policies typically championed by the other party.

Using this experimental paradigm, Cohen (2003) found that people are persuaded by cues to favour widely contrasting liberal or conservative welfare policies so long as they originate from their own party. Similarly, Rahn (1993) and Riggle et al. (1992) demonstrate that respondents support their party's candidates even when they deviate from the party line on core issues. Cohen's study shows how party cues affect not only the evaluation of policy alternatives, but also the interpretation of substantive information. In the absence of party cues, respondents preferred the policy that was consistent with their ideological values. But when the policies were

given party sponsors, liberals favoured the Democratic welfare policy whether it was generous or stringent, whereas conservatives favoured the Republican policy regardless of content. Furthermore, respondents reconciled the contradictory policy–party information by imputing the non-stereotypical policy had additional features consistent with party stereotypes.

These studies suggest that voters are easily misled by heuristics to make decisions that contradict their values. Yet, we should question how often trusted source cues, like parties, take the non-stereotypical positions attributed to them in experiments. If these situations are uncommon, which the term ‘non-stereotypical’ suggests, the mistakes in judgement in these studies may rarely occur in reality. Respondents in these experiments might be guilty of biased information processing, but only in the course of trying to make sense of an alternative universe in which Republicans are champions of the poor and Democrats favour the policies of Ronald Reagan.

8.3.1 Moderators of Cues and Information

Although endorsements can obscure relevant political information to produce suboptimal decisions, our broader theme is that various information contexts and individual characteristics moderate the extent to which attitudes and decisions are misdirected by heuristics. Studies identify circumstances when people are motivated to use cues appropriately in conjunction with relevant information, engage in more effortful processing of information, and make better decisions, as measured by the correspondence between their preferences and underlying values.

First, not all individuals are equally susceptible to misapplying cues. While the less politically aware often use party cues inappropriately

to form their policy preferences, people with higher levels of awareness use cues more reservedly and factor relevant information in their decisions (Kam, 2005; also see Arceneaux, 2008). For example, Boudreau and MacKenzie (2014) demonstrate that the politically knowledgeable ‘react objectively’ (p. 58) to non-partisan policy information when such information conflicts with partisan cues on ballot measures.

There is also evidence that the relative impact of policy information and cues is moderated by psychological factors such as ‘need for cognition’, a characteristic that reflects a willingness to grapple with substantive information (see also Chapter 5). In an experiment modelled on the Cohen study, Bullock (2011) finds that Democrats high in need for cognition are more responsive to ideological shifts in the substantive content of policy proposals and less diverted by misleading party cues.

The likelihood that cues lead people astray also depends on the nature of the political issue. Party cues have significantly less impact on salient issues (Arceneaux, 2008; Ciuk & Yost, 2016) and on issues that divide the electorate along clear group and ideological lines (Chong & Mullinix, 2019). Therefore, when party cues are misleading (non-stereotypical) on familiar or well-defined issues, respondents know enough about these issues to recognise where they stand on them regardless of the contradictory cues. This restricts the range of circumstances where people are prone to make errors in the application of cues. Moreover, the ‘errors’ that people make in these limited cases are arguably less egregious, as it is reasonable for people to lean more heavily on a trusted source such as the party to guide them on unfamiliar or unstructured issues (Chong & Mullinix, 2019; Lau & Redlawsk, 2001).

Research also documents information conditions that temper the use of heuristics. For

example, party cues bias how people attribute blame for the handling of natural disasters, but people reduce their reliance on cues when provided information about the responsibilities of government officials (Malhotra & Kuo, 2008). Reinforcing this point, several studies highlight specific types of policy information and arguments that offset the influence of party cues.³ Lengthy descriptions of policies (Bullock, 2011) and information from non-partisan sources (Kernell & Mullinix, 2019) matter as much as party cues, and moderate their influence when forming judgements. Short messages that heighten the personal relevance of an issue can eliminate and counteract the effect of parties endorsing counter-stereotypical information (Mullinix, 2016). And, information that clarifies the groups that benefit or are hurt by a policy constrains the ability of parties to take different positions without alienating their supporters (Chong & Mullinix, 2019). This is not to suggest that party cues are inconsequential, but, rather, that the scope of their influence is more limited than often assumed, while the power of policy information to shape preferences has been underestimated. Under particular circumstances, people make reasonable choices based on the available information.

The moderating effects of the information environment on the use of heuristics are not limited to party cues. While Achen and Bartels (2016) show that retrospective voters do a miserable job assessing an incumbent administration's economic performance – focusing almost exclusively on the election year economy – Healy and Lenz (2014) find that voters readily use more representative economic data when it is made available to them. Their results

suggest a straightforward solution to the faulty year-end heuristic: 'Government departments, the news media, or even candidates thus may be able to reduce voters' unintentional shortsightedness by changing how they frame economic data' (p. 45). At the same time, they wonder if this cure is more easily accomplished in the lab than in the real world.

8.3.2 Motivated Reasoning

Instrumental rationality requires that people act in accord with their beliefs about the likelihood that different courses of action will achieve their goals. A common bias in decision-making, however, is that people allow their beliefs to shape evaluations of information (rather than vice versa). Motivated reasoning refers to the influence of goals and prior attitudes on the acquisition, evaluation, and incorporation of information in decision-making. Research focuses on two broad categories of motivations: *accuracy* and *directional* motivations. People motivated by accuracy wish to make the correct decision so they try to obtain the information needed to reach that outcome. In contrast, directional goals lead people to search for and process information in an – often unconscious – effort to defend a prior attitude, identity, or belief (Kunda, 1990).

Directional motivations are driven by automatic, affective responses (Lodge & Taber, 2005; Redlawsk, 2002). People view arguments supportive of their priors as stronger (prior attitude effect), counterargue information that challenges their existing views (disconfirmation bias), and seek information consistent with their attitudes (confirmation bias). Such biased information processing is arguably incongruent with rational choice as both an explanatory model and a normative standard of good decision-making (Druckman, 2012).

³ Argument quality, issue involvement, and accountability also influence the relative effects of information and cues (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984).

8.3.3 The Effects of Motivated Reasoning

Motivated reasoning seemingly colours information processing on every topic commonly studied by political scientists. Notably, policy preferences are skewed by directional motivations originating from pre-existing issue attitudes or partisanship.⁴ For example, in Taber and Lodge's (2006) classic study, exposure to competing arguments in political debates over affirmative action and gun control only strengthened prior views, resulting in more extreme and polarised issue attitudes. Beyond its effect on policy preferences, motivated reasoning affects assessments of the economy, attitudes towards candidates, and perceptions of objective facts. Thus, not only do opinions vary by ideology and party, so do beliefs about the state of the world (Bartels, 2002). Even when partisans agree on the condition of the economy, they are motivated to engage in selective attributions of praise and blame so as to rationalise the situation and defend their partisan allegiances (Bisgaard, 2015; Bisgaard & Slothuus, 2018; Enns & McAvoy, 2012).

A considerable literature centres on the consequences of motivated reasoning for candidate evaluations and vote choice (Goren, 2002; Kim et al., 2010; Lebo & Cassino, 2007; Lodge & Taber, 2013; Redlawsk, 2002), but the biases documented in these studies vary in the degree to which they undermine rationality. Some work appears inconsistent with Bayesian learning (Kim et al., 2010); voters predisposed to like a candidate become more favourable following receipt of negative information about them – a finding Redlawsk (2002) describes as 'perverse'. But other work is less straightforward. For example, economic changes have little impact on evaluations of an in-party president due to partisan motivations, but people do, indeed, reward and punish out-party presidents for economic performance (Lebo & Cassino, 2007).

8.3.4 Moderators and Limitations of Motivated Reasoning

As in research on heuristics, studies that emphasise the power of directional motivations also identify moderators of these 'biases'. Nearly all of the evidence consistent with the prior attitude effect, confirmation bias, and disconfirmation bias in Taber and Lodge's (2006) study is confined to those who are most politically knowledgeable and hold strong prior attitudes about the topics of discussion. People with weak priors on the issues, and political neophytes generally, show almost no evidence of motivated reasoning (Bolsen et al., 2014; Druckman & Leeper, 2012; Miller et al., 2016; Taber & Lodge, 2006; Taber et al., 2009). Likewise, many people have ambivalent feelings towards political parties and are not driven to view their party favourably (Lavine et al., 2012). Motivated reasoning also differs by individuals' cognitive drives. People with a high need for cognition and low need for affect are more likely to be motivated by accuracy goals and to exhibit behaviour consistent with Bayesian updating (Arceneaux & Vander Wielen, 2013; see also Nir, 2011). Recognising such individual moderators of directional motivations alters our assessment of the breadth and pervasiveness of biases in attitude formation in the broader population.

The observation that increased investment in politics exacerbates biases in the evaluation of evidence suggests that people are relatively open to information on new subjects, but as their views solidify and become integrated with their other attitudes, they are more prone to defend their positions against contrary views. Hardin (2009, p. 8) views this path dependency

⁴ See Petersen et al. (2013) for a discussion of how partisan motivated reasoning is similar to, but distinct from, peripheral processing of party cues.

to be eminently reasonable, because ‘it is mentally cheaper to question a bit of new knowledge than to jettison a lot of old knowledge with the consequence of having to restructure the broken remainder of old knowledge. A new fact might not merely challenge a particular old fact but also much that is inferentially based on the old fact.’ In this regard, an ideologically constrained belief system (Converse, 1964) is worth preserving and defending if such ideological knowledge allows one to make decisions more simply and reliably than if one lacks a coherent world view.

8.3.5 Information and Social Contexts

The effects of motivated reasoning are not only shaped by individual-level characteristics, but are also attenuated by informational and social contexts (Leeper & Slothuus, 2014). The amount, type, and manner in which relevant information is communicated to people affect the degree to which directional motivations alter decision-making. People do not always seek confirming information when a wider choice of information sources is available; nor do they continue to resist contrary information indefinitely if it accumulates.

Most of the public, excepting the small proportion that is strongly ideological, appears to obtain its news by sampling across content domains in the media, which runs contrary to the confirmation bias claim (Prior, 2013; Nelson & Webster, 2017). Experiments show that when people are forced to view ideological programmes, they are more likely to engage in motivated reasoning, but when given opportunities to choose from a range of media options,

these effects dissipate and attitudes are less polarised (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2013).

Moreover, there is a limit to how much contrary information people are willing to discount about a favoured candidate; beyond this ‘tipping point’, they use the negative information to update their evaluations of candidates (Redlawsk et al., 2010). Likewise, Parker-Stephen (2013) shows that the latitude for motivated reasoning to alter views of the economy depends on the variance in the information. Partisans disagree most about the economy when economic news is mixed, allowing partisans to choose their facts, but partisans tend to converge in their economic assessments when economic reports are uniformly favourable or unfavourable. Similarly, Democrats were predictably quicker than Republicans to accept that weapons of mass destruction did not exist in Iraq, but Republicans eventually succumbed to this conclusion as evidence mounted against their prior belief (Gaines et al., 2007).⁵ As Kunda (1990, pp. 482–483) noted in drawing bounds on motivated reasoning, ‘people motivated to arrive at a particular conclusion attempt to be rational and to construct a justification of their desired conclusion that would persuade a dispassionate observer. They draw the desired conclusion only if they can muster up the evidence necessary to support it.’

Directional motivations are also curbed by social contexts that increase incentives for accuracy. Telling people they have to justify their opinion to others (Bolsen et al., 2014) or having them discuss alternative policies with people with contrasting perspectives (Klar, 2014) diminishes biased information processing. These results provide a degree of optimism with respect to people’s ability to make more deliberative and reasoned decisions, but of course only so far as people actually engage in these types of discussions with people from the ‘other side’ (e.g., Mutz, 2006).

⁵ Nevertheless, motivated reasoning in the *interpretation* of the new information remained unchecked by evidence, as strong Republicans treated the new fact as being irrelevant and were undeterred in their support of Bush’s handling of the war.

Monetary incentives can diminish partisan differences in factual beliefs by undercutting the social and expressive benefits that people get from stating biased beliefs about the world that reflect favourably on their own party and poorly on the opposing party. Therefore, payments for correct responses to factual questions about states of the world, such as the inflation and unemployment rates, have been shown to reduce partisan gaps by more than 50% (Bullock et al., 2015; see also Khanna & Sood, 2018; Prior et al., 2015).

Studies also indicate that partisan motivated reasoning is diminished when elite partisan divisions are described and communicated in particular ways (Druckman et al., 2013). Robison and Mullinix (2016) use a content analysis to demonstrate that partisan polarisation is often criticised in news stories; their subsequent experiments show that communicating party divisions as they are often presented in news media increases positive evaluations of the opposing party's arguments and heightens support for bipartisanship. This suggests certain types of news coverage stimulate more deliberative evaluations of arguments.

In general, diminishing or removing party or ideology cues in political communications is a reliable method of counteracting motivated reasoning. This seemingly obvious rule helps to explain Guess and Coppock's (2020) finding little evidence in their studies of the 'backlash' effects linked to motivated reasoning. In contrast to other work on directional motivations, evidence and arguments surrounding gun control, minimum wage, and the death penalty failed to polarise or reinforce attitudes; indeed, they frequently produced attitude change in the intended direction of the message.⁶ Notably, however, none of the pro and con arguments communicated in these experiments were attributed to a partisan or ideological source; instead, the

information for the three issues was ascribed to scientific and academic sources.

In contrast, the 'information' conveyed to participants in the Taber and Lodge (2006) study consisted of highly ideological and partisan claims that were attributed to political sources and written in an argumentative style (see also Lodge & Taber, 2013). For example, one argument stated, 'Affirmative action plans treat people based on race, not past or present circumstances. Middle class blacks are given preferences while lower class whites are not! This is unfair reverse discrimination and is itself a form of discrimination. Affirmative action programs must stop' (Lodge & Taber, 2013, p. 155). Such ideological messages, especially when amplified by a partisan source, are likely to be familiar to respondents and, not surprisingly, are counterargued and rejected by those with strong contrary positions on the issues. As we will see in Section 8.4, in the context of research on framing, resistance to such persuasive messages is often regarded as salutary. There is no way to choose between these contrasting normative perspectives without evaluating whether the information provided is sufficiently novel and reliable that one *ought* to take account of it in one's attitude.

8.4 Framing Effects

Rationality presumes that individuals have coherent preferences that are invariant to how the alternatives are described. To the contrary, framing research offers evidence that alternative (and often logically equivalent) descriptions of the same policy produce significantly different responses (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). Such framing effects purportedly

⁶ Similarly, across five experiments, Wood and Porter (2019) find no instances where backfire effects were triggered.

undermine the assumption of consistent preferences in rational choice theory (Druckman, 2001a, 2001b; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984).

The type of framing effects that has drawn the greatest attention in political science research is known as *issue* or *emphasis* framing (Druckman, 2001a). Issue framing is produced by communications that emphasise certain characteristics of an issue to the exclusion of other features. By making those characteristics more accessible in people's judgements, individuals can be swayed between supporting and opposing a policy depending on the valence of the highlighted feature. A classic example used in surveys and experiments asks respondents if they are willing to allow an extremist group to hold a public rally (Chong, 1993; Chong & Druckman, 2007a; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997). If the rally is framed as an exercise in free speech, people are more likely to support the group's right to stage it than if the rally is framed as a threat to public order. Similar examples of framing effects on other issues abound in the literature (e.g., Nelson & Oxley, 1999; Nicholson & Howard, 2003).

The information-processing biases associated with framing are the opposite of those attributed to motivated reasoning. In studies of framing, attitude shifts in the direction advocated by the frame are often regarded to be *overly responsive* to the manipulation, whereas in studies of motivated reasoning, it is *resistance* to contrary messages that is considered problematic. These conflicting normative standards for decision-making stem from different assumptions about the qualities of frames, arguments, and information, and the conditions in which people ought to resist or yield to persuasive communications.

A charitable interpretation of issue framing is that people are guided rather than misled or deceived by the substantive content of frames. In this view, which accords with rational calculation, alternative frames change the nature of

the problem for the respondent by providing new information. Although they have a significantly different normative status, 'framing effects' and 'information effects' describe similar processes that are hard to distinguish. Framing effects supposedly undermine the validity of public opinion, while information effects show that the public is responsive to facts and evidence, which is obviously a desirable quality in a democracy. But frames and facts both affect the beliefs that people hold about the implications of different choices. A possible distinction is that information introduces new considerations that change people's beliefs and possibly their preferences, while framing operates exclusively by increasing the accessibility and importance of existing beliefs rather than introducing new beliefs (Nelson & Oxley, 1999). Many instances of framing, however, probably result from a combination of persuasion and framing in which people adopt a particular way to construe an event that involves forming new beliefs rather than simply emphasising existing beliefs (Chong, 2000; Chong & Druckman, 2007b; Leeper & Slothuus, 2014).

8.4.1 The Scope and Limitations of Framing Effects

A number of framing studies focus on the moderating role of individual-level characteristics. Frames that resonate with one group of people have little to no effect on other individuals, depending on their values, partisanship, and ideology (Gross and D'Ambrosio, 2004; Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001; Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010). For example, alternative framings of handgun legislation shift policy attitudes and attributions of blame for school shootings, but these effects are moderated by individual predispositions and partisan attachments (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001). Although these studies are not typically discussed under the rubric of motivated

reasoning, they identify circumstances where directional motivations act as a type of ‘check’ or constraint on people’s over-responsiveness to frames. Evidence of the moderating effects of political knowledge, awareness, and education is more mixed, as these factors both facilitate and suppress framing effects under different circumstances, similar to their conditional effects on motivated reasoning and the use of heuristics (Barker, 2005; Chong & Druckman, 2007b; Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001; Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010).

Druckman (2004) provides evidence of contextual and individual variation in the size of framing effects on several prototypical experimental framing problems. Expertise reduces framing effects, and counterframing and discussion with people who have different views also temper framing effects by increasing the accessibility of alternative interpretations of the problem so that one is not swayed disproportionately by a singular framing of the issue. Furthermore, framing effects are contingent on the source of the frame (Druckman, 2001b, 2001c; Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010), which not only limits their ubiquity, but also suggests that opinion changes due to framing reflect reasonable evaluations of the credibility of the information source contained in frames.

8.4.2 Competitive Framing

Advances in the study of framing are based on increasingly realistic experimental designs to model how people encounter political communications in natural environments. Analyses of ‘competitive framing’ have focused on the interaction between individual predispositions and processing styles and the frequency and ‘strength’ of messages that individuals receive over time from opposing sides of an issue. The strength of a frame is defined simply by subjective estimates of its persuasiveness rather than by any set of objective criteria.

The results from experiments on competitive frames are encouraging from a normative perspective if strong frames are presumed to convey rationales that have greater validity or merit. When exposed to opposing frames of varying strengths and frequencies, participants weigh the relative strength of arguments on both sides of the issue and do not merely revert to standing positions. They assess the relevance or applicability of competing frames to the issue at hand, counterargue against weak frames, and search for additional information to distinguish between opposing frames (Chong & Druckman, 2007a; Druckman, 2004). These results are reassuring in that respondents behave sensibly and are not distracted by irrelevant features of the decision.

However, competition does not always lead people to side with the frame that is congruent with their value priorities, which is positive evidence of responsiveness to information, but also violates a criterion for a good decision. When presented with competing frames, people tend to adopt an intermediate policy position that is proportional to the relative strengths of the frames. This means that although competition diminishes framing effects, as Sniderman and Theriault (2004) showed, one side can nevertheless obtain a strategic advantage by developing compelling frames to pull support from individuals whose values are inconsistent with the policy (Chong & Druckman, 2007a, 2010; Wise & Brewer, 2010). Again, depending on assumptions about the content of frames, such framing effects can either raise or lower our confidence in the capacities of citizens to make reasonable political judgements.

8.4.3 Source Effects

If frames contain valuable information, the finding that people weigh competing frames

according to their strength is among the more positive results. It is evidence that people judge the applicability or relevance of messages and respond only to those that are compelling or persuasive. Unfortunately, this favourable assessment is tempered by research showing the impact of frames is moderated by *sources*, especially political parties. In competitive contexts, strong frames may no longer carry more influence than weak frames if the source of the frame lacks authority or is incongruent with the recipient's group affiliations.

The observation to draw from this result is that the strength of a frame derives not only from its substantive content but also its source. That the source of a message is a critical component of its persuasiveness is a central tenet in theories of attitude change (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). But the role of sources, and partisan sources in particular, in the study of framing has been underappreciated (Bechtel et al., 2015; Druckman, 2001c; Hartman & Weber, 2009; Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010). Although the content of a frame is separable from the source, the overall strength or effectiveness of the frame must take both into account. For example, an editorial in a major metropolitan newspaper has greater strength than the same argument coming from a student newspaper because the metro paper is more credible for most readers (Chong & Druckman, 2007a; Druckman, 2001b). Likewise, adding ideological sources to frames can increase their effectiveness among respondents who share the source's values and reduce their impact among respondents who hold different ideological priorities (Hartman & Weber, 2009). For this reason, a frame judged a priori to be strong based on its content alone may no longer be perceived as a strong frame if it originates from a less reputable or out-group source. In competitive contexts, a strong substantive frame attributed to a political party may even generate a contrast effect among

respondents of the opposing party when the party source strengthens the frame among co-partisans, but backfires among those who disagree with the party (Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010).

The ability of party cues to fortify weak frames in competition with stronger frames is another instance of the potentially detrimental effects of motivated reasoning. Druckman et al. (2013) show that when frames are coupled with party sources, the normal framing effects produced by pro and con arguments vanish, and people follow the *party* they identify with regardless of the *strength* of the arguments. Notably, they conform to the party position even when they receive a stronger argument for the opposing position.

The tentative normative conclusion from Druckman et al. (2013) is that partisan-motivated reasoning reduces the quality of opinions – because respondents ignore the a priori strength of the frames based on content alone and simply toe the party line. Whether this normative judgement is warranted depends significantly on whether the frames are viewed as substantive arguments or 'information', or as strategic 'frames' designed to manipulate public opinion.

Such ambivalence towards frames runs parallel to uncertain evaluations of partisan cues, which can be either a valuable heuristic (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001; Lupia, 1994; Popkin, 1994) or a poor substitute for, and impediment to, systematic information processing (Bartels, 2002). Linking policy options to partisan endorsements is an especially effective way to reduce arbitrary framing effects that cause people to make inconsistent choices (Druckman, 2001a). Unfortunately, if people can lean on party cues to guard against cognitive biases, they can also be misled by party cues to adopt positions they would not support on the basis of the strength of arguments.

8.4.4 Normative Assessments of Framing

Future research on the quality of decisions that citizens make under competitive framing conditions must address why some frames are more effective than others (O'Keefe, 2016). The normative assessment of framing effects in competitive contexts depends on evaluations of the substantive content of frames. If competing frames contain valuable information that should be used to update beliefs and preferences, then rational individuals ought to respond to these substantive policy details. This is the positive interpretation of a framing effect. A more cynical interpretation holds that, while frames can inform, they are also strategic instruments (Gershkoff & Kushner, 2005; Glazier & Boydston, 2012; Hanggli & Kriesi, 2010; Sides, 2006). Elites, in this view, employ any message that will shift public opinion in the manner they wish and do not care if their arguments are defensible. In environmental conservation campaigns, consultants use polling to test-run a laundry list of arguments for and against a ballot measure to gauge which arguments increase or decrease the probability that voters will support it (Chong & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2005). The primary consideration for the list is not the relevance or empirical validity of the argument, but whether the argument moves public opinion in the desired direction, and the degree to which it stands up when matched against opposing claims.

The meaning of frame strength adopted in Chong and Druckman (2007a, 2010) carries no connotation that the stronger frame is a superior argument and should be followed for rational reasons. Indeed, there was a presumption in their studies that strong frames could be specious and influential for irrelevant reasons, notwithstanding the strong frames developed in their experiments, which contained reasonably good and truthful substantive arguments for and against the issues.

8.5 Reconciling Concepts and Evaluations: A Path Forward

Researchers draw ambiguous and often conflicting normative implications from studies of information processing despite sharing a common focus on the interactions of three groups of variables that systematically predict decision-making outcomes: (1) political heuristics; (2) information, arguments, or frames describing the alternatives; and (3) the capacities, motives, and attitudes of the decision maker. Such disagreements stem from different criteria for a good (i.e., rational) decision, based on varying assumptions about the kinds of information people ought to attend to and factor into their choices. According to the rational choice model, people's choices follow from their beliefs, values, and goals. They will modify their beliefs if new information shows those beliefs are incorrect, and if more accurate beliefs would lead to better decisions. But they will also reject invalid claims and arguments that would lead to worse decisions.

Studies of motivated reasoning equivocate in adjudicating between reasonable scepticism and irrational intransigence in the evaluation of information. Although people are expected to moderate their positions in the face of contrary arguments, it is also reasonable for them to question information that challenges their existing beliefs. The issue is how much resistance is allowable without being irrational; unfortunately, this is almost never discussed. Normative discussions of framing are equally tentative. Sometimes people are influenced by the arguments conveyed in frames, and other times frames are resisted, with unclear implications of either for the quality of choices. The literature is indecisive regarding the circumstances when stability or flexibility reflects better judgement. Consistency of preferences across frames is the normative ideal when the

frames are assumed to be manipulative messages rather than reliable information. Citizens do best in such cases by deciphering which policy supports their value priorities, which requires them to ignore or reject frames that encourage a mismatch. In contrast to studies of motivated reasoning, respondents who are persuaded by contrary frames to adopt preferences that are inconsistent with their values are being tricked. Therefore, following a party cue or other heuristic leads to a better decision if it prevents one from being influenced by a deceptive frame.

Yet other studies of framing employ an alternative standard, closer to the premises of motivated reasoning research, of whether respondents' preferences reflect the 'strongest arguments' received in a debate. Accordingly, strong frames should prevail over party cues even when those cues recommend choices that are consistent with respondents' values. Following the cues in this instance is considered motivated reasoning that leads to the wrong decision because the substantive information in the frames is assumed to be of greater diagnostic value than the cue.

In research on heuristics, cues should be followed if they point to the alternative that corresponds closest to one's values and priorities. They are usually counterproductive only when they recommend a non-stereotypical choice that conflicts with substantive information about the alternatives. The problem facing individuals in these atypical circumstances is whether to place greater confidence in the cue or in the information. In the motivated reasoning research, following the party cue is detrimental if it prevents a person from incorporating relevant information into the decision. But relevance is often debatable. In framing research, following the party cue is helpful if it leads to value-consistent preferences across alternative frames, but harmful if the resulting choice does not reflect the

strength of arguments for each alternative – two criteria that sometimes conflict.

Judging the rationality of decisions ultimately depends on assessments of the value of the information presented to respondents in the study. Researchers should directly state, from the outset, whether a particular rational choice assumption is violated by (non)responsiveness to a particular piece of information or cue. The benefit of paying attention to information is simply the reduction in the likelihood of making a mistaken choice (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998). Additional information is therefore useful or necessary if it prevents a costly mistake. Surprisingly, studies of information processing gloss over the attributes of the information that respondents are provided. The information contained in motivated reasoning, heuristics, and framing experiments runs the gamut from highly partisan arguments and symbolic value appeals to expert opinion and scientific evidence. This information is attributed to representatives of political parties and ideological camps or to more neutral sources, such as experts, newspapers, and non-partisan groups.

Rarely if ever do studies establish the premise that the information presented to respondents is valuable or worthless, informative or manipulative. Many of the political communications used in experimental treatments have the characteristics of tendentious appeals to ideological values. These types of biased messages are unlikely to be interpreted and evaluated as objective information by those holding alternative positions on the issues in question. Closer scrutiny of the variety of 'information' treatments across studies of information processing in the heuristics, motivated reasoning, and framing traditions suggests that respondents display consistent tendencies in the manner in which they evaluate and balance cues, frames, arguments, and information, even as the scholarly interpretations of their

decisions varies because of inconsistent normative criteria. Substantive facts, frames, and arguments all have an impact on individuals under certain conditions, but rarely when they originate from sources that are perceived to be unreliable.

The most pervasive heuristic source in politics is the party. In studies of information processing, partisanship is an ever-present influence, sometimes the problem, and sometimes the solution, depending on the criterion against which it is evaluated. Party identifications draw upon stereotypes about the group interests that parties usually champion, and more often than not, public policy conforms to these stereotypes (Green et al., 2002). Although cues and heuristics sometimes distract individuals from relevant information that would lead to better decisions, these shortcomings are bounded by individual and contextual factors that limit errors.

The motivated reasoning literature highlights that people resist contrary information, but such resistance is amplified when information is attributed to distrusted sources. Information from more neutral sources has a greater chance of influencing people's opinions. Framing research shows that people are more easily influenced by one-sided or imbalanced frames, especially on unfamiliar issues, but on issues about which people are informed and have strong attitudes, it is more difficult to shift their views using contrary frames. People also show improved ability to make value-consistent choices in balanced competitive contexts that allow them to weigh the strength of opposing messages based on their content and sources. These framing results help explain why studies of motivated reasoning find that balanced information has a limited or negative impact, especially among better-informed respondents.

The broad lesson from studies of information processing is that citizens are economical

in their investments in politics. They try to do more with less and take shortcuts whenever possible. They use group cues and stereotypes to draw inferences about public policies, and often lean on trusted sources to evaluate arguments and information more than they scrutinise the information themselves. They conform to the beliefs and values of their reference groups, and the resulting partisan and ideological world views developed in this manner facilitate political choices. Across studies of information processing, people show they can and often do behave reasonably, given the proper incentives and social and political contexts, though they also commit the kinds of errors we expect owing to low attention and knowledge.

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9 Emotions and Politics

David P. Redlawsk and Kyle Mattes

9.1 Introduction

It has become the norm to start reviews of emotions in politics by observing how emotion has been ignored in political psychology, generally in favour of cognitive explanations. But such a statement is no longer accurate. Indeed, for at least the last 35 years, political psychologists have engaged seriously with emotions, developing and expanding theories and empirics, and pushing emotions ahead of cognitive-based theories as descriptors of what people do when confronted with political stimuli. The study of emotions in political psychology is now integral to the field.

Accordingly, there is also an ever-growing literature. Some works are traditional handbook chapters (Brader & Marcus, 2013; Brader et al., 2011; Marcus, 2003), while others appear as research encyclopaedia essays (e.g., Sirin & Villalobos, 2019). In addition, many edited volumes have been published (Åhäll & Gregory, 2015; Demertzis, 2017; Neuman et al., 2007; Redlawsk, 2006) and political psychology textbooks routinely include chapters on emotions (Cottam et al., 2015; Houghton, 2014).

Redlawsk and Pierce (2017) discuss three key research programmes in political psychology: affective intelligence, motivated evaluation, and ambivalence. These three generally represent the different approaches to emotions, engaging either dimensional models as in motivated evaluation (Lodge & Taber, 2013), or discrete emotions like anger, anxiety, and enthusiasm in affective intelligence theory

(AIT; Marcus et al., 2000). Lavine et al.'s (2012) ambivalence theory engages both paradigms; ambivalent voters are more likely to employ in-depth, objective reasoning, while non-ambivalent voters are more likely to use motivated reasoning (see also Chapter 8).

Given the limitations of space and the existing reviews, we focus on recent research without attempting to survey the entire field. We primarily examine research on a key set of discrete emotions, putting aside both the dimensional and ambivalent perspectives. In addition to the more commonly studied emotions (anger, anxiety, and enthusiasm/hope), we highlight other discrete emotions that have important political implications. We also briefly discuss two group-oriented approaches that have gained attention more recently: moral emotions and collective emotions.

9.2 Appraisal Theory of Emotions

Appraisal theory focuses on how differences in the way people appraise their environment determine the emotions they experience. Each emotion is represented by a unique set of appraisal outcomes across various dimensions. The dimensions themselves include self-appraisal of a person's situation, such as motivational state (appetitive/aversive: see Lang et al., 1992), probability (certain/uncertain),

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and agency (self/others/circumstances; Roseman, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). These appraisals need not be done consciously, nor need they be accurate.

Lerner and Keltner's (2000, 2001) appraisal-tendency theory refines appraisal theory by combining the dimensions that underlie discrete emotions with an evolutionary perspective on how emotions coordinate responses to situations. They write that, 'appraisal tendencies are goal-directed processes through which emotions exert effects on judgement and choice until the emotion-eliciting problem is resolved' (Lerner & Keltner, 2000, p. 477). Much of politics – especially voting – is about judgement and choice, and so understanding this role for discrete emotions is important.

Roseman (2011) generally categorises 16 of the most-studied discrete emotions into 4 families:

1. Contacting (all positive emotions): hope, joy, relief, love, pride
2. Distancing (negative emotions with **low control** potential): fear, sadness, distress, dislike, regret)
3. Attack (negative, **appetitive** emotions with **high control** potential): frustration, anger, guilt
4. Rejection (negative, **aversive** emotions with **high control** potential): disgust, contempt, shame

More specifically, the significant dimensions of emotions relevant to our discussion here are:

- Hope (uncertain, appetitive, circumstance-caused, high control potential, positive)
- Fear (uncertain, circumstance-caused, low control potential, negative)
- Anger (other-caused, appetitive, high control potential, negative)
- Contempt (other-caused, aversive, high control potential, negative)

- Disgust (circumstance-caused, aversive, high control potential, negative)
- Guilt (self-caused, appetitive, high control potential, negative)
- Shame (self-caused, aversive, high control potential, negative)

AIT addresses the first three emotions, while the next two are critically important 'rejection' emotions. The final two emotions are often classified more generally as moral and/or collective emotions (see also Chapter 19).

9.3 Discrete Emotions in Political Psychology

The study of discrete emotions in political science owes much to AIT (e.g., Marcus et al., 2000), which initially focused on different effects of enthusiasm and anxiety on political information processing and behaviour. AIT describes two affective subsystems: disposition and surveillance. The disposition system reflexively drives political behaviour based on existing beliefs and political habits, leading to enthusiasm (or its absence). The surveillance system activates under threat, causing anxiety. Anxious voters rely less on political habits, seeking out new information and behaving more akin to rational voters (see also Chapter 8).

Recent formulations of AIT add 'aversion', which, according to Brader and Marcus (2013), is defined as 'a cluster of feelings that includes anger, disgust, contempt, and hatred' (p. 179), and several studies have similarly treated *aversion* and *anger* as synonyms (e.g., Capelos, 2013). However, conflating these four emotions into one is problematic, as they are distinct emotions with distinct determinants, characteristics, and effects (e.g., Ekman & Cordaro, 2011; Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Haidt, 2003; Halperin et al., 2012; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). In particular, anger is not aversive; as we explain below, it

is an aggressive emotion quite different from aversive emotions like disgust or contempt (Lee & Lang, 2009; Roseman, 2011). For instance, Ryan (2012) finds that anger substantially increases information seeking, and Huddy et al. (2007) show that angry citizens are more likely to support military action.

For the remainder of this chapter, we discuss the basic traits and general effects of a set of discrete emotions, followed by highlighted topics from recent research. We focus first on the emotions of AIT: anger, anxiety, and enthusiasm. We then turn to recent work on emotions that influence politics but are not necessarily subsumed under AIT. These include contempt and disgust, along with moral emotions (Haidt, 2003; see also Chapter 19) and the emerging collective emotions perspective.

9.4 Anger

Anger is one of the most-studied emotions in political science. It is produced by appraisals of injustice (Averill, 1982), unfair outcomes (Kuppens et al., 2003), or goal blockage (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009). One key facet is the appraisal of another person as the cause for the anger-evoking situation, even if the person blamed had nothing to do with it (Quigley & Tedeschi, 1996). Anger is often combined with frustration, which arises from the appraisal of obstacles or circumstances being attributed as the cause (Roseman, 2011).

Behaviourally, anger is an approach emotion (e.g., Frijia, 1986), as angry people are motivated to force change in another's behaviour (e.g., Sell et al., 2009), seek revenge, or otherwise hurt the target person (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Anger arises especially when one feels control or power over the target (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Huddy et al., 2007). For instance, people are more likely to express anger towards lower-status individuals than to higher-status people (Kuppens et al., 2004), and angry individuals

prefer to allocate less to welfare recipients (Small & Lerner, 2008).

Anger is associated with reflexive decision-making. Angry people tend to rely on pre-existing heuristics (Huddy et al., 2007) thus making short-sighted inferences using stereotypes (Bodenhausen et al., 1994; Tiedens & Linton, 2001) and failing to deliberate carefully (Chaiken & Trope, 1999). Anger increases people's motivation to find information bolstering existing attitudes (MacKuen et al., 2010) and decreases their motivation to learn about candidates with whom they disagree (Redlawsk et al., 2007).

9.4.1 Recent Studies

We focus on recent studies in five areas. First, anger can contribute to political polarisation (see also Chapter 25). Anger is central to partisan identity (Huddy et al., 2015) and is induced whenever people encounter incivility directed towards their political in-group (Gervais, 2017). Gervais (2019) finds that counter-attitudinal incivility from political elites on Twitter arouses anger, decreases pride, and leads to a condemnation of the opposing party. Clifford (2019) reports that persuasive frames eliciting anger or disgust increase political issue moralisation and polarisation. Suhay and Erisen (2018) identify anger as the primary mechanism behind motivated reasoning; when people are confronted with information challenging their views, both anger and anxiety are elicited. However, only anger causes a politically biased reaction evidenced by a greater willingness to generate counterarguments. Finally, there is evidence that partisan sorting precedes issue polarisation. Mason (2015) finds sorting strengthens partisan identity, leading to increased activism, bias, and anger. Yet, despite the strong in-group/out-group effects, issue positions are not as polarised, resulting in 'a nation that

agrees on many things but is bitterly divided nonetheless' (Mason, 2015, p. 142).

Second, anger can mobilise. Anger was central to the Tea Party movement (Sparks, 2015) and a stronger predictor than fear of voting against either Barack Obama or John McCain in 2008 (Finn & Glaser, 2010). Anger about US voter ID laws has been so mobilising that it has counterbalanced demobilisation created by the laws themselves (Valentino & Neuner, 2017). Valentino et al. (2011) also find across various forms of political participation that anger is more mobilising than enthusiasm. Lamprianou and Ellinas (2019) find anger especially motivates people who are less politically sophisticated, while shame motivates the more sophisticated. At the same time, the mobilising effects of anger may also depend on social status, particularly minority status. Phoenix (2019) documents what he calls the 'racial anger gap' in the United States. Across nearly 40 years of American elections, Black voters consistently express less anger than do Whites, especially for Democrats. Phoenix argues that by limiting anger – often for good reason – Black Americans have been less able to form political coalitions, resulting in political marginalisation. Given anger's mobilising nature, the tamping down of Black anger undermined their turnout in 2016.

Third, anger leads to increased information sharing on social media. Though there is an established link between emotional arousal and social media sharing (Berger & Milkman, 2012; see also Chapter 32), it has only recently been tested in the political domain. Tweets about the German election in 2011 evoking high-arousal emotions (anger and anxiety) were more often retweeted (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Following the 2016 US presidential election, anger contributed to a rise in information sharing on Facebook and Twitter, as well as via email, over the phone, and face to face (Hoewe & Parrott, 2019).

Fourth, the effects of anger may differ by political ideology, especially regarding preferences for hierarchies and system justification. Rico et al. (2017) find that populist attitudes are driven by anger rather than fear (see also Chapter 28). Anger has also been central to opposition to healthcare reform (Banks, 2014). Vasilopoulos et al. (2018) find anger moves people with right-wing, but not left-wing, ideologies towards more authoritarian policy preferences. Anger also supports system justification, that is, the motive to 'actively defend and bolster existing social arrangements, often by denying or rationalizing injustices and other problems' (van der Toorn & Jost, 2014, p. 414; see also Chapter 37). It also encourages status-seeking behaviour, which could aid the establishment or bolstering of dominance-based hierarchies (Cabral & de Almeida, 2019). Interestingly, system justification could reduce anger in some situations. Vasilopoulos and Brouard (2019) find that higher levels of system justification caused people to experience less anger (and fear, but more hope) after the November 2015 Paris attacks.

Fifth, there appear to be links between anger and violence. Baele (2017) reports that lone-actor terrorists exhibit a combination of anger and high cognitive complexity. Matthes et al. (2019) argue that citizens' emotional reaction to terrorist threat risk depends on the number of potential offenders and the riskiness of a site (symbolic buildings and large events are high-risk, rural areas and small gatherings are low-risk). If there are many potential offenders threatening low-risk sites, anger at government increases. They also find that anger about terrorism increases support for anti-Muslim policy. Obaidi et al. (2018) examine in-group/out-group effects in a study of Muslims in Denmark. Those who identified more strongly with Muslims were 'more likely to perceive Western foreign policy as more unjust, reported greater group-based anger, and were

more inclined to help Muslims both by non-violent and violent means' (p. 577).

9.5 Anxiety and Fear

Anxiety and fear centre on appraisals of threat. While certainly overlapping, there are some key differences. Fear dissipates more quickly than anxiety (Davis, 1998) and has an avoidance motive (Epstein, 1972). It is a response to specific, identifiable threats; anxiety is a response to diffuse threats (Macleod & Rutherford, 1992). Anxiety is primarily future-oriented, while fear focuses on the present (Sylvers et al., 2011; Tellegen, 1982). However, there has been little attention paid to these distinctions in political science, likely because it is difficult to disentangle the two emotions.

While anger is coupled with high control potential, anxiety and fear are emotions of uncertainty and low control potential. Tiedens and Linton (2001) find emotions of uncertainty result in systemic processing – thus, reducing reliance on 'expert' sources, invoking less stereotyping, and increasing attention to argument quality. They also affect perceptions of risk. For example, Lerner et al. (2003) find that fear increases estimates of risk from terrorism, while anger decreases them. Meijinders et al. (2001) find that inducing people's fear of increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels moves them to favour policies promoting energy conservation (see also Chapter 34).

Risk-taking seems to be influenced by anxiety and fear, with anxious people biased towards low-risk and low-reward choices (Habib et al., 2015; Raghunathan & Pham, 1999). A well-known framing effect – prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979, 1984) – shows people are risk-averse for gains, while risk-seeking for losses. Habib et al. (2015) find that in gain frames, fear increases risk-averse

choices, whereas anger *decreases* risk-averse choices. Similarly, Druckman and McDermott (2008) find that emotional effects on framing are context specific. In an investment scenario, anger and enthusiasm increase risk-taking, while distress – similar to anxiety – decreases it; in a life-or-death disease scenario, only distress affects risk-taking, again decreasing it. In the political realm, anxiety about terrorism decreases support for war and hawkish candidates, while anger increases support (Lambert et al., 2010).

The effects of anxiety on information seeking are complicated. As Maslow (1963) says, 'we can seek knowledge in order to reduce anxiety and we can also avoid knowing in order to reduce anxiety' (p. 122). There is convincing evidence for both views, since anxious people exhibit vigilance in the short term and avoidance in the long term (Mogg et al., 2004). In accordance with AIT, Valentino et al. (2008) find anxiety increases both information search and learning, and Brader (2006) shows anxious citizens are more likely to vote based upon political issues and candidate qualities, rather than partisanship. MacKuen et al. (2010) find that anxious citizens are more likely to accept compromise and more willing to engage with opposing arguments. People searching for information may also find anxiety to be helpful. For example, readers of online reviews find anxious-sounding reviews more helpful than angry-sounding reviews (Yin et al., 2014). Hunter et al. (2019) find that social anxiety is associated with increases in deliberative evaluation, even to the point of overthinking and paralysis in social situations.

While anxiety and fear can encourage deliberation, anxiety also undermines processing efficiency and performance (Eysenck & Calvo, 1992; Eysenck et al., 2007; Miu et al., 2008). Threats, whether controllable or uncontrollable, cause attentional and interpretive

bias because people focus on too few alternatives (Keinan, 1987), though this can be countered somewhat by voluntary task-related effort (Mathews & Mackintosh, 1998). Fear can reduce a person's ability to process arguments and increase susceptibility to persuasion (Jepson & Chaiken, 1990). Nai et al. (2017) provide some nuance, as they find that political sophistication increases calm citizens' resistance to persuasion and decreases it for anxious citizens.

9.5.1 Recent Studies

We focus on recent studies in three areas, starting with the role of anxiety in information search and processing. Results for information search are mixed at best. Hoewe and Parrott (2019) find that anxiety increased information seeking and resulted in more information sharing on social media, although enthusiasm and anger had stronger effects. Redlawsk et al. (2007) find that anxiety only enhances learning about a preferred candidate in a high threat environment. Ryan (2012) finds no link between online advertisements evoking moderate levels of anxiety and increased information search measured by click-through rates. Yet, moderate levels of anger 'substantially increas[e] web users' proclivity to click through to a political website' (p. 1138). Hasell and Weeks (2016) find no link between anxiety and sharing of partisan news (though they do for anger). Cheung-Blunden and Ju (2016) showed news stories about cyberattacks to participants and found that anxiety inhibited recall, while other emotions did not. Taken together, these studies mostly question the link between anxiety and information search.

Second, fear can conditionally shift ideology and political policy preferences. In a meta-study on mortality salience and political ideology, Burke et al. (2013) find that increased

mortality salience can affirm existing ideologies, but, in some cases, can elicit a shift towards conservatism, regardless of existing ideologies. For example, Weise et al. (2011) argue that increased mortality salience manifests as more negative attitudes towards immigrants for people high in right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), but more positive attitudes towards immigrants for those low in RWA. Banks and Hicks (2016) show that fearful Whites with high levels of implicit racism become more supportive of voter ID laws. Matthes et al. (2019) find that citizens become more afraid after a terrorist attack when they believe there are large number of potential offenders. They also find that fear about terrorism increases support for anti-Muslim policy.

Third, fear and anxiety reduce trust towards out-groups (Salam et al., 2017; Steen-Johnsen & Winsvold, 2019). Fear and the derogation of out-groups are particularly strong among individuals from both far left and right wings. Van Prooijen et al. (2015) find that those with extreme views expressed contempt for a larger number of social groups than did their more moderate counterparts, and right-wing extremists were particularly negative towards immigrants (see also Chapter 26). Hatemi et al. (2013) find that increases in social fear are associated with increasingly negative out-group opinions, and they manifest as negative attitudes towards immigration and positive attitudes towards segregation.

9.6 Hope and Enthusiasm

Positive emotions are understudied across disciplines. They are also more difficult to differentiate because of high correlations between them (e.g., Averill, 1980), and the fact that people experience multiple positive emotions simultaneously more often than multiple negative emotions (Barrett et al., 2001). That said, positive emotions can have distinct effects.

Fredrickson and Cohn (2008, p. 779) explain that, while response tendencies for positive emotions are broad and flexible, 'low-arousal positive emotions are likely to have different thought–action tendencies from high-arousal ones, and ignoring these emotions impedes our ability to make specific predictions about emotions and behavior'. Cavanaugh et al. (2016) differentiated 4 positive emotions (excitement, pride, contentment, and gratitude), and Tong (2015) differentiated 13.

Among the positive emotions, political psychologists have focused most on hope and enthusiasm. Both are appetitive emotions, as are positive emotions in general, and are future-orientated, although hope for the future may implicitly imply negative attitudes towards the present. Hope is coupled with appraisals of high control potential, and involves behaviours of anticipation and approach, along with the motivation to pursue goals (Roseman, 2011). It can improve problem-solving ability and be a predictor of future success (Snyder et al., 2002). In politics, hope is associated with dovish foreign policy and can motivate conflict resolution (Cohen-Chen et al., 2017). Enthusiasm is mobilising (e.g., Brader, 2006; Marcus & MacKuen, 1993), reinforces one's predilections, and is associated with reflexive, dispositional decision-making (Marcus et al., 2000). To the extent that voters feel enthusiasm for a candidate, it may mitigate effects of negative racial attitudes on candidate evaluations (Tolbert et al., 2018). Hope and enthusiasm are often used interchangeably (e.g., Boukala & Dimitrakopoulou, 2017), though Ellsworth and Smith (1988) define enthusiasm as a combination of hope and pride. In any case, hope and enthusiasm are similar enough that the political psychology literature generally does not distinguish them. In various efforts to differentiate positive emotions (Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Goetz et al., 2010; Hu et al., 2019; Shiota

et al., 2014; Tong, 2015), one or the other (predominantly, hope) is usually included, but not both.

9.6.1 Recent Studies

Political psychology mostly focuses on the motivational characteristics of hope and enthusiasm. Jenkins (2018) argues that hope is the antidote for demotivation and disenchantment, and cultivating hope can generate interest, engagement, and positive affect towards politics. Though negativity remains a staple of modern politics, hope still has an effect at the polls. For example, in the 2016 Iowa caucuses, hope for one of the three major GOP candidates (Trump, Cruz, and Rubio) predicted an increased probability of voting for that candidate (Redlawsk et al., 2018). Valisopoulou and Wagner (2017) find that when pro-European Union groups create enthusiasm, citizens are mobilised in favour of European integration. Tweets increase enthusiasm for those who agree with the message, but only if they are uncivil – likely because incivility is entertaining (Kosmidis & Theocharis, 2020).

Hoewe and Parrott (2019) find enthusiasm encourages political information sharing. Collins and Block (2020) studied mobilisation of African Americans, finding a substitution effect between enthusiasm and civic duty. While both increase mobilisation, high levels of civic duty can compensate for low levels of enthusiasm, and vice versa. Stolwijk et al. (2017) show that voters are more likely to vote for a party after being exposed to positive poll coverage about that party; thus, enthusiasm is a main driver of the bandwagon effect.

At the same time, Phoenix (2019) argues that hope predicts higher turnout in the USA among Whites but not Blacks, even in 2008 and 2012 with Barack Obama on the ballot. Instead, pride correlates with turnout

for Black voters, because it ‘is rooted in a fervent belief in one’s own capacity to get the job done’ (p. 181), whereas hope does not augment similar perceptions of agency. This interaction is intriguing and worth additional scholarly focus.

Hope plays a significant role in the rise of populism (see also Chapter 28). Although populists certainly appeal to anger and fear (e.g., Salmela & von Scheve, 2017, 2018; Wodak, 2015), they regularly use positive emotions. In the UK’s vote to leave the EU, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) used more emotionally laden content (vs Labour) and projected a higher frequency of positive emotions (Breeze, 2019). Populism encourages beleaguered citizens to buy into a positive view of the future and to believe that it is in their control, rather than in the hands of elites (Curato, 2016). In the Philippines, supporters of Rodrigo Duterte collectively felt hope and euphoria (but also contempt: Montiel & Uyheng, 2020). They felt a ‘reclaimed sense of democratic agency’ and were spurred towards political action (Curato, 2016, p. 102). In the USA, Donald Trump provided hope for those who were struggling economically (Hochschild, 2016); Reicher and Haslam (2016) describe a Trump rally as ‘an identity festival that embodied a politics of hope’ (p. 29). Depending on its use, hope can either fracture social cleavages or heal them; affective polarisation increases with in-group enthusiasm and decreases with out-group enthusiasm (McLaughlin et al., 2020).

9.7 Rejection Emotions: Contempt and Disgust

Brader and Marcus (2013) include anger, disgust, and contempt as a single undifferentiated set of ‘aversive’ emotions in AIT. Some evidence is developing that suggests this approach does not encompass a full range of negative

responses in politics. As we noted earlier, Ekman and Cordaro (2011) argue for distinguishing between these three specific emotions, as each has distinct antecedents, effects, and expressions. Roseman (2011, 2013; Fischer & Roseman, 2007) argues that many specific emotions show variation in response profiles, as well as ‘consistency across many instances of the same emotion’ (2011, p. 435). His model groups emotions into four families: positive, distancing, attack, and rejection. In the context of affective intelligence, political psychologists have generally considered only two of the three negative families: distancing (fear/anxiety) and attack (anger). The third family, rejection, has been broadly absent.

We argue that politics clearly engages rejection emotions at least as readily as the others. Anyone who has spent even brief moments watching negative campaign advertising has certainly felt the contempt or disgust that is meant to be engendered towards the target of the ad (Mattes & Redlawsk, 2014). These two emotions have particular resonance in the political realm.

9.7.1 Contempt

Anger and contempt occupy similar spaces in Roseman’s (2011) typology, yet they have important differences and can be readily disentangled. Anger has at its root the perception that others are taking unjust actions, while contempt is elicited by perceptions that others are inferior (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). Thus, contempt is a trait-focused emotion centred on people and their incompetence, stupidity, or corruption, while anger is outcome-focused (Roseman, 2018).

Voters get angry at politicians who are perceived to treat them unfairly, but they feel contempt towards those who appear to be incompetent or corrupt. A political candidate who uses contempt to push voters away from

the opponent can enhance these perceptions. Voters may perceive that bad outcomes can be changed, while bad people cannot. Politically, then, getting voters to feel contempt for one's opponent is different from getting them to feel angry about what the opponent does. Mattes et al. (2018) show evidence of contempt in negative advertising, with voters recognising its presence and reacting with felt contempt towards candidates, even from their own party.

Roseman et al. (2020; also Johnston et al., 2014) show that when both anger and contempt are included in a model of emotional responses to candidates, contempt can be a more powerful predictor of voting behaviour than anger. There are limits, though, and the use of contempt by politicians can backfire. When efforts to create contempt for an opponent move into personally defamatory or uncivil language that violates norms of respectful discourse, contempt may rebound on the attacker (Frimer & Skitka, 2018; Mattes & Redlawsk, 2014).

Contempt would seem to be a fruitful area of research in politics, especially in the context of elections. One way to win is to attempt to push one's opponent beyond some line of acceptability, to convince voters that they are not even worthy of consideration. Donald Trump has routinely attempted to do this – for example, by using belittling nicknames for his political opponents. Many other politicians clearly foment contempt, and its use may be on the rise (Stohr, 2017). Grimmer and King (2011) document that more than a quarter of US senators' press releases from 2005 to 2007 used 'exaggerated language to put them down or devalue their ideas' (p. 2649). A better understanding of when and how contempt works in politics would be valuable.

9.7.2 Disgust

As another rejection emotion, disgust is related to, but distinguishable from, contempt

(Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2018), and shame (see Section 9.8.1), where the self or group is seen as substandard (Roseman, 2013). Disgust is a response to potential contamination and acts to distance people from sources of infection, motivating physical distancing and the avoidance of that which is disgusting. Where the objects of contempt are typically other people, objects of disgust can be human or non-human.

Significantly more research has been done on the role of disgust (vs contempt) in politics. One focus has been 'disgust sensitivity', a personality trait indicating the extent to which a person is likely to feel disgust. Typical is Shook et al. (2017), who find that those with greater sensitivity towards disgust were less likely to vote for Obama in 2012, with disgust sensitivity associated with a higher likelihood of identifying as Republican and supporting conservative values. Other studies have found stronger reactions to disgusting stimuli among conservatives compared to liberals (Ahn et al., 2014).

Yet there seems to be little research on how voters are influenced by the feeling of disgust generated by political candidates during a campaign. More typical are studies on policy issues which may evoke a disgust reaction due to perceived moral purity violations, such as same-sex marriage and abortion (Adams et al., 2014; Inbar et al., 2009), and some health-related issues (Clifford & Wendell, 2016).

Disgust may also affect willingness to learn new information in certain threatening contexts such as infectious disease. Clifford and Jerit (2018) manipulated information about a disease outbreak and report that when disgust is high in the context of such a threat, learning is attenuated, as people avoid information about the disease. Yet, Park (2015) finds that, among Twitter users in South Korea, increased feelings of disgust (along with anger) motivate more information seeking, not less.

The difference may be in the nature of the information. Park examines 'negative news stories', which may not raise the direct personal threat to purity that fears of an infectious disease create.

9.8 Two Group-Oriented Perspectives on Emotions

In addition to the specific emotions approach, political researchers have begun to put more focus on social contexts. Emotions are more than simply the reactions of atomised individuals to stimuli. We read each other's emotions as part of social interaction, and humans regularly respond to what we perceive from others through a process of emotional contagion (Elfenbein, 2014; Hatfield et al., 1994). As such, two more socially focused approaches may have much to say about the political world generally. Moral emotions have both individual and group effects, as people can personally experience emotions that connect to their own sense of moral behaviour, as well as experience emotions on behalf of, and about, in- and out-groups. Collective emotions go beyond the self and may help bind people to social groups and even nation-states.

9.8.1 Moral Emotions

In general, moral emotions connect behaviour and moral standards (Giner-Sorolla, 2012; Halperan & Schori-Eyal, 2019). Haidt (2003, p. 853) defines them functionally as 'linked to the interests or welfare either of society as a whole or at least of persons other than the judge or agent'. Thus, moral emotions are not simply about individual responses to stimuli, but also their embeddedness in affinity or antipathy towards groups. A given emotion may or may not act as a moral emotion, depending on whether it (1) is triggered by situations that do not directly harm or benefit

the self and/or (2) involves prosocial action tendencies (Haidt, 2003). Anger can be moral in some contexts (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011), for example, when generated by the behaviour of a government towards some of its citizens, as long as the person feeling the anger is not personally targeted. Disgust may be considered a moral emotion (Bloom, 2014) when it is socially orientated, such as in response to certain types of 'deviant' behaviour (as opposed to disgust felt in seeing a dead animal on the road).

Halperin and Schori-Eyal (2019) write that, 'moral emotions influence the link between moral standards and moral behaviour, driving people to behave in moral, socially appropriate ways in their social interactions and intimate relationships'. In intergroup emotions theory (Smith & Mackie, 2016), moral emotions work at both individual and group levels, so when one holds a group identity, emotions generated by behaviours of group members can be positive, such as taking pride in group action. They can also be negative, as when the group's behaviour generates guilt or shame. In both cases, emotions are responses to actions of group members and, while felt by the individual, are about one's relationship to the group (Lickel et al., 2011).

Haidt (2003) distinguishes four families of moral emotions: other-condemning; self-conscious; other-suffering; and other-praising. Anger, contempt, and disgust are the typical other-condemning emotions. When considered as a moral, rather than non-moral, emotion, anger is related to demands for restoration of moral order and can be generated by the perceived unfair treatment of a group. Disgust has a prosocial action tendency, with punishment for culturally inappropriate behaviour. Contempt weakens the experience of other moral emotions towards its object.

Self-conscious emotions are felt about oneself in relation to others. These generally

include shame, guilt, pride and embarrassment (Tangney et al., 2007). Shame is felt individually when a moral violation is committed and others know about it. As a group emotion, shame can be experienced when fellow in-group members act in immoral or inappropriate ways. Guilt may be the response when one feels personally complicit in the action taken by the group. Pride rewards morally correct choices and behaviour and motivates conformity to moral standards (Tangney et al., 2007).

Sympathy and compassion are in the other-suffering family. Eisenberg (1986) argues that sympathy is elicited by perceiving suffering and need not require experiencing the other person's feeling. Sympathy and compassion can generate helping behaviour and altruism (Tangney et al., 2007). The fourth category, the other-praising emotions, include elevation and gratitude (Haidt, 2003) and occur when experiencing positive moral behaviour by others, like kindness and loyalty.

Lickel et al. (2011) and Halperin and Schorley (2019) summarise the research on the self-conscious emotions of shame and guilt. In particular, the latter suggest that guilt can reduce violent intergroup relations. The strength of group affiliation combined with an appraisal implicating one's own responsibility by association can lead to experiencing guilt and other self-conscious emotions. In a political context, these moral emotions may be influenced by the violation of moral values by group members or leaders (Walter & Redlawsk, 2021). Recent work by Salmela and von Scheve (2018) argues that both left- and right-wing populism are characterised by shame, with the former a factor of 'repressed shame' and the latter 'acknowledged shame'.

9.8.2 Collective Emotions

Collective emotions provide another way to think about emotions in groups, including

both social groups and states within the international order. While for the most part the moral emotions approach focuses on individual feelings in response to morally focused actions of groups, collective emotions emphasise sharing emotions within a group in response to events and actions implicating it. Mercer (2014) locates these group-level emotions in social identification, arguing that, while the feelings can be the same, collective emotion can be distinguished from individual emotion because the locus of the feeling is not about oneself, but about what is observed about a group.

The challenge, as laid out by Hutchison and Bleiker (2014, p. 492), is to 'theorize the processes through which individual emotions become collective and political'. Collective emotions have been advanced by scholars of social movements (Goodwin et al., 2001; see Chapter 31) and in international relations more generally, but not without controversy. Rational actor models have dominated these fields, even when it would seem to be difficult to ascribe the behaviour of a group or state to a rational calculus. Some of the complexities in applying emotions to social groups and the actions of states are laid out by Mattern (2014), who writes that, while she is convinced about emotions' role in world politics, she is also 'increasingly skeptical of my own conviction' (p. 589). Nonetheless, as Bar-Tal et al. (2007) argue, group emotions can be meaningfully different from individual emotions in that they are caused by group-related experiences and operate in a social environment.

Collective emotions support the emergence, maintenance, and development of social groups. Identity groups can arise when the emotions of individuals converge on an important shared topic. For instance, shared anger at oppression or shared guilt about collective wrongdoing to a third party plays an important role in the emergence of social and

political movements (Salmela, 2014). Collective emotions maintain groups by giving group members feelings of closeness and solidarity. And collective guilt and remorse and expecting group apologies for certain behaviours hold groups accountable for their actions (Huebner, 2011).

Gould (2004) argues that social movements require emotional responses; these are what 'political organizers appeal to, arouse, manipulate, and sustain to recruit and retain members' (p. 158). However, the place of collective emotions in political mobilisation remains underexplored though potentially fruitful. For example, Montiel and Uyheng (2020) provide insight into populism in the global south by focusing on collective emotions of its supporters. Basta (2020) develops the concept of collective exhaustion master frames that narrate the aggrieved community's arrival to a threshold of collective impatience, arguing such narratives legitimise radical departures from prevailing political habits (a cognitive task) and stimulate collective impatience with the political status quo (an emotional management task). Another promising approach by Sirin et al. (2016) is Group Empathy Theory. They argue that standard theories of collective emotions assume emotions engage the same psychological processes in all individuals. What is missing is a theory for sub-groups within a broader society, particularly the responses of minority groups versus majority groups. Broadly speaking, discrete emotional responses to an incident hurting members of a group may be mixed with responses unique to subgroups. Minority group members, for example, may have experiences that create empathy between them and the target of a hate crime, which majority group members might not feel, even as both groups are sympathetic (see also Sirin & Villalobos, 2019). This is similar to Phoenix's (2019) argument about Black anger in the USA.

The current trend in political psychology shows a broadening of scope in the study of emotions. While the primary focus remains on AIT with its emphasis on anger, fear, and enthusiasm, a distinct role exists for an array of other important, but less studied, emotions. In this, we agree with Sirin and Villalobos' (2019) call for expanding the range of emotions studied by political psychologists. Doing so will no doubt broaden our understanding of how people relate to the political world.

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10 The Developmental Science of Politics

Insights from the 2016 US Presidential Election

Christia Spears Brown and Rebecca Bigler

10.1 Introduction

He's a racist. He's offending people. Some people don't like him. I don't like him.

Black girl, age 10, about Donald J. Trump

She has done bad things. Deleted 30,000 emails and gave away top-secret government information.

White boy, age 9, about Hillary R. Clinton

Politics is a critical domain of human behaviour, affecting nearly every facet of human life. Although this statement is true of all eras and locales, the role of politics in human life has been demonstrated especially starkly in the United States by the events of the first six months of 2020. Governmental policies dramatically shaped the responses of individuals, communities, cities, and states to the worldwide SARS-CoV2 virus and to racism and brutality among police officers. Perhaps surprisingly, psychologists historically have showed little interest in the political domain relative to other topics (e.g., aggression, intelligence). Yet the last few decades have seen an increase in psychological research concerning individuals' political judgement and behaviour, including the origins and pathways of political development. Given the dramatic events of 2020, we expect this interest to grow, with potentially important implications. The overarching goal of our chapter is to facilitate the study of politics via a developmental lens.

The specific sub-goals of this chapter are threefold. First, we argue for – and describe possible foundations of – a developmental science of politics. Second, we demonstrate the

utility of studying political socialisation surrounding presidential elections by describing the results of a large study of US children's views of the 2016 US presidential election. Third, we speculate about some of the broad messages that children may have taken away from the 2016 presidential election. We argue that US institutions and parents should strive to improve children's political socialisation by, for example, providing youth with environments that are rich in information related to the purpose and value of politics, and ripe with opportunities and encouragement for political thought and action. Although this chapter draws heavily (albeit not exclusively) on empirical findings from a specific presidential election in the United States, the principles and implications that we derive from these data are likely to be relevant to most democratic societies in which enfranchised voters should be informed of, and engaged in, the political process.

This chapter is organised into six sections. Following this introduction, we argue that the developmental study of politics is vitally important. In Section 10.3, we identify major foundations and tenets of a theoretical framework for understanding political development. In Section 10.4, we provide an overview of factors rooted in cultural contexts, families, and children themselves that shape political development during childhood. In Section 10.5, we describe selected findings from an empirical study of elementary-school-age children's views of the 2016 presidential election

(Patterson et al., 2019). In Section 10.6, we speculate about the beliefs that children may have internalised from watching the 2016 election, suggest directions for future research and applied policies, and provide brief concluding remarks.

Throughout these sections, we draw heavily upon ideas and data that stem from our collaborative theoretical and empirical project on children and politics (Patterson et al., 2019). In this chapter, we draw on aspects of that work that, because of space constraints, received relatively little attention, and speculate more broadly than we did in the original work about the implications of children's exposure to the 2016 US presidential elections. We begin each section with quotes from children (labelled by their age, gender/sex, and self-identified race/ethnicity) who participated in Patterson et al.'s (2019) study of the 2016 election, which illustrate, hopefully in a rich and engaging manner, some of the relevant points of each section.

10.2 The Need for a Developmental Science of Politics

Trump. He is in the news because he wants to be president and he's talking about what he would do for our country.

Latinx boy, age 8, when asked whether he could identify Trump from a photograph

No, I never looked in the news.

Iraqi American girl, age 7, when asked whether she could identify Trump from a photograph

There are strong theoretical and applied reasons for studying political development among youth. With respect to theory, a host of core theoretical tenets within developmental psychology can be applied and tested within the domain of politics. We note two such issues here. First, theory-based hypotheses about the interactive contributions of nature and nurture

in shaping developmental outcomes can be derived and tested. Politics is well suited to testing the interactive contributions of intrinsic (innate or endogenous) and extrinsic (environmental or exogenous) factors because political thought and behaviour are highly complex (e.g., multifaceted, dynamic) phenomena that empirical research has tentatively linked to both types of influences. For example, biologically based contributions, such as temperament and cognitive maturation, are linked to political thought (e.g., Gerber et al., 2010; Patterson et al., 2019; see also Chapter 5) as are exogenous contributions, such as parental messages and school civics lessons (McIntosh et al., 2007).

Second, a central question for developmentalists is whether continuity or discontinuity characterises development across the life course. Scholarly work on political development during childhood (prior to the onset of puberty) is sparse and, thus, the degree to which political attitudes and beliefs are, first, shaped by childhood events and, second, stable over the life course, are unknown. There are, however, fascinating bits of evidence that political attitudes have continuity across the life course, starting from a remarkably young age (Sears & Valentino, 1997). There is also some evidence that single, salient political events have long-lasting effects on development. Developmental research using cross-sequential designs will be valuable for addressing such questions.

With respect to applied reasons for studying the childhood origins and development of political attitudes and behaviour, there are a host of pressing rationales. Here, we note just one major rationale: improving citizens' political knowledge and engagement in the political process. Political engagement in the United States and many other countries is low, which compromises the quality of democracies. For instance, less than 56% of the eligible US

voting-age population voted in the 2016 US presidential election. In contrast, over 75% of the voting-age population voted in the most recent national elections in Australia, Israel, South Korea, and Sweden (Pew Research Center, 2017). Furthermore, young adults were less likely to vote than older adults: 46.1% of 18- to 29-year-olds voted in the 2016 presidential election compared to 66.6% of 45- to 64-year-olds and 58.7% of 30- to 44-year-olds (US Census Bureau, 2017). It is impossible to have a government that represents ‘the people’ when only a minority of the population is involved in choosing that government.

Like political engagement, political knowledge is also low, especially in the United States. As Galston noted (2001, p. 217), ‘Despite huge increases in the formal educational attainment of the US population during the past 50 years, levels of political knowledge have barely budged.’ There are, however, very large individual differences in political knowledge among children and adults, as the quotes that begin this section indicate. Better knowledge of the factors that shape children’s political knowledge and engagement has the potential to improve parental practices, school instructions, and social and legal policies aimed at optimising youth’s political knowledge and engagement.

10.3 An Integrative Theoretical Framework

A bunch people told me [that no woman has been US president] . . . my mom, my teacher, my friends. And because I mostly know about men presidents. I don’t know about women presidents.

White girl, age 7

My parents are voting for her. I don’t know if she is good or not. I’m not really one to get involved in all this election stuff.

White girl, age 11, when asked to explain her preference for Clinton over Trump

With our colleagues (Patterson et al., 2019), we have argued that understanding political development requires integrating three major bodies of theoretical work within developmental science: (a) ecological systems approaches (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), (b) constructivist perspectives (Piaget, 1954), and (c) dynamic systems accounts of human development (Thelen & Smith, 1994). With respect to *ecological systems approaches*, explaining political development will require documenting the effects of the myriad politically related messages that emanate from children’s multi-layered, nested environments. The quotes at the start of the section illustrate children’s exposure to, and reception of, politically related messages in their environments. Documenting such messages is, however, a daunting task, especially when one considers that children are likely to be affected by many messages that are not intended for them. Children may be exposed to messages about politics stemming from parents, siblings, grandparents and other relatives, as well as television, radio, social media, advertisements, teachers, peers, and unfamiliar adults in public settings (such as parks, buses, and recreation centres). Children, for example, may overhear their parents discussing an upcoming election while preparing dinner, or they may hear a news report about a candidate playing on the television or radio in the background. Little is known about the frequency or consequences of exposure to messages from many of these sources.

With respect to *constructivist perspectives*, developmental research has consistently shown that children remember information consistent with their existing beliefs or schemas, misremember inconsistent information, and forge their own explanations for events in the absence of adult input (see Bigler & Liben, 2007). In the domain of politics, explaining political development will require

identifying the qualities of children that lead them to elicit political messages from others, as well as selectively attend to, misconstrue, or misremember political messages. The second quote at the start of the section nicely illustrates a child's active response to political messages in her environment. To assess the degree to which children accurately remember and construct political messages, researchers will need to collect data on the same topic from multiple sources, such as both the child and the parent. It is possible, for example, that some parents report expressing their political views to their children while their children simultaneously report that their parents failed to express such views.

With respect to *dynamic systems theory*, explaining political development will require documenting the reciprocal responses that individuals in evolving, dyadic interactions have to each other's political communication. For example, adolescents who are strongly interested in politics report initiating conversations with their parents about political issues (McIntosh et al., 2007). These conversations are, in turn, likely to further shape both the child's and the parent's views and future behaviour (e.g., likelihood of initiating future conversations). Research in which parent-child conversations concerning political topics are recorded at various points over time may help to explain the dynamic nature of political attitudes and behaviours within families, classrooms, and other contexts.

10.4 Sources of Influence on Political Development

There is widespread agreement that the development of political knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour is the result of dynamic interactions among a host of factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic to the child. In our limited space, we provide a discussion of a few key factors

(a more complete list of factors are described in Patterson et al., 2019).

10.4.1 Cultural Characteristics

I heard on the TV, the news, he hated Mexicans, he lies, he doesn't let people talk. I saw him and Hillary on the TV and he wouldn't let her talk. But Hillary was respecting him so that was not fair he did that.

Latinx boy, age 9, when asked where he learned about the candidates

Cultural characteristics of the societies in which children are embedded are likely to affect their political development (Huckfeldt et al., 1993; Pacheco, 2008). Children's cultural contexts include an array of hierarchically organised places, spaces, and entities (e.g., nations, states, cities, neighbourhoods, schools, churches, community centres) that filter and transmit political and politically related information (Huckfeldt et al., 1993). Although they are relatively rare, cross-cultural studies are especially helpful for acquiring insights into when, why, and how the particular characteristics of cultural contexts influence children's political development. An example of such a study is the Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation (PIDOP) project, funded by the European Commission. The study investigated political and civic engagement and participation in nine European countries (Barrett et al., 2018).

One characteristic of children's cultural contexts that is likely to affect their political development concerns the prevalence and nature of media coverage of political topics (Cho & McLeod, 2007; Conway et al., 1981; McDevitt, 2005; Sugarman, 2007). In the United States, children spend a large amount of time each day consuming media (Rideout, 2017; Rideout et al., 2010). Furthermore, politics is a topic of frequent media coverage.

However, data on children's exposure to political media are scarce, in part because the media landscape has changed dramatically within the last decade. The United States has, for example, myriad cable television channels, including three 24-hour news networks. Additionally, social media are now major sources of political information for many US adults (Gainous & Wagner, 2014). The reason that the vast majority of elementary-school-age children in Patterson et al.'s (2019) study knew something of the 2016 presidential election is probably because of the prevalence of its coverage on traditional and social media. Indeed, children's knowledge of the candidates was unrelated to their report of how often their parents discussed the election (Patterson et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the nature and distribution of media political coverage has changed in recent decades in ways that are likely to affect youth. Particular media outlets now cater specifically to liberal or conservative audiences, and social media platforms foster the propagation of one's own particular world view (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007; Pariser, 2011; see Chapter 32). These trends are likely to have substantial consequences for children's political development. Rather than encountering diverse views and opinions about political events (e.g., elections, wars, protests), children are likely to be exposed to a narrow subset of media outlets, and, thus, more homogeneous politically related perspectives.

Two additional characteristics of children's cultural context that may be relevant for their political attitudes are the racial/ethnic and ideological composition of their communities. Some sociological research indicates that United States' communities and neighbourhoods are markedly and increasingly segregated by race and political ideology (Bishop, 2008; Orfield et al., 2012). Accordingly, children are typically surrounded by

homogeneous individuals and unlikely to encounter social and political attitudes that differ from their own. Consistent with this notion, Patterson et al. (2019) reported that those children who resided in counties with high Trump support were more likely than children who resided in counties with low Trump support to prefer Trump over Clinton in the 2016 election.

Of course, political ideology and race/ethnicity are related, with African Americans being especially likely to vote for Democratic rather than Republican tickets (e.g., Junn & Masuoka, 2020; see also Chapter 14). The tendency for children to live and attend school with racially and ideologically similar others – like their tendency to encounter ideological homogeneous media – is likely to undermine (rather than bolster) the vitality and viability of the US democracy.

10.4.2 Family Characteristics

She is a candidate in the presidential election.

My dad thinks she should be in jail.

White boy, age 9, when shown a photograph of Hillary Rodham Clinton

[I was] eating breakfast. My dad told me [Trump won the election]. My brother said, 'dang it' and so did I.

White girl, age 7, on learning about the election outcome

Parents appear to influence children's views concerning many topics (e.g., health behaviours such as smoking, social attitudes, gender stereotyping, and religious beliefs) and, as hypothesised by many theorists, they are likely to be powerful influences on children's social-emotional outcomes. A large body of empirical work indicates that children often (albeit not always) share their parents' political attitudes (Andolina et al., 2003; Beck & Jennings, 1982; McIntosh et al., 2007).

The empirical questions now facing developmental psychologists concern the mechanisms involved in producing associations between children's and their parents' political thoughts and behaviour. According to Patterson et al. (2019), parents' political thoughts and behaviours may be linked with their children's thoughts and behaviours through five potential (non-exclusive) causal processes. First, parents and their biological children share biological foundations, via their genetics, that are related to traits associated with political views, such as temperament (see Chapter 3). Second, parenting attitudes and behaviours that are unrelated to politics per se, such as discipline strategies that focus on authoritarian and harsh discipline, may indirectly shape political views by shaping other personality characteristics (see Chapter 11). Third, parents may provide instruction and guidance regarding political beliefs and opinions (see first quote at the start of this section). Some of this instruction is likely to be direct and intentional, such as providing books and engaging in joint media viewing about politics. Other types of influence may be indirect, as, for example, when parents discuss political topics with other adults within the earshot of youth. Fourth, parents may model political interests and views through their own beliefs and actions, as seems likely when children go with their parents to vote. Finally, parents may either explicitly or implicitly reinforce particular political views, such as smiling when their child makes a comment aligned with their own beliefs.

In addition to parents, siblings and extended family members (e.g., aunts, grandfathers) are likely to be sources of influence on children's political attitudes and behaviour. Although we know of no empirical work on the topic, children in the Patterson et al. (2019) study of the 2016 election occasionally mentioned siblings and extended family as sources of information

(as illustrated by the second quote at the start of this section). It will be important for future work to examine the role of non-parental family figures in children's political development, and to address the ways in which children actively elicit and dynamically shape the messages that they encounter from these sources.

10.4.3 Child Characteristics

Because he's a boy like me.

White boy, age 9, when asked to explain his preference for Trump

Because I think that she is right and we haven't really had a woman president and I don't think that's fair.

White boy, age 6, when asked to explain his preference for Clinton

Children's own qualities and characteristics influence both the nature of political messages to which they are exposed and their responses to those messages. Many demographic characteristics are predictive of political attitudes and behaviour among adults, including gender/sex, race/ethnicity, age, income, and educational level (see Patterson et al., 2019 for a review). For example, women and African Americans are more likely than men and Whites, respectively, to support liberal candidates for political office. In addition to social group memberships, temperament and personality characteristics – and qualities of individuals' cognition and their experiences in politically related realms – are associated with political views (see Chapter 5). In this section, we provide a detailed description of the theory and evidence related to one particularly salient child factor: gender/sex. Gender/sex is an especially important characteristic to consider in research with children because gender/sex is one of children's most central (i.e., salient, valued) social identities and is frequently the basis of strongly

held stereotypes and prejudices (e.g., Brown et al., 2011). A detailed description of additional child characteristics is provided by Patterson et al. (2019).

Gender/Sex. Within political science and political psychology, some outcomes of interest show consistent evidence of gender/sex differences, whereas other outcomes show little (or, at least, inconsistent) evidence of gender/sex differences. Studies of specific political attitudes and voting patterns show consistent sex differences. That is, men and women, at the group level, endorse modestly different views on many specific political issues, including gun control, the death penalty, military force, and government aid for individuals living in poverty (Lizotte, 2017). As a result of these attitude differences, women have been more likely to support Democratic candidates in the last several elections than have men, although this trend is less pronounced among White voters (e.g., Diekman & Schneider, 2010; Junn & Masuoka, 2020). In contrast, studies of knowledge of political issues have produced inconsistent results; some (but not all) studies show that men have more political knowledge than women.

Developmental research on gender/sex differences and politics is relatively rare. There are, however, theoretical bases for expecting gender/sex differences in political development (see also Chapter 16). For example, children view the US presidency as a masculine sex-typed occupation (Liben et al., 2002). Because it may seem more self-relevant, boys may seek out information and be more knowledgeable about politics than are girls. Furthermore, political issues are often linked to sex-typed interests and behaviours, many of which emerge in childhood. For example, aggression is stereotypically associated with boys (Liben et al., 2002), and boys' play often incorporates aggression and violence-based themes and toys (e.g., GI Joes, lightsabres,

Nerf blasters). Boys' and girls' affective responses to aggression and violence may inform adults' general political attitudes related to war and gun control. In contrast, nurturance and childcare are stereotypically associated with girls (Liben et al., 2002), and girls' play often incorporates nurturance-based themes and toys (e.g., baby dolls, kitchen implements, veterinarian sets). Boys' and girls' affective responses to nurturance may inform adults' general political attitudes related to education and healthcare. Thus, gender/sex differences in support for particular political policies may have their origin in childhood. Empirical research has, however, been inconsistent. Boys are sometimes (although not always) reported to be more knowledgeable about politics than are girls (Bigler et al., 2008; Owen & Dennis, 1988; Simon, 2017; van Deth et al., 2011; Wolak & McDevitt, 2011). Additionally, boys and girls are sometimes (but not always) reported to care about different issues (e.g., girls reported more concern with environmental protection than do boys; Zelezny et al., 2000).

One particularly important gender/sex difference concerns running for political office. Men are more likely than women to express interest in holding, and are more likely to run for, a range of public offices (Fox & Lawless, 2004). Because girls are less likely to encounter same-sex models of political leadership than are boys, it seems possible they would be less likely to show an interest in political leadership. This does not, however, appear to be the case. Bigler et al. (2008) found no gender/sex differences in rates at which boys and girls expressed an interest in becoming US president; Patterson et al. (2013) found that girls were indeed more interested in becoming president than were boys. Furthermore, neither Bigler et al. (2008) nor Patterson et al. (2013) found gender/sex differences in the rates at which boys and girls believed that they *could*

become president if they so desired. When asked about the qualities that allow individuals to successfully vie for the US presidency, most children rank traditionally feminine-sex-typed traits (e.g., being gentle, showing kindness, being polite, caring about others) as more important than masculine-sex-typed qualities (e.g., being loud, liking to be in charge, being physically strong, being competitive; Leshin et al., 2019; Patterson et al., 2019). Thus, women's failure to run for office as often as men does not appear to have roots in childhood, but instead, to have its roots in adults' judgements of, and experiences with, political leadership.

10.5 Children's Views of the 2016 US Presidential Election

Elections are important occasions for political socialisation, even for children as young as 6 years of age (Allen, 1994; Conway et al., 1981). The increased political messaging provided by media and other individuals (e.g., unfamiliar adults, family, peers) that surround elections are likely to play a role. Furthermore, the salience of presidential elections might lead children to solicit information from others, which may facilitate their constructivist understanding of politics. To learn about these processes, Patterson et al. (2019) conducted a study of US elementary-school-age children's views of the 2016 election. In this section, we briefly describe the study and highlight a few significant findings.

10.5.1 Study Description

Patterson et al. (2019) interviewed 187 children (101 girls) between 5 and 11 years of age ($M = 8.42$ years, $SD = 1.45$ years). Children were recruited from schools and youth organisations in five counties in four US states (Kansas, Kentucky, Texas, and Washington).

These counties had varying voting patterns (e.g., Trump voters ranged from 27% to 71% of county voters). Although the sample was not nationally representative, it was racially diverse (35 African American, 50 Latinx, 81 White, and 21 multiracial, Asian American, Middle Eastern, or Native American children).

Patterson et al. (2019) focused their data collection on three key constructs. First, they examined elementary-aged children's knowledge of the 2016 presidential election, including children's knowledge of the specific candidates (i.e., Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton) and the election outcome. Second, they examined children's attitudes about the 2016 election, including their preferences for the candidates, expectations about who would win, and reactions to Trump's win, as well as their political behaviour (e.g., accompanying parents to vote). Third, because of the authors' collective expertise and interest in gender and social justice issues, and because of the historical significance of a female candidate in a US presidential election, they assessed children's knowledge and attitudes concerning gender and politics. We next highlight a few findings relevant to each of these constructs.

10.5.2 Children's Knowledge of the 2016 Presidential Election

Donald Trump doesn't want immigrants to come into the US, and he doesn't want people from Mexico to come into the US.

White boy, age 7, when asked what he knows about Trump

[Hillary Clinton] won't send Mexicans back to Mexico.

Latinx boy, age 11, when asked what he knows about Clinton

Overall, children were interested in, and knowledgeable about, the presidential election. Most children identified the candidates correctly

(79% identified Trump and 80% identified Clinton by name) and most children (over 90%) reported some knowledge about their personal qualities or policy positions. They reported more information about Donald Trump's than Hillary Clinton's policies (68% versus 49%, respectively). This distinction was driven largely by the substantial percentage of children (41%) who referred to Trump's immigration policies, especially policies regarding Mexican immigrants.

The prevalence of knowledge of Trump's immigration views is likely to be related to two factors. First, the sample included two sites in Texas and, thus, included many children whose families were likely to perceive themselves as strongly affected by such policies. Second, a central facet of Trump's immigration policy was the proposal to build a wall between the United States and Mexico, a concrete (rather than abstract) concept that even young children are able to understand (i.e., it is both literally and figuratively concrete). Indeed, Trump's proposal to build a wall between the United States and Mexico was mentioned by one in three children within the Patterson et al. (2019) sample. Furthermore, many children highlighted the racial/ethnic connotations of this immigration policy. For example, a Latinx 9-year-old boy stated, 'He wants to build a wall and make them pay for it. That's racist.'

Furthermore, children reported a host of personal characteristics of the candidates. Overall, they noted as many negative as positive personal qualities of the candidates, with negative qualities being reported more often for Trump (56% of negative comments; e.g., 'Donald Trump calls women pigs. That is not nice at all' – Latinx girl, age 6) than for Clinton (18% of negative comments; e.g., 'She is rude' – White boy, age 9). As the quotes illustrate, many of the unflattering qualities mentioned by children were starkly negative,

which is perhaps concerning given that these individuals were running for such a highly prestigious and powerful office, and is a topic to which we return in the final section of this chapter.

10.5.3 Children's Election Attitudes and Behaviour

Good! Because I wanted Donald Trump to win and he did.

White boy, age 7, when asked about his reaction to Trump's win

Horrified, because my brother was crying and he's not afraid of anything. And my mom was crying too; she cares a lot about women's rights.

White girl, age 10, when asked about her reaction to Trump's win

Nearly all of the children expressed a clear preference for one or the other candidate (88% supported Clinton), a preference that did not vary by participant gender/sex or race/ethnicity. Children often expressed strong emotions about the outcome of the election: only 5% of the children reported that they cared *not at all*, whereas 13.9% reported that they cared *a little bit*, 22.8% reported they cared *somewhat*, and 58.3% reported that they cared *a lot*. Most laypeople have probably assumed that children would be only modestly interested in the election and, thus, relatively unconcerned about who won the election. This did not appear to be the case, as the quotes at the start of this section illustrate.

When asked to explain why they preferred Clinton or Trump, 7% of children cited a candidate's stance towards a national-level policy issue (e.g., immigration, gun control), 35% cited a candidate's characteristic (e.g., fairness, kindness), and 19% cited gender/sex. Of those children who discussed a candidate's gender/sex, 90% mentioned Hillary Clinton's potential to become the first female president.

Children were also able to articulate views on the most important tasks that a president should tackle when elected. Most ideas focused on fighting terrorism, building infrastructure ('build new schools'), providing safety nets (e.g., 'give food to the poor'), and promoting social justice ('be fair to everyone in the United States of America').

Although children are not yet able to vote, they are able to have political behaviours, especially when it reflects parents' political socialisation behaviours. For example, 41.6% of those children who indicated that their parents voted reported that they accompanied their parent(s) to the polling centre (i.e., responded 'yes' when asked 'Did you go with them when they voted?'). We expect that the experience of accompanying a parent to vote would be a positive predictor of children's likelihood of voting as adults.

10.5.4 Children's Attitudes and Knowledge about Gender and Politics

Because all of them have been boys and none have been girls. Forty-four and all of them are men and that's not fair.

White boy, age 8

Most of the time, boys and girls vote for each other. [Clinton] really wanted to be president but boys wouldn't vote for her.

White girl, age 9

Most children were egalitarian in their gender attitudes about political leadership, with 91% reporting that they thought that both men and women *should* be president. However, they expected other individuals to be less gender egalitarian. For example, many children predicted a gender gap in others' candidate preferences, expecting more women than men would vote for Clinton. When asked about why Trump won, 31% of children reported that they thought the election outcome was

due, at least in part, to the candidates' gender/sex. African American children were more likely than White children to believe that Clinton lost because she is a woman, which may reflect a broad view of social biases that stems from their knowledge of, and experiences with, racism.

Despite their gender egalitarian beliefs, children were largely ignorant of both the history of women's exclusion from the presidency, and their civil rights efforts to improve gender equality. Only 65% of children correctly reported that no woman has ever served as president, and only a single child was able to name a historical individual who worked for women's civil rights (one girl named Susan B. Anthony).

10.6 Speculations, Recommendations, and Conclusions

As we noted earlier, there is some evidence that salient political events shape children's political development in meaningful and lasting ways (Allen, 1994; Conway et al., 1981). In this section, we speculate about some of the lessons that children may have learned from the 2016 presidential election and make suggestions for future research. We then make recommendations for policy and draw broad conclusions.

10.6.1 Immigration

A lot of people voted for Trump cause a lot of people want to send Mexicans to Mexico.

Latinx girl, age 8

It seems possible that children learned, as a result of exposure to election coverage, a good deal about immigration issues, especially concerning Mexico. Specifically, children may have learned that some adults do not want individuals from other countries to come to

the United States, perhaps especially when those individuals are Latinx or non-White. It is also possible that the election coverage led children to develop hypotheses about why it is that people from other regions of the world seek entry into the United States. Trump's 2015 comments about Mexican immigrants, for example his statement that 'When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best . . . They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists,' may have informed children's views of immigration. Much more research is needed on children's views of immigration and immigrants, both among native and immigrant populations (e.g., Brown & Lee, 2015).

10.6.2 Racism

I heard in the newspapers and TV that Trump said he would bring slaves back again.

Multiracial boy, age 8

He wants to bring Black people back to Africa, the White people to America, and the Mexicans to Mexico.

Black boy, age 9

It seems possible that children learned, as a result of exposure to election coverage, a good deal about racial and ethnic prejudice in the United States. Exposure to media coverage and discussion of the election may have led some children of colour to learn that they are members of a stigmatised group for the first time. Other children of colour may have been repeatedly exposed to stereotypic comments and biased treatment of themselves and their families. Although a good deal is now known about adolescents' experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination, much more research is needed on the topic of elementary-school-age children's understanding of, and experiences with, of racial and ethnic discrimination (see Brown, 2017, for a review). Youth views of the intersections of political issues and

institutional racism (e.g., attitudes towards policing, affirmative action, school desegregation) are especially in need of empirical study (Hughes & Bigler, 2011; Stewart et al., 2009).

10.6.3 Women's Rights

They didn't want a woman running for president and thought it was silly.

Black girl, age 10

Some people didn't want a girl to be president.

Latinx girl, age 7

Although the 2016 presidential election seems to have made nearly all children in the United States aware that is possible for a woman to run for the US presidency, whether the election generally increased children's gender/sex egalitarianism is unknown. As Patterson et al. (2019) reported, only 65% of children reported knowing that no woman had ever served as US president, a percentage that was lower (rather than higher) than percentages reported in earlier studies (Bigler et al., 2008). Thus, it seems possible that Clinton's candidacy led children to assume that other women had held that office. Although some observers might view this outcome as positive, we believe that it is generally better for members of both stigmatised and privileged groups to accurately understand the historical and contemporary forms of institutional and interpersonal bias (see Bigler & Wright, 2014).

10.6.4 Cynicism about Politics

He wants to be president. He's a big fat liar.

White girl, age 7

They're both nasty people.

Multiracial boy, age 10

It seems possible that some children acquired, as a result of their exposure to information about the 2016 US presidential election, a

cynical view of politics. The two major-party presidential candidates are contenders for the most powerful job in the United States, and perhaps the world. Even young children understand the prestige and importance of this occupational role. Furthermore, the president is elected to represent the interests of the public and is expected to be highly principled in their standards and conduct. Thus, the frequency and nature of the negative qualities of the candidates reported by the children in Patterson et al. (2019) are troubling; children described the candidates as, for example, 'evil', 'wicked', 'racist', 'total crap', 'a big fat liar', and 'the worst person in the world'. The view that political offices are held by self-serving, unethical, and unlikable figures is likely to severely undermine children's interest in, and motivation to acquire, political information, and to engage in political action, including voting and running for political office. It will be important for future research to examine whether, and if so, how, children's political development is affected by their exposure to negative political figures and actions.

10.6.5 Recommendations for Policy and Conclusions

One major conclusion that we draw from the theory and empirical findings that we've reviewed here is that US institutions and families should strive to improve political socialisation of youth. Data from Patterson et al. (2019) suggest that it is generally impossible to shield children from political discourse (i.e., protect children from receiving political messages). Children as young as five years of age are exposed to political information, at least some of which is incorrect or misunderstood (as some of the quotes in this piece illustrate). Thus, children need additional guidance from responsible authority figures concerning why and how to think about politics.

Because some parents will be ill-equipped (for many reasons) to undertake high-quality political socialisation, one especially important source of political socialisation is educational institutions. Schools are one of the major arenas in which youth learn about politics and political processes, including national-level politics. Educational curricula concerning presidential elections often focus on the role of elections in a democracy and the importance of voting, particularly in high schools (Hess & McAvoy, 2016). However, little is known about whether and how elementary-school teachers discuss presidential election processes, candidates, or outcomes. Anecdotal and a handful of empirical studies (e.g., Geller, 2020; Payne & Journell, 2019) suggested that teachers were unsure of how to handle pupils' remarks about the political campaigns and issues. Data from Patterson et al. (2019) suggest that teachers typically actively discouraged conversation about politics (e.g., 'Every time we wanted to talk about it, they wanted us to stop') and did not share their own views ('We talked about it, but the teachers can't tell their votes because it's the law'). We recommend that educational policy makers develop and institute new curricula that aim to teach elementary-school-age children: (a) pre-political participation skills (acquiring and evaluating policy-relevant information, respectful debate concerning differing views), (b) the value of politics as a domain of human endeavour, and (c) the knowledge and skills to be involved in political discourse and action. We believe that such steps can improve the viability of democracy in the USA and elsewhere.

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Part II

The Politics of Intergroup Attitudes

11 Authoritarianism

Conceptualisation, Research, and New Developments

John Duckitt

The first systematic research on authoritarianism as a set of social attitudes and beliefs held by individuals was published in 1950 by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford. They conceptualised authoritarianism as a broad personality dimension disposing individuals to right-wing conservatism, anti-Semitism, generalised prejudice, and notably fascism, and so named their measure of this syndrome the F scale. They proposed that this authoritarian personality arose out of inner conflicts originating from harsh, punitive childhood socialisation. This concept stimulated a great deal of research but the findings did not support their theory of the origins of authoritarianism or the psychometric adequacy of their F scale. As a result, alternative measures, which broadly followed their conceptualisation, were developed and used.

11.1 Conceptualising and Measuring Authoritarianism

11.1.1 Altemeyer's Right-Wing Authoritarianism

In 1981 Altemeyer developed the first psychometrically reliable and seemingly unidimensional scale to measure individual differences in authoritarianism. This right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) scale was directly derived from the F scale but empirically refined it by reducing its original nine content facets to only three; that is, authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, and conventionalism.

Research by Altemeyer (1981, 1996) and others (see, e.g., Duckitt, 2009) confirmed that RWA was stable in individuals over periods as long as 20 years, and was powerfully associated with right-wing political orientation, religious fundamentalism, social conservatism, traditionalism, and prejudice against minorities and out-groups. The RWA scale soon became the measure of choice for research on authoritarianism.

Some researchers have argued that the strong correlations between RWA and measures of social or cultural conservatism suggested that they were measuring the same dimension (Feldman, 2003). However, Altemeyer (1996) argued that RWA (as 'toughminded conservatism') was conceptually and empirically distinct from social conservatism, although they would be strongly related due to their inevitably shared right-wing ideological content. This was expressed in the harsh, intolerant, coercive, moralistically self-righteous, and therefore blatantly authoritarian content of many of the RWA scale's items, particularly the pro-trait items, that make them very different to the more neutral items found in measures of social conservatism, which express a preference for particular values, lifestyles, and social arrangements. As a result, the RWA scale has been a markedly better predictor of indices of punitiveness, support for anti-democratic actions, political intolerance, prejudice, extreme right-wing party preference, and ethnocentrism than conventional measures of social conservatism (Altemeyer, 1981, 1996) and has remained a

significant predictor even with liberal-conservative political orientation controlled (e.g., Conway & McFarland, 2019). Consequently, the RWA scale has remained the measure of choice for most authoritarianism research.

11.1.2 Social Dominance Orientation

A further development came with the concept and measure of social dominance orientation (SDO) (Pratto et al., 1994). In contrast to the items of the RWA scale, which expressed beliefs in coercive social control, obedience and respect for authorities, and conforming to traditional moral and religious norms, SDO items expressed support for inequality and the right of powerful groups to dominate weaker ones. Not surprisingly, therefore, scores on the SDO and RWA scales were often uncorrelated or weakly correlated, indicating that the two scales were measuring different and relatively independent dimensions (Altemeyer, 1998; Pratto et al., 1994).

Despite this, SDO proved as powerful a predictor as RWA of support for authoritarian social phenomena such as nationalism, militarism, support for tough, undemocratic, authoritarian government, and of generalised prejudice. Altemeyer (1998) suggested that the RWA and SDO scales measured two different authoritarianism dimensions, the submissive and the dominant respectively. This view of SDO as a second distinctively different dimension of authoritarianism has been broadly accepted by most researchers.

11.1.3 Social Conformity versus Autonomy

Feldman and Stenner (1997) have suggested that authoritarian attitudes or reactions are activated by the impact of social situational threats to social cohesion on individuals who

hold values of social conformity (versus autonomy), which they viewed as predisposing to authoritarianism. Feldman (2003) developed a 17-item scale to measure social conformity versus autonomy (SCA) values, with items that clearly express socially conservative rather than the openly authoritarian sentiments of the RWA scale. Although the SCA scale did correlate powerfully with the RWA scale this correlation would have been inflated by shared items and was still well below the scale reliabilities suggesting that they did measure somewhat different constructs.

In much of their research, Feldman and Stenner (1997; Stenner, 2005) preferred to use a much shorter four-item scale contrasting socially conservative and traditional child-rearing values with socially liberal ones, which they viewed as an equivalent measure of their concept of an authoritarian predisposition. The shortness of this child-rearing values (CRV) scale, and its inclusion in large-scale social surveys, has made it a popular choice for many researchers, who have typically described it as measuring authoritarianism itself. This, however, is a misconception. The items of the SCA and CRV scales, unlike those of the RWA and SDO scales, do not express clearly authoritarian sentiments, but simply contrast socially conservative with liberal child-rearing values. It is also inconsistent with Feldman and Stenner's (1997; Feldman, 2003; Stenner, 2005) conceptualisation of these scales as measuring not authoritarianism *per se* but a predisposition to authoritarianism. As such, these scales seem better conceptualised as measures of social conservatism rather than authoritarianism.

11.1.4 Political Conservatism

In contrast to Adorno et al. (1950) and Altemeyer (1996) who had viewed authoritarianism and conservatism as conceptually and

empirically distinct, Jost et al.'s (2003) motivated cognition theory suggested that both were subsumed in a single broad Political Conservatism dimension that was driven by needs to reduce and manage threat and uncertainty. In their research Jost and colleagues therefore treated measures of authoritarianism (such as the F, RWA, and SDO scales) and conservatism as essentially equivalent indicators of Political Conservatism.

There have been important criticisms of this approach, with the assumption that political attitudes can be organised along a single dimension particularly controversial. Research, for example, has shown that social and economic conservatism, and RWA and SDO, are factorially distinct dimensions and that the correlations between them vary across social contexts from strong positive through weak and non-significant to significantly negative (e.g., Malka et al., 2019; Roccato & Ricolfi, 2005) and that they have quite different origins and correlates (e.g., Duckitt & Sibley, 2017; Federico & Malka, 2018; Kandler et al. 2016). A second criticism has been Jost et al.'s (2003) assumption that authoritarianism and conservatism are essentially isomorphic and that authoritarianism is therefore largely or almost entirely to be found on the political right. This has been brought into question by new research on political extremism and left-wing authoritarianism which are discussed in Section 11.1.6.

Overall, therefore, there may be social contexts (particularly where social and economic conservatism and RWA and SDO are highly correlated) in which a broad Political Conservatism construct may be meaningful for particular research objectives. However, its conflation of critical conceptual and empirical distinctions suggests that it may be less useful for research on authoritarianism specifically.

11.1.5 Non-ideological Concepts of Authoritarianism

An early criticism of Adorno et al.'s (1950) authoritarianism was that it focused only on explaining authoritarianism of the political right and ignored authoritarianism of the left (e.g., Shils, 1954). One response to this was the attempt to develop constructs and measures that would be ideologically neutral and equally applicable to authoritarianism of the right and left.

Rokeach (1954) suggested that dogmatism, or rigidity in beliefs, might predispose individuals to authoritarianism in general, rather than just authoritarianism of the right. His Dogmatism (D) scale, however, proved problematic. The items were broad, vague statements of opinion often with ideological implications and sometimes similar to items of the F scale. As a result, the D scale correlated highly with both the F and RWA scales (Altemeyer, 1981), indicating that it was clearly not ideologically neutral. Altemeyer (1996) later developed a new Dogmatism (DOG) scale with a more precise conceptualisation of dogmatism as 'relatively unchangeable, unjustified certainty' (p. 201), which had better psychometric properties than the D scale. However, his DOG scale also correlated powerfully with the RWA scale and even more strongly with religious fundamentalism, suggesting that the scale might largely assess religious dogmatism (Duckitt, 2009).

Despite the failure of non-ideological measures of authoritarianism, new research on political extremism has indicated that there might well be a shared basis to authoritarianism of left and right. This research, reviewed by van Prooijen and Krouwel (2019), has shown that political extremism of both left and right was motivated by quests for meaning in an uncertain world, and resulted in cognitively simplistic views of social reality, moral absolutism,

overconfidence in own beliefs, and intolerance to those with different views. Moreover, both liberal and conservative extremists were more self-righteous and used more negative and angry language than moderates and were both motivated by perceived threat from political rivals. Extremists were also more cognitively inflexible, deferential to their own authorities, and had a simplistic understanding of politics and of how their favoured policies would work.

Overall, therefore, content-based attempts at ideologically neutral concepts of authoritarianism, such as dogmatism, failed. This was partly because they inevitably invoked values leaning in a particular ideological direction, and possibly also because authoritarianism was rooted not in cognition, but in motives which differed on the left and the right. As a result, authoritarianism researchers have continued to use ideologically based measures, such as the RWA or SDO scales. The new research on extremism, however, by indicating that authoritarian reactions could indeed be found on the political left as well as the right gave fresh impetus to the neglected issue of trying to measure left-wing authoritarianism.

11.1.6 Left-Wing Authoritarianism

Until recently there had been only two noteworthy attempts to develop left-wing authoritarianism (LWA) scales but neither involved a sustained research effort. The first by Altemeyer (1996) viewed LWA as an ideological mirror image of his tripartite concept of RWA, and thus characterised by authoritarian submission (to left-wing authorities), authoritarian aggression (against established authorities), and conventionalism (conformity to norms of left-wing authorities). The items of his LWA scale therefore directly expressed these sentiments. The scale, however, seemed unsuccessful as there were few high scorers and

it unexpectedly correlated positively though weakly with his RWA scale. A possible flaw may have been his assumption that authoritarians of the left and right would share fundamentally the same values, just directed at different targets.

A second attempt by Van Hiel et al. (2006) proposed that LWA would comprise only authoritarian submission (obedience to party discipline) and authoritarian aggression (support for political violence). Their scale did not appear valid in a general population sample but performed better in a sample of left-wing activists. This may have been because their items expressed support for communism and violent revolution, which after the collapse of communism in Europe and the USSR would no longer have been endorsed by any other than committed left-wing activists. Neither of these two LWA scales has been much used subsequently.

Recently, however, there have been two more promising attempts to measure LWA. First, Conway et al. (2018) adapted Altemeyer's RWA items to refer to causes and groups that leftists (rather than right-wingers) would support, but retained the intolerant, coercive, authoritarian content of the items. Initial findings have indicated that this LWA scale predicted liberalism-conservatism and presidential candidate support equivalently and oppositely to the RWA scale, as well as prejudice (against conservative targets) and dogmatism (in liberal-favouring domains). A criticism of this LWA scale, however, is that its items, like those of the RWA scale, are complex and cumbersome, often expressing two or even three distinct ideas simultaneously, which is not psychometrically ideal.

Second, Costello, Bowes, Stevens, et al. (in press) used an exhaustive test construction process to develop a content-valid LWA scale which showed impressive evidence of validity when tested against over 50 criterion variables.

These findings showed that authoritarians of left and right shared many characteristics as well as both endorsing coercive, intolerant, prejudiced, morally absolutist, and aggressive actions and attitudes towards others seen as threatening their values.

Overall, therefore, there has been remarkably little research on LWA in comparison to the enormous volume on RWA. Nevertheless, recent developments are promising although they need independent replication and extension.

11.1.7 Conceptualising and Measuring Authoritarianism: Conclusions

The conceptualisation and measurement of authoritarianism has involved important difficulties. The most critical, stemming largely from Adorno et al.'s (1950) original conceptualisation and the failure to develop ideology-free measures of authoritarianism, has been the almost universal conflation of authoritarianism with right-wing ideology and conservatism. New research on political extremism and LWA, however, indicates the need for a conceptual approach able to subsume authoritarianism of both right and left. Crystallising the core elements proposed for authoritarianism and incorporated in its measurement therefore suggests a broader conception of authoritarianism as a morally absolutist and intolerant desire for the coercive imposition of particular beliefs, values, way of life, and form of social organisation on people irrespective of their wishes and of any human costs involved.

11.2 Assumed Antecedents of Authoritarianism

Researchers have investigated many possible causes of authoritarianism. These can be broadly divided into dispositional (i.e., genetics, personality, motives, values, and

cognitive factors), social or situational influences (i.e., family and parental influences, personal and social experiences, and broader societal and cultural factors), and threat, which is largely situational but also reflects dispositional differences in threat perception.

11.2.1 Dispositional Factors

Genetic Influences

Hatemi and McDermott (2012) have reviewed the findings of numerous studies investigating the heritability of ideological attitudes. The findings have shown stronger correlations between the ideological attitudes of monozygotic versus dizygotic twins enabling estimates of the variance due to genetic, common environmental (i.e., shared among siblings) and unique (to the individual) environmental influences. These have shown a substantial genetic influence (40%–60% of variance) for measures of conservatism, RWA, and traditionalism. In adult samples there were relatively weak effects for shared environmental influences and substantial effects for unique environmental factors, which were broadly equivalent to those for genetic influences. Findings for genetic influences on SDO, however, have suggested weaker effects than for RWA with Kandler et al. (2016) finding minimal genetic effect on SDO and Kleppestø et al. (2019) only moderate effects (24%–37% of variance).

Research has also shown that genetic and environmental influences can interact to influence behaviour. Studies using longitudinal panel designs have shown that during adolescence genetic influences tend to be weak and shared environmental influences strong. However, when children leave home the effects of shared environment largely disappear and genetic factors exert a more powerful effect which lasts for the rest of life (Hatemi & McDermott, 2012; Hufer et al., 2020). This

suggests that environmental influences can modulate the degree to which genetic factors may be expressed in ideological attitudes, either permitting maximal genetic impact or reducing it substantially.

Personality

Although early theorists, such as Adorno et al. (1950) did view authoritarianism as a personality dimension, later evidence, and notably genetic analyses (Funk et al., 2013), have indicated that personality and ideological attitudes are clearly distinct factors. As a result, subsequent research has focused on the relationship of RWA and SDO with well-validated personality constructs, such as the broadband personality dimensions of the Big Five and Hexaco models.

For the Big Five, meta-analytic findings have shown that the primary predictors were Openness on lower RWA (-0.36), and Agreeableness on lower SDO (-0.29) (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Conscientiousness was also a significant but much weaker predictor of RWA as was Openness of SDO. For the Hexaco dimensions, Zettler et al.'s (2020) meta-analysis found that Openness was the primary predictor of RWA ($r = -0.39$), while Lee et al. (2010) found that Honesty-Humility was the most important predictor of SDO. Since Hexaco Honesty-Humility and Big Five Agreeableness (Gaughan et al., 2012) are highly correlated these findings are clearly consistent with each other.

Meta-analytic findings for more specific personality traits have indicated that SDO but not RWA was associated with lower empathy or altruism (Onraet et al., 2017) and positively with the dark triad traits (i.e., Narcissism, Psychopathy, and Machiavellianism) (Vize et al., 2018). Upper body strength or drive for muscularity was also positively correlated with SDO but not RWA among men (Peterson

& Laustsen, 2019). Meta-analytic findings, however, have shown little if any association of positive affectivity, negative affectivity, and self-esteem with Conservatism, RWA, or SDO (Onraet, Van Hiel, & Dhont, 2013).

The relatively few longitudinal findings available have supported the view that personality does causally affect ideological attitudes. Three longitudinal studies over approximately one-year periods found significant cross-lagged effects for Big Five personality dimensions of Openness and Agreeableness on RWA and SDO respectively (Perry & Sibley, 2012; Sibley & Duckitt, 2010, 2013) with little evidence of reciprocal effects from personality from ideological attitudes.

A second issue is that of whether effects of personality on ideology might be direct or mediated. Research on the Dual Process Motivational (DPM) model has shown that the effects of the Big Five or Hexaco personality dimensions on RWA and SDO were fully or partially mediated via Dangerous and Competitive World-View Beliefs respectively (Duckitt & Sibley, 2017). In addition, Caprara et al. (2009) have shown that the effects of Big Five personality on Conservatism were fully mediated by basic values, with effects of Openness and Conscientiousness mediated via Security values and Agreeableness via Universalism values.

In conclusion, therefore, research findings show that the major personality dimensions do clearly predict ideological attitudes, but differentially so, with RWA predicted primarily by low Openness (for both Big Five and Hexaco models) and SDO by low Big Five Agreeableness (and Hexaco Honesty-Humility). Moreover, effects of personality on ideological attitudes would appear not to be direct but mediated, again differentially so, via Dangerous World beliefs and Security values on RWA, and via Competitive World beliefs and Universalism values on SDO.

Motives, Values, and Morality

Early theorists had viewed authoritarianism as a single motivationally based dimension (Adorno et al., 1950; Wilson, 1973). This approach was comprehensively articulated by Jost and his colleagues who proposed that authoritarianism (both RWA and SDO) and conservatism comprise a single Political Conservatism dimension motivated by needs to manage, and control threat and uncertainty (Jost et al., 2003). Research, reviewed in the next two sections, however, has not supported this perspective. Rigid cognitive styles and threat and fearfulness, which were assumed to underlie these needs, have been shown to relate differently to social and economic aspects of conservatism, and SDO and RWA (e.g., Costello, Bowes, Malka, et al., 2020; Federico & Malka, 2018).

The DPM model in contrast proposes that authoritarianism comprises two different motivationally based dimensions. RWA expresses the motivational goal or value of maintaining collective or societal safety and security and is driven by a view of the social world as dangerous, threatening, and unstable. SDO, on the other hand, expresses the motivational goal or value of power, dominance, and superiority over others driven by a view of the social world as a ruthlessly competitive jungle in which the strong win and the weak lose. Research comprehensively reviewed by Duckitt and Sibley (2017) has supported the DPM model by showing that RWA and SDO are factorially distinct, have different personality, genetic, and world-view origins, and are differentially reactive to different kinds of perceived threats with SDO more reactive to competitive threats to status and power differentials and RWA to threats to social order, stability, cohesion, and personal security.

Finally, research on motivationally based values, such as Schwartz's well-validated

values typology, has found powerfully differential effects on RWA and SDO, with the former primarily related to Conservation values and the latter to Self-Enhancement values (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Boer & Fischer, 2013; Duriez et al., 2005). Similar differential effects have been found for moral values with RWA associated with binding moral foundations (loyalty, authority, and sanctity), and SDO primarily (and negatively) related to individualising foundations (care and fairness) (e.g., Federico et al., 2013; Hadarics & Kende, 2018).

To conclude, therefore, research has supported the original view that authoritarianism would be motivationally based, but also shown that it comprises two distinct authoritarian dimensions with each expressing different basic motives.

Cognitive Style and Ability

Early theorists had suggested that authoritarianism and conservatism would be associated with cognitive styles characterised by rigidity, intolerance of ambiguity, and preferences for structure and order (Adorno et al., 1950; Rokeach, 1954; Wilson, 1973). This was supported by Jost et al.'s (2003) meta-analysis which found positive correlations between Political Conservatism (which included RWA, SDO, as well as conservatism) and indices of more rigid cognitive styles ($r = 0.23\text{--}0.34$). A second more comprehensive meta-analysis by Jost and colleagues (Jost, Sterling, & Stern, 2017) obtained similar effects.

Critics, however, expressed concern about an over-reliance on self-report cognitive style measures that were also often poorly defined, unreliable, unvalidated, and included ideologically relevant item content, as well as the conflation of different ideological dimensions (e.g., Costello, Bowes, Malka et al., 2020; Van Hiel et al., 2010, 2016; Zmigrod, 2020). For

example, two meta-analyses by Van Hiel and colleagues (Van Hiel et al., 2010, 2016) found very weak correlations for behavioural rigidity-related cognitive measures with right-wing ideological attitudes compared to much stronger effects for self-report measures.

Most recently, a new and more extensive meta-analysis by Costello, Bowes, Malka, et al. (2020) used the same rigidity-related cognitive style measures as Jost, Sterling, and Stern (2017) but redressed a number of the concerns with their meta-analyses, by for example excluding self-report measures with overlapping item content (between ideology and cognitive style). Its findings showed a considerably smaller overall relationship between rigidity-related indices and conservatism ($r = 0.13$) than previously reported, with a significant though weak overall effect for social conservatism ($r = 0.20$) but a negligible effect for economic conservatism. In addition, the effects for behavioural indices were much weaker and the overall effects were non-significant in representative samples.

These meta-analyses, however, all focused on conservatism broadly. Relatively few studies have included both RWA and SDO and these have found that whereas the correlations between RWA and indices of greater cognitive rigidity were consistently significant, those for SDO were much weaker and often non-significant (Berggren et al., 2019; Burger et al., 2020; Van Hiel et al., 2004). This parallels the findings from Costello, Bowes, Malka, et al.'s (2020) meta-analysis for social and economic conservatism with cognitive rigidity.

Research on the relationship of intelligence or cognitive ability with ideological attitudes has suggested a similarly complex picture. A meta-analysis of findings by Onraet et al. (2015) found an overall effect of intelligence on conservative ideology (i.e., RWA and social conservatism) of $r = -0.20$ but did not include effects for SDO and economic conservatism.

Research on cognitive ability and SDO has found either non-significant (Heaven et al., 2011; Ludeke et al., 2016; Van Hiel et al., 2019) or significant but very weak negative effects (Choma & Hanoch, 2017; Choma et al., 2019). For economic conservatism, on the other hand, a few studies have found non-significant effects (e.g., Choma et al., 2019), but most, and particularly those using large representative samples, have found economically conservative attitudes associated with higher cognitive ability (Carl, 2014; Lewis & Bates, 2018; Ludeke & Rasmussen, 2018).

Overall, therefore, more rigid cognitive styles and lower cognitive ability are consistently associated with greater social conservatism and RWA but the effects are not strong (around $r = 0.20$). On the other hand, the effects for SDO are inconsistent, with very weak or non-significant correlations, and those for economic conservatism are either negligible or, in the case of cognitive ability, positive.

11.2.2 Situational Factors

Parental and Family Influences

Altemeyer's (1996) findings did not support Adorno et al.'s (1950) theory that authoritarianism originated from strict and punitive parenting. He did, however, find moderate to strong correlations (around 0.40) between parent-offspring RWA. Subsequent research has replicated this for RWA and conservatism, as well as finding significant though much weaker correlations for parent-offspring SDO (e.g., Dhont et al., 2013; Kandler et al., 2012).

Altemeyer (1996) suggested that parental and family influences were largely transmitted through social learning during childhood and adolescence. However, findings from twin behavioural genetic research, already noted, have shown that shared environmental effects

such as family and parental influences on ideological attitudes largely disappear when offspring leave the parental home (Hatemi & McDermott, 2012; Hufer et al., 2020). This suggests that the parent-offspring ideological attitude correlations in adulthood primarily reflect shared genetic influences, which would also be consistent with the stronger effects found for genetic influences on RWA than SDO.

Social Influences and Personal Experiences

Altemeyer (1996) had argued that authoritarian attitudes could be modified throughout life by social influences and personal experiences and research supports this. Thus, exposure to ethnic and cultural diversity and intergroup contact experiences are associated with lower RWA (Van Assche et al., 2018), and two experimental studies have shown that interethnic contact lowered students' SDO levels (Dhont et al., 2014; Shook et al., 2016).

Research has shown that education, and particularly higher education, reduced social conservatism, RWA, and SDO (Altemeyer, 1996; Napier & Jost, 2008; Van Hiel et al., 2010) but not economic conservatism (Houtman, 2003; Lewis, 2018; Napier & Jost, 2008). However, the effects vary, being greater for 'liberal' educational approaches and hierarchy-attenuating college courses (e.g., psychology) than for more conservative educational approaches and hierarchy-enhancing college courses (e.g., law) (Guimond et al., 2003; Hurley & Hurley, 2015). Ageing and becoming a parent have been found to be associated with higher RWA and social conservatism, but not with SDO (Altemeyer, 1996; Pratto et al., 1994; Ruffman et al., 2016), with the effects on RWA and social conservatism mediated by increased threat perception and vigilance (Cheon & Esposito, 2020; Kerry & Murray, 2018).

Consistent with social dominance theory, research has shown that ethnic groups of higher status are higher in SDO, that males are consistently higher in SDO than females, and that larger differences in social group status are associated with larger differences in the mean group levels of SDO (Sidanius et al., 2000). Two studies have also shown that assigning individuals to positions of personal power (i.e., manager versus receptionist) can increase their SDO level (Guimond et al., 2003) though only if the normative context was hierarchy enhancing (as opposed to hierarchy attenuating) (De Oliveira et al., 2012). Higher income and socio-economic status have been associated with higher economic conservatism but, inconsistent with social dominance theory, with lower SDO, as well as lower social conservatism, and RWA (Houtman, 2003; Lewis, 2018; Napier & Jost, 2008).

Overall, therefore, social and personal experiences throughout life seem likely to influence either both RWA and SDO (education, diversity, intergroup contact) or RWA (ageing, parenting) and SDO (group or personal power) differentially.

Societal and Cultural Influences

A number of studies from diverse disciplines have investigated effects of societal- and cultural-level factors on individuals' ideological attitudes. One pattern identified was that normative cultural values of hierarchy (or power distance) and collectivism (or embeddedness) were associated with individuals being higher in SDO and RWA respectively (Fischer et al., 2012).

A second pattern has been between low socio-economic development and more conservative ideological attitudes. Onraet, Van Hiel, and Cornelis (2013) found powerful correlations for 91 countries between adverse socio-economic indicators (higher inflation,

unemployment, homicide rate, and lower gross national product and life expectancy) with higher sociocultural and economic-hierarchical conservatism ($r = 0.71$ and 0.79 , respectively). Fischer et al. (2012) found a similarly strong correlation between lower gross national income and higher SDO ($r = -0.59$) over 27 different countries, and similar effects have been reported in other studies (e.g., Welzel, 2013). Researchers have assumed that this effect is broadly driven by the experience of social and personal insecurity, instability, and threat (e.g., Onraet, Van Hiel, & Cornelis, 2013; Welzel, 2013).

11.2.3 Threat, Conservatism, and Authoritarianism

Most early theorists had seen threat as a major cause of conservatism and authoritarianism (e.g., Adorno et al., 1950; Wilson, 1973). Jost et al.'s (2003) influential meta-analysis found that Political Conservatism was consistently and often strongly correlated with heightened perceptions or experiences of social, political, economic, and personal threats. A later review by Hibbing et al. (2014) argued that conservatives were higher on psychological and physiological reactivity to threatening stimuli of all kinds and were therefore characterised by a generalised negativity bias.

Critics, however, have noted that conservatives were no different from liberals in negative affectivity, anxiety, neuroticism, self-esteem, and fear of death, and were higher in well-being and optimism (e.g., Feldman & Huddy, 2014). In addition, new and more comprehensive research failed to replicate earlier findings that conservatives were higher in physiological reactivity to threat (Bakker et al., 2020; Osmundsen et al., in press).

A second more extensive meta-analysis by Jost and colleagues (2017) reported much weaker, and sometimes non-significant, effects

than found in the earlier meta-analysis. In discussing their weaker effects, they noted new findings indicating that liberals and conservatives differed in reactivity to different kinds of threats (fig. 5, pp. 344–345). Two subsequent studies that used more comprehensive taxonomies of perceived threats over many samples found no overall differences between liberals and conservatives in threat perception, but differences in the kinds of threats they perceived (Clifton & Kerry, 2020; Kahn et al., 2020). Liberals emphasised threats of omission (failure to make needed social changes) while conservatives emphasised threats of commission (harms from disruptive social changes).

There is also evidence that threats are differentially related to different ideological dimensions. Thus, correlational, longitudinal, and experimental studies have shown that threats to social and personal safety and security predict social conservatism or RWA but not economic conservatism or SDO (e.g., Choma & Hodson, 2017; Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Jugert & Duckitt, 2009; Nagoshi et al., 2007). SDO on the other hand, as proposed by the DPM model, would be predicted by competitive threats over relative dominance and superiority arising from disruptive social changes to the social hierarchy of status and power (Duckitt & Sibley, 2017). Thus, correlational and longitudinal research has shown that a perception of the social world as dangerous predicted RWA but not SDO, while a perception of the social world as a ruthlessly competitive jungle predicted SDO but not RWA (Perry et al., 2013; Sibley & Duckitt, 2013).

According to the DPM model, threats affect RWA and SDO through changing people's world-view perceptions, and this has been demonstrated experimentally (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Jugert & Duckitt, 2009). However, these social world-view beliefs (belief in a dangerous or competitive world), once established, form

relatively stable and partly dispositional interpretive lenses that determine how people interpret social experiences (as threatening or competitive, or not) and so can moderate the effect of social and personal experiences on ideological attitudes. For example, some threats (e.g., minor, symbolic) may have no effect on liberals (for whom the social world is safe and stable) but shift conservatives (who are more ready to see threat) towards more authoritarian reactions (cf. Feldman & Stenner's (1997) 'authoritarian reaction'). Other threats (e.g., more serious, realistic threats) may have a greater 'conservative shift' on liberals (by dramatically violating their view of the world as safe and secure) than on conservatives (who already see the world as dangerous and threatening) (cf. Hetherington & Suhay, 2011).

Overall, therefore, both ideological right and left seem associated with threat, but of different kinds, with the left more sensitive to threats perceived as necessitating social change, and the right to threats resulting from disruptive social changes. Moreover, on the right disruptive social changes that threaten personal and collective security are associated with RWA, and competitive threats of change to the social hierarchy with SDO. These effects seem mediated via social world-view perceptions which can also moderate their effects. And finally, it has also been shown that the presence of threat can also weaken or even eliminate the effects of personality, cognitive factors, and values on ideological attitudes (Bakker, 2017; Boer & Fischer, 2013).

11.2.4 Conclusions: Assumed Antecedents of Authoritarianism

Overall, although evidence of causality is often tentative, research does suggest a reasonably clear pattern. There are strong genetic influences, though more so for RWA than SDO. Dispositional factors, which may mediate

genetic as well as environmental influences, show clearly differential effects with particular traits, values, motives, and threat-related social world-view perceptions associated with RWA and others with SDO. New findings indicate that the effects for cognitive factors seem weaker than previously assumed and associated with RWA (and social conservatism) rather than SDO (and economic conservatism). Social and societal influences have effects as strong as genes with important differential effects for RWA (ageing, parenting, diversity experiences) and SDO (individuals' social positioning). And finally, threats of disruptive social changes seem a potentially major driver of authoritarianism, but again differentially so, with threats to safety and security related to RWA and competitive threats to the social hierarchy to SDO.

11.3 Assumed Consequences of Authoritarianism

Many assumed effects of authoritarianism have been investigated, and particularly the core issues identified by early theorists. These are anti-democratic attitudes, political intolerance, prejudice, ethnocentrism, political extremism, nationalism, militarism, and support for autocratic leadership.

11.3.1 Anti-democratic Attitudes and Political Intolerance

Altemeyer (1996) found that his RWA scale correlated powerfully with how justified illegal, repressive actions by government officials were seen (illegal wiretaps and searches, denial of right to protest, and use of agent provocateurs), particularly when these targeted unconventional and therefore even right-wing groups. Many studies have replicated these findings by showing that RWA and SDO correlated with lower support for

human rights, civil liberties, and democratic values (e.g., Cohrs et al., 2005; Crowson, 2009). There is also evidence, consistent with the DPM model, that the effects of RWA and SDO on civil liberties restrictions seem differentially motivated, with those for RWA associated with perceiving the social world as dangerous and threatening and the effects of SDO associated with perceiving the social world as a ruthlessly competitive jungle (e.g., Crowson, 2009; see also Cohrs et al., 2005).

There is, however, evidence that the lower support on the political right for civil liberties and individual rights may not also hold for political intolerance and electoral democracy. Research reviewed by Brandt et al. (2014) shows that conservative and liberals show equivalent levels of intolerance for threatening or opposing groups (see also Stern & Crawford, 2020). New research also indicates an important distinction between electoral or majoritarian democracy (decisions based on the will of the majority) and minoritarian or liberal democracy (civil liberties and minority rights) with RWA associated with support for majoritarian but not minoritarian democracy (Claassen, 2020; Šerek & Lomičova, 2020).

Overall, therefore, findings indicate that RWA, SDO, and political conservatism are associated with lower support for democratic values, and particularly civil liberties and individual rights, with the effects for RWA and SDO differentially motivated, but not with greater political intolerance or lower support for electoral or majoritarian democracy. These seemingly anomalous effects seem consistent with right- (RWA, SDO, and conservatism) and left-wing ideologies being motivated to defend or change the social status quo respectively.

11.3.2 Authoritarian Leadership

Given its theoretical centrality, there has been relatively little research on authoritarianism

and support for autocratic, dictatorial leadership. One indirectly relevant finding is that threatening social conditions (i.e., uncertainty, hardship, conflict, physical danger, low economic development) that predict greater authoritarianism also predict preferences for leaders who are male, more dominant, masculine, charismatic, strong, conservative, and physically intimidating in appearance (e.g., Laustsen & Petersen, 2017; Russo et al., 2019).

One set of studies has found that conservatism, RWA, and SDO were positively correlated with preference for dominant as opposed to non-dominant leaders (using facial appearance, voice tone, or adjective ratings of dominance) but only the effect for SDO remained significant when all three predicted simultaneously (Laustsen & Petersen, 2016, 2017). Another set of studies using a single item originally from the World Values Study (WVS) found that preference for ‘a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections’ was positively correlated with conservatism but the effects for SDO and particularly RWA were stronger (Miller, 2017; Russo et al., 2019) with only RWA significant when both RWA and conservatism were used as predictors (Russo et al., 2019).

Overall, therefore, right-wing ideologies and threatening circumstances are both associated with preferences for more dominant, autocratic, and strong authoritarian leadership. However, the effects seem to be driven by RWA or SDO rather than conservatism, with SDO, rather than RWA, associated with preference for dominance in leaders, and RWA associated with strong leader authoritarianism.

11.3.3 Prejudice and Ethnocentrism

Research has shown that RWA and SDO powerfully and independently predict a broad ethnocentric pattern involving a generalised dislike of minorities, out-groups, and deviants

as well as in-group favouritism (Altemeyer, 1998; Pratto et al., 1994; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Research on the DPM model has shown that RWA and SDO have differential effects on prejudice reflecting their different motivational bases (see, e.g., Duckitt & Sibley, 2017, pp. 202–211, for a recent review). RWA primarily predicts prejudice against groups seen as threatening personal and collective safety and security, while SDO primarily predicts prejudice against groups seen as challenging or threatening the social hierarchy of status and power. These effects are therefore differentially mediated with the effects of RWA mediated by perceived out-group threats to safety and security and those for SDO by perceived intergroup competitiveness over relative status and dominance. They are also differentially moderated with RWA being more predictive of prejudiced attitudes when threats to collective security are salient and SDO more predictive when competitive concerns over relative group dominance and superiority are salient.

Another implication of the DPM model is that authoritarianism of the right (RWA and SDO) does not predict prejudice against all out-groups, as the generalised prejudice thesis had suggested, but only against groups seen as potentially threatening the legitimacy of the traditional social order. Consistent with this, research recently reviewed by Brandt and Crawford (2019; see also Stern & Crawford, 2020) has shown that those on the political right were prejudiced against groups perceived as left wing, and those on the political left equivalently prejudiced against groups perceived as right wing, with these effects mediated by perceived threat. This suggests, as Brandt and Crawford (2019) have proposed, that right-wing prejudices arise from motives to preserve the status quo (i.e., with RWA pro-tradition and SDO pro-hierarchy) and left-wing prejudices from motives to promote social change.

To conclude, right-wing authoritarian attitudes seem to predict generalised prejudices not to all out-groups but to those perceived as threatening the legitimacy of the social order, with RWA predicting prejudice against groups threatening personal and collective safety and security and SDO groups threatening the social hierarchy of status and power.

11.3.4 Political Extremism, Nationalism, and Militarism

Research, meta-analysed by Van Assche, Dhont, and Pettigrew (2019) has shown that RWA and SDO were consistently strong predictors of support for far-right and populist parties or candidates (with correlations around 0.40). Several studies have also reported effects consistent with the different motivational bases of RWA and SDO, with effects of RWA, and not SDO, on far-right support mediated by perceived immigrant threat (Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016), and RWA being associated with support for traditionalist parties and SDO for libertarian parties (Van Assche, Van Hiel, Dhont, & Roets, 2019).

RWA and SDO have also both consistently predicted nationalism (belief in national superiority and dominance) (Altemeyer, 1996; Osborne et al., 2017; Pratto et al., 1994), whereas effects for patriotism (affective attachment to one's nation) have varied. RWA has consistently correlated positively with patriotism, whereas the correlations for SDO have only been positive for members of powerful, dominant social groups and nations (Osborne et al., 2017; Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius et al., 1997).

Research has also shown that RWA and SDO predict support for the military, military action, war in general, and prisoner abuse in conflict situations (Crowson, 2009; Jackson & Gaertner, 2010; Pratto et al., 1994; Van Hiel

et al., 2020). Moreover, these effects seem differentially motivated with the effect for RWA associated with perceived threat and that for SDO with competitiveness and a lack of concern for victims (Crowson, 2009; Jackson & Gaertner, 2010).

Overall, therefore, findings show that RWA and SDO predict support for extreme right-wing and populist parties and candidates, nationalist attitudes, support for the military, military action, war, intergroup conflict, and the use of torture in conflict situations with the effects across domains differentially motivated for RWA and SDO.

11.3.5 Conclusions: Assumed Consequences of Authoritarianism

Research indicates that RWA and SDO consistently predict the core outcomes proposed by early theorists such as anti-democratic attitudes, political intolerance, prejudice, ethnocentrism, nationalism, militarism, and support for extremist right-wing political parties and candidates. The findings, however, also show that RWA and SDO predict these outcomes for different motives. And finally, whereas existing research has focused almost entirely on authoritarianism of the right, new findings suggest that LWA may be as predictive of authoritarian phenomena on the left as RWA and SDO are for the right (Costello, Bowes, Stevens, et al., in press).

11.4 Authoritarianism: Conclusions and New Directions

Research on individual differences in authoritarianism has a long history, but there have been important new developments. These have underlined the need to conceptually clarify the construct to adequately differentiate authoritarianism on the right from conventional conservatism, as well as LWA from conventional

liberalism. It is argued that authoritarianism can be viewed as a morally absolutist and intolerant desire for the coercive imposition of particular beliefs, values, way of life, and form of social organisation (radical traditionalism on the right and radical egalitarianism on the left) on people irrespective of their wishes and of any human costs involved.

There have also been important developments in research on the likely causes and consequences of authoritarianism. This suggests that authoritarianism is fundamentally rooted in motivation (rather than cognition) with the right motivated by support of traditional values and social organisation and the left by changing them. The research, which has focused almost entirely on authoritarianism of the right, also indicates that two distinct dimensions, best captured by RWA and SDO, have different genetic, dispositional, and situational origins. In addition, despite having broadly similar likely effects, they are differently motivated, in the case of RWA by concerns over personal and collective safety and security, and in the case of SDO by concerns over competitive threats to the social hierarchy of status and power. New research on LWA, while still in its infancy, also suggests that authoritarianism of right and left may be rooted in broadly similar personal characteristics and have similar effects on social behaviour and attitudes. Nevertheless, there may also be important differences and such possibilities signal important new directions for research and theory.

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12 A Political Psychology of Ethnocentrism

Boris Bizumic and Hannah Sheppard

Ludwig Gumplowicz, one of the key sociologists in history (Scott, 2007), was born and lived in the Austria-Hungarian Empire. At the time, it was the second-largest country in Europe after the Russian Empire, and it comprised numerous ethnic groups, many of which craved independence and their own nation states. Observing many conflicts between ethnic groups, his major approach to sociology was a study of intergroup conflict, which for him principally consisted of ethnic conflict. His theory of realistic group conflict had a profound impact on early sociology, strongly influencing the founders of American sociology, such as Albion Small, William Graham Sumner, and Lester Ward. Ward, in fact, had travelled twice to visit Gumplowicz, about whom he later wrote a glowing obituary (Ward, 1909).

Gumplowicz was born in Krakow, where Nicolaus Copernicus lived several centuries earlier, and he wrote during the time when Charles Darwin's books were making an initial huge impact. While Copernicus's heliocentric

theory criticised geocentrism, and Darwin's theory of evolution criticised anthropocentrism, Gumplowicz's theory of group conflict, in turn, criticised ethnocentrism, which he saw as a 'delusion' (Gumplowicz, 1879), analogous to anthropocentrism and geocentrism: 'Just as he regards himself as the centre of the earth (Anthropocentrism), as he regards the earth as the centre of the universe (Geocentrism), as every people and every nation regards itself as the most splendid (Ethnocentrism)...' (Gumplowicz, 1881, p. 71).

Gumplowicz was probably the first person to use the term ethnocentrism in print and may have coined it (Bizumic, 2014), and it features prominently in his books and articles written in Polish and German (e.g., Gumplowicz, 1881, 1887, 1895, 1905). His German books influenced Sumner (1906, 1911), who later popularised the concept. Sumner, in fact, ended up being incorrectly credited for inventing the concept by many researchers writing in English (e.g., Brewer, 2016; Kinder & Kam, 2009; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Tajfel, 1982).

Sumner's own treatment of ethnocentrism and group conflict built upon that of Gumplowicz (see Bizumic, 2014), but given that Sumner wrote in English, his work directly influenced modern perceptions of ethnocentrism. Sumner (1906, 1911) defined ethnocentrism as a belief that one's in-group was the centre of everything, and it included intragroup (group cohesion, devotion, and comradeship) and intergroup attitudes (in-group superiority, purity, preference, and the desire to protect

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in-group interests against any out-group). Sumner also assumed that ethnocentrism would unavoidably correlate with negative out-group attitudes as out-groups' differing customs, values, social norms, and/or deities would incite condescension from members of the in-group. These definitions have had a lot of influence on subsequent conceptualisations of ethnocentrism, and over time ethnocentrism has become one of the fundamental concepts in psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, marketing research, philosophy, and other disciplines (e.g., Adorno et al., 1950; Booth, 1979/2014; Cleveland et al., 2009; Kinder & Kam, 2009; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Rorty, 1986; van der Geest & Reis, 2002).

Both Gumprowicz and Sumner saw ethnocentrism and ethnic conflict as fundamental aspects of the human mind and human groups. Neither would be surprised to see the world today dominated by the news of ethnic tensions and conflicts. Ethnocentrism appears to have been on the rise for the last several decades, evident in ethnic conflicts around the world. These include ethnic tensions in Western societies, which, for example, resulted in Brexit in the United Kingdom and Donald Trump's presidency in the United States. Explicit ethnocentric statements appear to infiltrate mainstream politics across many societies. For example, Viktor Orban, the prime minister of Hungary, recently asserted: 'We do not want a multicultural society', and sent an unambiguous message to refugees in Hungary: 'We want no more people to come. Those who are here, go home!' (see Orban, 2017).

Even places that are widely perceived to be ethnically tolerant are hardly free of ethnocentrism. For example, in Sweden, ethnic profiling is widespread, and ethnic minorities are 10 times more likely to be unemployed than the ethnic majority (Burlin, 2020). In addition, the far-right anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats are making significant electoral

gains, as is the case in other Nordic countries (Henley, 2018), which have also been perceived as exemplars of ethnic tolerance, but where far-right political parties are becoming increasingly popular.

Despite the rise of ethnocentrism in politics, the usage of the term has declined in psychology. This is likely, in part, due to the ambiguity of the concept, which arises from the varying definitions, explanations, and measures of ethnocentrism found throughout the literature. Although influential, Sumner's original definitions left the concept of ethnocentrism open to interpretation (LeVine & Campbell, 1972), resulting in a plethora of conceptualisations and operationalisations, including: in-group preference (e.g., Crocker & Schwartz, 1985), positive in-group evaluation (Turner et al., 1987), out-group negativity or hostility (Altemeyer, 1998; Pettigrew et al., 1997), and the association between in-group positivity and out-group negativity (Chang & Ritter, 1976). This has resulted in a lack of clarity around what ethnocentrism is and what conclusions can be drawn from this area (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2012; Raden, 2003).

Several influential theories have attempted to explain ethnocentrism over the years. In the middle of the 20th century, Adorno et al.'s (1950) authoritarian personality theory assumed that personality differences in authoritarianism cause ethnocentrism, which this theory saw as an amalgam of anti-minority and chauvinistic attitudes. Subsequently, LeVine and Campbell's (1972) realistic group conflict theory assumed that conflict over material resources causes ethnocentrism, which this theory saw as a complex 'syndrome' involving many pro-in-group and anti-out-group attitudes and behaviours. Social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (1986) focused on self-esteem as an underlying cause of in-group bias, which this theory saw as an analogue of ethnocentrism that can be studied in a

psychology laboratory. Further, Greenberg et al.'s (1997) terror management theory saw ethnocentrism as a predilection for promoting one's own cultural beliefs and values, even at the expense of other beliefs and values, and most likely arising from the intrapsychic threat of mortality. The political scientists Kinder and Kam (2009) used an eclectic approach consisting of a number of theories, such as authoritarian personality, realistic group conflict, social identity, and evolutionary theory, to explain ethnocentrism, which they saw as a tendency to split the world into in-groups and out-groups, and measured it as an affective and cognitive preference for one's ethnic in-group over ethnic out-group. Most recently, Bizumic, Duckitt, and colleagues' (Bizumic, 2019; Bizumic & Duckitt, 2012; Bizumic et al., 2009, in press) in-depth conceptual and empirical analysis of ethnocentrism found the concept to be best defined as an attitudinal construct related specifically to ethnic groups, and that it involves a strong sense of ethnic group self-centredness and self-importance.

Using this last definition as a basis, this chapter provides a comprehensive review of ethnocentrism, with a particular emphasis on the implications of this research for the field of political psychology. Although ethnocentrism tends to be expressed in many domains, including musical preferences (Boer et al., 2013), consumer product preferences (Cleveland et al., 2009), dating preferences (Liu et al., 1995), and religion (Bizumic, 2015), it finds its expressions especially significant in the political domain. Accordingly, after describing the concept and theory, we will focus on the role of ethnocentrism in political domains, such as nationalism, policy preferences, and political party and candidate support.

12.1 Concept and Theory

As an attitudinal construct, the broad concept of ethnocentrism is hierarchically organised

(Bizumic & Duckitt, 2012). It can be split into two main dimensions: intragroup ethnocentrism, which includes attitudes in favour of giving more importance to the ethnic in-group over individual group members, and intergroup ethnocentrism, which includes attitudes in favour of giving more importance to the ethnic in-group over out-groups. Intragroup ethnocentrism in turn consists of two dimensions: devotion (strong, uncritical, and passionate commitment and loyalty to the ethnic in-group) and group cohesion (favourability towards ethnic group unity and cohesiveness over individual freedoms and differences). Intergroup ethnocentrism, however, consists of four dimensions: preference (differential liking for ethnic in-groups over out-groups), superiority (of the ethnic in-group over any other), purity (social distance towards and rejection of ethnic out-groups), and exploitativeness (favourability towards pursuing ethnic in-group interests over out-group interests). Figure 12.1 shows our conceptual model consisting of ethnocentrism as a third-order factor, which in turn comprises intragroup and intergroup ethnocentrism as second-order factors, which further comprise the six dimensions of ethnocentrism.

We also developed a balanced 58-item Ethnocentrism Scale 1 (Bizumic et al., 2009) and its balanced 36-item abbreviated version (Bizumic, 2019), as well as a balanced 36-item Ethnocentrism Scale 2, and its abbreviated (slightly unbalanced) 12-item and balanced 6-item versions (Bizumic, 2019; Bizumic et al., 2020), using rigorous statistical techniques, such as confirmatory factor analysis, item response theory, Yarkoni's (2010) genetic algorithm, and an analysis of different kinds of validity and reliability. The items from the 6-item and 12-item versions of the Ethnocentrism Scale 2, that is, the ES2-6 and ES2-12, are in Table 12.1. The conceptual model from Figure 12.1 has achieved empirical

Table 12.1. *Abbreviated versions of the Ethnocentrism Scale 2: the ES2-6 (in italics) and ES2-12 (all items)*

Preamble: The following statements deal with various ways in which you may think, feel about, and relate to the ethnic group you see yourself belonging to or are most closely identified with. Some statements also pertain to your relationship with other ethnic groups. Please assume that the term ‘we’ relates to your ethnic group.

<i>No matter what happens, I will ALWAYS support my ethnic group and never let it down</i>	I just DON'T have the kind of strong attachment to my ethnic group that would make me make serious sacrifices for its interests*
<i>It is absolutely vital that all members of our ethnic group think and behave as one</i>	We, as an ethnic group, must unite, even if all our personal freedoms are lost
<i>In general, I prefer doing things with people from my own ethnic group than with people from other ethnic groups</i>	I don't think I have any particular preference for my own ethnic group over others*
<i>I don't believe that my ethnic group is any better than any other*</i>	The world would be a much better place if all other ethnic groups modelled themselves on my ethnic group
<i>I like the idea of a society in which people from completely different ethnic groups mix together freely*</i>	I prefer not to be around people from very different ethnic groups
<i>We should always be considerate for the welfare of people from other ethnic groups even if, by doing this, we may lose some advantage over them*</i>	We need to do what's best for our own ethnic group, and stop worrying so much about what the effect might be on others

Note: * Reverse-scored items.

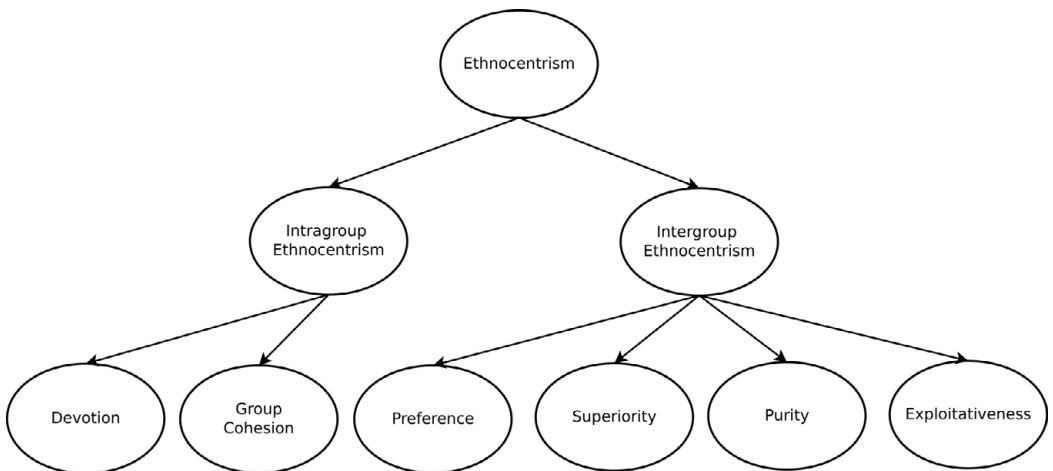


Figure 12.1 The conceptual model of ethnocentrism

support across thousands of participants in many samples and several languages, including both ethnic majority and minority samples (Bizumic, 2019; Bizumic et al., 2009, 2020;

Sheppard et al., 2020). Ethnocentrism, according to this definition, is conceptually distinct from ethnic out-group negativity or prejudice, as well as mere ethnic in-group

positivity. Empirical research supported this distinction (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2012).

Although there have been many theories of ethnocentrism, most converge on the idea that ethnocentrism, including each of its dimensions, has been useful for ethnic groups and its members to survive, prosper, and achieve important group and individual goals. Reviewing both theories and the findings of numerous studies, Bizumic (2019) claimed that theoretically ethnocentrism is seen to arise from the need for ethnic group strength, power, and resilience. For millennia, humans have belonged to various kinds of ethnic groups, from small ethnic groups characteristic of hunter-gatherers to very large, consisting of modern ethnic groups in nation states. All these ethnic groups shared several characteristics, such as language, culture, values, and belief in the common origin.

Human survival has been closely tied to strong and resilient ethnic groups, which gave people a sense of meaning, purpose, and esteem (see also Inglehart, 2018; Jones, 2018; van den Berghe, 1999). Accordingly, as many people have craved strong ethnic groups, they have also been heavily invested in these groups, perceiving them as extremely important, much more important than individual groups' members (intragroup ethnocentrism) and much more important than any other ethnic group (intergroup ethnocentrism). Ethnocentrism has therefore enabled humans to attach to and support their ethnic groups, even when this had negative individual consequences. According to Worchel (1999), ethnic groups are the most fundamental human groups, which are 'at the core of human identity' (p. 19), while, according to Levi-Strauss, ethnocentrism is 'the most ancient of attitudes' (as cited in Kinder & Kam, 2009, p. 219).

Although there have always been group and individual differences in levels of ethnocentrism,

ethnocentrism according to anthropological research has been a human universal (Brown, 2000, 2004), and ethnocentric groups and individuals can be easily found across time and geographic locations, including both non-industrial societies and modern nation states (Bizumic et al., 2020; Gumpłowicz, 1887; Kinder & Kam, 2009; Sumner, 1906). Ethnocentrism is an ancient attitude, but it permeates our contemporary world, with nationally representative data from 68 countries obtained by the Pew Research Center (2007, 2018) indicating that a majority of people tend to mostly or completely agree with the statement: 'Our people are not perfect, but our culture is superior to others' (see also Bizumic et al., 2020, for a more in-depth analysis of the data). In addition, simulation analyses of the evolution of ethnocentrism tend to show that ethnocentric strategies appear to always win over any other interpersonal and intergroup strategies (e.g., see Bausch, 2015; Hammond & Axelrod, 2006; Hartshorn et al., 2012). Ethnocentrism, therefore, appears to deeply affect humans and is unlikely to disappear any time soon.

Research (Bizumic, 2019; Bizumic et al., 2020) shows that the need for ethnic group strength correlates strongly with all dimensions of ethnocentrism and with most of the consequences of ethnocentrism, such as ethnic prejudice, positivity towards political leaders, and support for many policies that favour the ethnic in-group at the expense of ethnic in-group deviants and out-groups. The need for ethnic group strength is measured in this research by items such as: 'I want my ethnic group to be strong' and 'I don't mind if my ethnic group becomes so weak that it disappears one day' – reverse-scored. Although it may be assumed that the need for ethnic group strength is a characteristic of those on the far right, Figure 12.2 shows that endorsement of ethnic group strength items in the year 2020 is

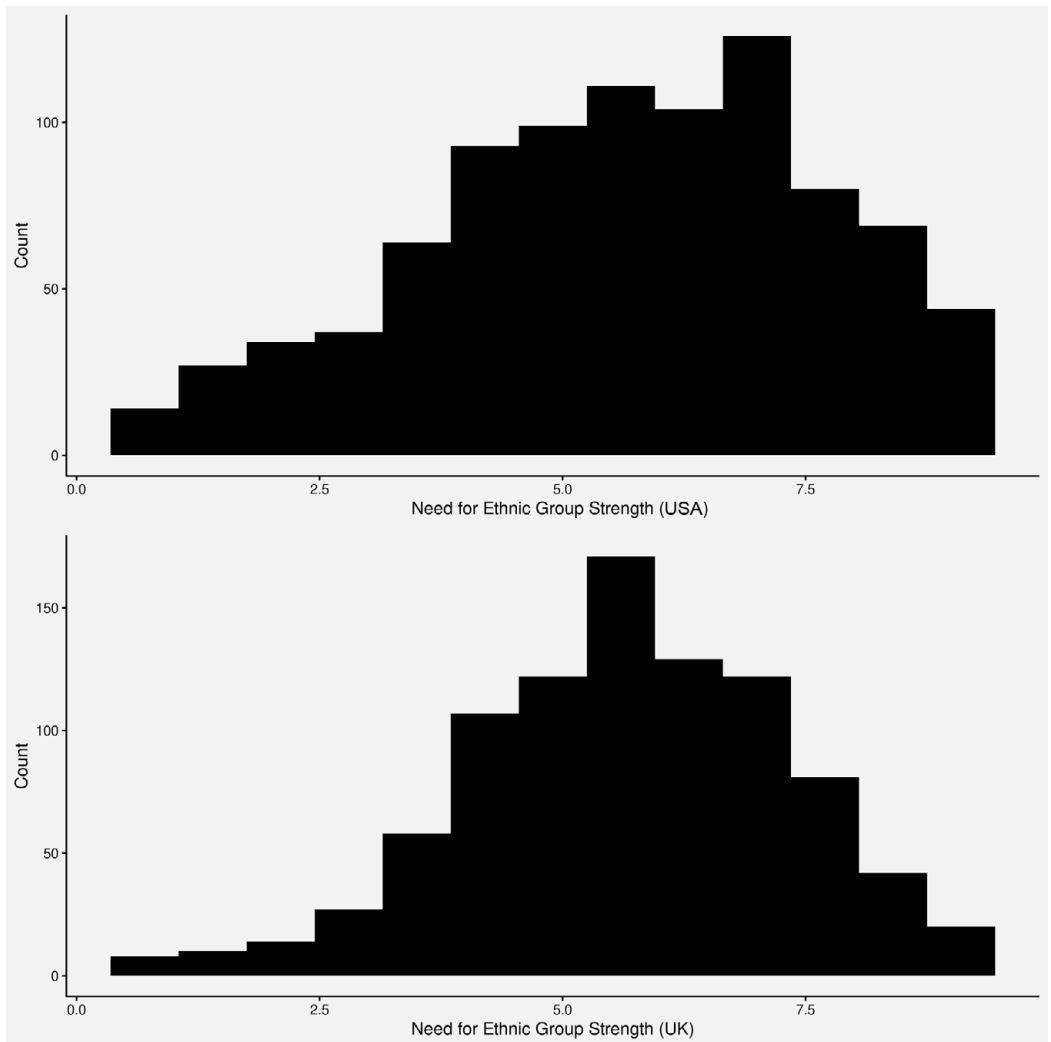


Figure 12.2 Histograms for the need for ethnic group strength scale, measured on a 9-point rating scale with 1 indicating very strong rejection of the need for ethnic group strength and 9 indicating very strong acceptance of the need for ethnic group strength, in nationally representative US ($N = 902$) and UK samples ($N = 911$)

substantial in two nationally representative samples obtained from the Prolific online platform in two liberal democracies, the USA ($N = 902$) and the UK ($N = 911$). Most participants tended to agree with statements supporting the power and strength of one's own ethnic group. Although conceptually distinct from ethnocentrism, the need for ethnic group strength

correlated powerfully with ethnocentrism in the two samples: $r = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$, in the USA, and $r = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$, in the UK.

The need for ethnic group strength and ethnocentrism together explain a huge amount of variance in many of the consequences of ethnocentrism, and ethnocentrism fully or partially mediates the effects of ethnic group

strength on the consequences (Bizumic et al., 2020). For example, among Anglo/White Americans, there were three indirect effects of the need for ethnic group strength, that is, via intragroup ethnocentrism, via intergroup ethnocentrism, and via intragroup then via intergroup ethnocentrism, on positivity towards Donald Trump. This suggests that to a large extent the need for Anglo/White ethnic group strength leads to the two kinds of ethnocentrism among Anglo/White Americans, and that these in turn predispose people to like Donald Trump. The same pattern of findings of the three indirect effects was, for example, observed in the UK among White English voting for Brexit, suggesting that the Brexit vote is to a large extent about strengthening the ethnic in-group via the dimensions of ethnocentrism. Accordingly, two highly important events in the Western world in the past several years seem to have their basis in ethnocentrism and, even more distally, in the need for ethnic group strength among the ethnic majorities in the USA and UK.

12.2 Political Consequences of Ethnocentrism

We will now discuss more broadly several relevant political consequences of ethnocentrism. Although there are certainly other political consequences, nationalism, policy preferences, and party and candidate support appear particularly important and have been tightly linked to ethnocentrism in research.

12.2.1 Ethnocentrism and Nationalism

Nationalism is a consequence of ancient ethnocentrism in the contemporary international system consisting of nation states. Nationalism is defined in different ways, with the main theme in most definitions being an

overriding preoccupation with a nation (Smith, 2010). Nationalism is frequently conceptualised and measured as an uncritical belief in the superiority and dominance of one's own nation state (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Osborne et al., 2017, 2019), or as a blind and uncritical allegiance to one's own nation state (Blank & Schmidt, 2003; Mummendey et al., 2001; Roccas et al., 2006). Accordingly, it is similar to ethnocentrism, but with a focus on the nation state as opposed to the ethnic group (Sheppard et al., 2020).

Although we live in a world where nationality appears to be the dominant system for human groups, ethnic groups still exert much influence on both intranational and international relations. Most nations developed around the common history, origin, customs, myths, values, and language of one ethnic group (see Smith, 2010; Staerklé et al., 2010). This is pronounced in Europe, where almost all nation states are highly ethnically homogeneous (Fisher, 2013). The dominant ethnic group's culture and attributes extend to the national group (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2012), and become the foundation of the culture, legal system, historical narratives, economy, and political structures that define the nation (Smith, 1991). This system is, for example, engrained in the populace through socialisation, education, and policies enforced largely by the dominant ethnic group.

In highly ethnically homogeneous countries, such as Japan where geographical boundaries are almost solely inhabited by the ethnic group the nation was founded upon, ethnocentrism and nationalism tend to be intertwined. In more ethnically heterogeneous countries, such as the USA, which comprises many ethnic groups, conflict may occur between ethnocentric and nationalistic attitudes. The nation's dominant ethnic group, around whose ethnic identity the nation developed, continues to

promote, defend, and benefit from the systems already in place. On the other hand, an ethnic minority group may find its cultural values, beliefs, and/or customs in conflict with those of the nation, or may find that the established systems are oppressing its ethnic group. In such situations, ethnocentrism and nationalism may conflict with each other.

We present in Table 12.2 the relationship between ethnocentrism, including its two broader kinds and the six dimensions, with nationalism (related to the existing nation states) in the USA, UK, and Australia. We use data from the previously described US and UK nationally representative samples, to illustrate the relationship between ethnocentrism and nationalism in ethnic majority and minority groups. We supplement them by

Anglo-Australian data from a student population and Australian Sri Lankan data from a community population. In all three countries, the correlations of ethnocentrism and its dimensions with nationalism were exceptionally strong among the ethnic majority groups, suggesting that ethnocentrism and nationalism highly overlap. This is certainly because ethnic majority groups tend to see themselves as prototypical of the nation (cf. Wenzel et al., 2007, 2016).

The relationship between ethnocentrism and nationalism appeared much stronger among ethnic majority participants than among other ethnic groups. In fact, there was not a single correlation coefficient that was smaller in the majority groups than in the other groups. The differences were particularly pronounced in

Table 12.2. *Correlations of nationalism with ethnocentrism, intergroup ethnocentrism, intragroup ethnocentrism, and the six dimensions of ethnocentrism in ethnic majority and minority groups in the USA, UK, and Australia*

Variables	USA		UK		Australia	
	Anglo/Whites	Others	White English	Others	Anglo-Australians	Sri Lankans
Ethnocentrism	0.73 ^{***}	0.32 ^{***}	0.65 ^{***}	0.56 ^{***}	0.70 ^{***}	0.28 ^{***}
Intragroup ethnocentrism	0.67 ^{***}	0.31 ^{***}	0.61 ^{***}	0.54 ^{***}	0.67 ^{***}	0.14
Intergroup ethnocentrism	0.67 ^{***}	0.25 ^{***}	0.58 ^{***}	0.47 ^{***}	0.47 ^{***}	0.31 ^{***}
Devotion	0.65 ^{***}	0.10	0.57 ^{***}	0.49 ^{***}	0.58 ^{***}	0.07
Group cohesion	0.57 ^{***}	0.42 ^{***}	0.53 ^{***}	0.47 ^{***}	0.22 ^{**}	0.17 [*]
Preference	0.52 ^{***}	0.10 ^{***}	0.42 ^{***}	0.27 ^{***}	0.62 ^{***}	0.11
Superiority	0.63 ^{***}	0.26 ^{***}	0.58 ^{***}	0.44 ^{***}	0.50 ^{***}	0.29 ^{***}
Purity	0.53 ^{***}	0.22 ^{***}	0.43 ^{***}	0.36 ^{***}	0.47 ^{***}	0.33 ^{***}
Exploitativeness	0.63 ^{***}	0.18 ^{**}	0.54 ^{***}	0.41 ^{***}	0.47 ^{***}	0.31 ^{***}

Notes: USA: Anglo/White $n = 655$; Others: $n = 247$. UK: White English $n = 645$; Others = 266. Australia: Anglo-Australians: $n = 152$; Sri Lankans: $n = 177$. In the USA and UK, ethnocentrism was measured by the ES2–12, and nationalism by Kosterman and Feshbach’s (1989) scale (slightly adapted in the UK). In Australia, ethnocentrism was measured by the Ethnocentrism Scale 1 (a 12-item version among Anglo-Australians and 36-item among Sri Lankans) and nationalism by Sheppard et al.’s (2020) Nationalism Scale (a 36-item version among Anglo-Australians and a 12-item version among Sri Lankans).

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

the USA and Australia, and less pronounced in the UK. This is probably because although White English are the dominant and most numerous ethnic group in the UK, Whites from Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales may see in certain ways the UK as a super-ordinate identity, comprising of British Whites as the dominant group, which allows expressions of these groups' ethnocentrism at the national level through nationalism. This appears to be much less the case in the US and Australia where the dominant ethnic groups largely define the national groups. Thus, nationalism, at least as related to the existing three nation states, appears to be a direct political consequence of ethnocentrism for the dominant ethnic groups. Among ethnic minorities, ethnocentrism and nationalism appear distinct phenomena, and certain dimensions of ethnocentrism may not even significantly correlate with nationalism in these groups.

12.2.2 Policy Preferences

Group identities other than ethnic identity, such as class and religion, may undoubtedly influence many political consequences. Nonetheless, ethnic identity is relatively stable and pervasive in most individuals. Thus, it is expected that ethnocentric individuals will tend to favour policies that promote ethnic unity and purity, favour and strengthen the ethnic in-group at the expense of other ethnic groups, and even possibly weaken out-groups.

Particularly prominent policies that ethnocentric people favour are related to tougher or reduced immigration, rejection and exclusion of foreigners, and a decrease in the proportion of ethnic minorities within one's own country. We argue that although prejudice or dislike of ethnic out-groups tends to drive people's support for these policies, ethnocentrism appears more important than these negative out-group

attitudes. We present data in support of this. For example, among 655 Anglo/White Americans in the nationally representative sample described in Section 12.1, a multiple regression analysis demonstrated that ethnocentrism measured by the ES2–12 was a much more powerful predictor of support for tougher immigration policies ($\beta = 0.56, p < 0.001$) than prejudice against foreigners ($\beta = 0.13, p < 0.001$). It was also a more powerful predictor ($\beta = 0.55, p < 0.001$) of support of building a wall alongside the USA/Mexico border than prejudice against foreigners ($\beta = 0.09, p < 0.01$). Similarly, ethnocentrism predicted more powerfully ($\beta = 0.64, p < 0.001$) support for policies to decrease the number of ethnic minority people in the USA (which amounts to ethnic cleansing) than prejudice against Blacks ($\beta = -0.06, p = 0.38$), Asian Americans ($\beta = -0.05, p = 0.31$), or Hispanic Americans ($\beta = 0.13, p < 0.05$). Finally, at the start of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic in the UK, among 645 White English participants (from the nationally representative sample described earlier), ethnocentrism showed a much stronger impact ($\beta = 0.37, p < 0.001$) on supporting a travel ban against Chinese to the UK than prejudice against Chinese ($\beta = 0.12, p < 0.01$). These findings indicate that it is ethnic self-centredness and self-importance, and not ethnic out-group hostility and prejudice, that drives people's support for policies of excluding ethnic out-groups.

There are many other preferences that have been directly linked to ethnocentrism in our (Bizumic, 2019; Bizumic et al., 2020) and others' research (e.g., Kinder & Kam, 2009, who used a similar conceptualisation of ethnocentrism to ours). For example, ethnocentrism among US or UK participants leads to support for: (a) increasing military funding; (b) the war on terror, including increased expenditure; (c) military action against North Korea; (d) cutting foreign aid; (e) an increased tax on

foreign-made products; and (f) racial (ethnic) profiling. On the other hand, ethnocentrism among US or UK participants leads to opposition to: (a) same-sex marriage; (b) the removal of Confederate monuments and memorials; and (c) funding museums to commemorate slavery. As mentioned before, many of these policies appear, at least in the minds of many people, to ultimately strengthen the ethnic in-group against ethnic out-groups and in-group deviants.

12.2.3 Political Party and Candidate Support

The results presented above imply that politicians can drum up support for many forms of policies by targeting the public's ethnocentric attitudes or increase their own support by developing and promoting particular policies in ethnocentric populations. Voters in a democratic country who score higher on ethnocentrism tend to support policies that favour and strengthen the ethnic in-group and will vote for political parties and candidates who will endorse, promote, and put in place such policies. These voters may overlook other potentially negative attitudes, characteristics, or actions of a political candidate if they feel their own ethnocentric needs are being satisfied.

Although many liberal democracies tend to have ethnically tolerant norms and policies, there is a strong ethnocentric undercurrent. In the USA, Donald Trump was undoubtedly elected in large part due to his ethnocentric policies and tapping into ethnocentrism of Anglo/White Americans. For example, the higher an Anglo/White American scored on ethnocentrism the more they preferred Donald Trump over other Republican presidential candidates in the 2016 election, and in general, White Republicans reported higher average levels of ethnocentrism than White Democrats (Kalkan, 2016). Hochschild (2016)

covered this phenomenon in her book, describing how White Americans that she encountered felt like strangers in their own land. They felt as though public policies and opinions were changing to benefit ethnic minorities and immigrants at the expense of White Americans, whose traditions and values were being marginalised and scorned. Hochschild attributes much of Trump's support from this demographic to these feelings. In fact, defending traditional cultural values, promoting ethnic resentment, and rejecting multiculturalism and outsiders appear more important to the rise of Donald Trump than economic insecurity (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Similar sentiments are to be found in many other ethnic majority groups across liberal democracies, where there has been increased support for political parties that base their platform chiefly on reducing immigration and anti-minority sentiment, such as Australia's One Nation Party or Sweden's Democrats.

Using ethnocentrism for political purposes is certainly not only a characteristic of parties and candidates that are further on the political right spectrum. For example, it is plausible that ethnocentrism helped elect the Australian Liberal Party more than once because of their 'Stop the Boats' campaign and their strong stance on the mandatory detention of asylum seekers. 'Stop the Boats' was the slogan used by the Australian Liberal-National Coalition to promote a policy to physically turn back boats carrying fleeing migrants (Martin, 2015; Menzies, 2015). The mandatory detention policy in Australia involves a compulsory confinement of asylum seekers for considerable periods of time. Our own research showed that ethnocentrism was strongly correlated with support for the mandatory detention policy of all asylum seekers, whereas those lower on ethnocentrism were highly hostile to the policy, including its supporters (Bizumic et al., 2017). Similarly, the current prime minister of the UK, Boris Johnson, and his Conservative

Party have undoubtedly benefited from his and his allies' support for Brexit, which was a 'predominately white phenomenon compared to ethnic minorities' (Alabrese et al., 2019, p. 136). Among 645 White English participants in the nationally representative sample described earlier, we also found a relatively strong relationship (Spearman $\rho = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$) between ethnocentrism and the item: 'If there was another referendum on Britain's membership of the EU, how would you vote?' (1 – *Remain*, 2 – *Don't know/undecided*, 3 – *Leave*).

Further, those political events and issues that impact voting, such as war, the economy, immigration, and ethnic tension, can also activate ethnocentrism (Bizumic, 2019; Kam & Kinder, 2007; Kinder & Dale-Riddle, 2012; Kinder & Kam, 2009), and increase the role ethnocentrism plays in elections. Political issues that draw attention to perceived threats to the ethnic in-group may activate ethnocentrism, resulting in an increase of ethnocentric attitudes in segments of the population. It is, therefore, clear that despite broad ethnically tolerant norms, a politician in a democratic country can take advantage of ethnocentrism to increase votes and support for their policies. They may choose to promote ethnocentric policies when campaigning, frame a policy's reasoning with consideration to ethnocentric attitudes, or emphasize imminent or potential threats to the ethnic in-group to increase public support. By tailoring information to highlight how their policies favour the ethnic in-group and/or combat real or fictional threats, politicians can gain support across multiple communities.

It is also important to point out that ethnic group membership has been found to influence voting preferences, with voters more likely to vote for candidates from their own ethnic in-group over those from out-groups (e.g., Graves & Lee, 2000; Parenti, 1967). For

example, political parties and candidates in Ghana rely heavily on ethnic influence to increase voter support (Faanu & Graham, 2017). Since Ghanaian independence in 1957, several political parties have formed along ethnic lines and ethnocentrism has become increasingly important in the political sphere. Nathan (2019) found that in some areas of Ghana ethnic voting is pervasive and 'simply knowing a voter's ethnicity [in these neighbourhoods] would have allowed you to predict her vote choice with considerable confidence' (p. 153). Politicians have attempted to take advantage of this by basing campaign platforms on ethnocentric dimensions to influence voter behaviour (Faanu & Graham, 2017).

Ethnocentrism may predispose people to vote for a political candidate with shared in-group ethnicity over an out-group member, regardless of policies or party affiliation. Indeed, Kam and Kinder (2012) found that, in White American Democrat and Independent voters, as ethnocentrism increased, support for Barack Obama's 2008 bid for presidency decreased. This was not because the voters disagreed with Obama's policies, but because they saw him as an out-group. On the other hand, the researchers noted that 99.5% of Black American respondents in the study reported voting for Obama (thus, Black Americans regardless of their political preferences appeared to uniformly support the ethnic in-group member). Similarly, Kam and Kinder investigated the impact of ethnocentrism on support for Hillary Clinton and Obama in the lead-up to the 2008 US presidential election. In a hypothetical political race between Clinton and the Republican opponent John McCain, they found ethnocentrism to have no influence, but when Obama and McCain were hypothetical opponents, ethnocentrism was highly influential. As expected, support for Obama fell as people's ethnocentrism scores increased. Additionally, Obama's support

against McCain was higher (relative to Clinton's) in White participants who were lower in ethnocentrism.

It is important to point out that, as stated by Kinder and Kam (2009), ethnocentrism can be considered as 'a central ingredient in public opinion *on average*' (p. 222). Its impact varies depending on the social and political situation of the country and the constituents' levels of ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism does not strongly influence voters' opinion on every policy and at every election, but it does need to be considered and measured given its pervasiveness. Ethnocentrism appears to be dormant and 'banal' (cf. Billig, 1995), especially in dominant and secure groups, which may often appear ethnically tolerant and inclusive, but it shows its power and force when the ethnic in-group and its important goals are perceived to be under threat.

12.3 Conclusions

This chapter aimed to provide a comprehensive review of research on ethnocentrism, and in particular its relevance in political psychology. It has also demonstrated how ethnocentrism and politics are linked. It is important to point out that the influence of ethnocentrism is not necessarily a negative phenomenon and that ethnocentrism, which has existed for millennia, has been adaptive. When it comes to politics, it has both harmful and beneficial effects. For example, political systems dictated by an ethnocentric ethnic majority may lead to institutional discrimination and oppression of ethnic minority groups. Further, extreme levels of ethnocentrism may lead to ethnic cleansing and genocides. Ethnocentrism, however, can be beneficial in politics and push actions for positive change, such as the many movements of weaker ethnic groups against colonisation, systemic discrimination, and oppression by stronger ethnic out-groups.

Although most social scientists tend to see ethnocentrism as bad, whether it is good or bad is, in part, in the eyes of a beholder.

It is unlikely that ethnocentrism will cease to be an influence in political and other domains, as it is deeply rooted in the human mind. Indeed, the influence of in-group preference and self-centredness on cultural evolution and ethnic group survival can be observed universally, across many thousands of years, suggesting an evolutionary and biological basis of ethnocentrism (see Chapter 2 for more details about the evolution of human group living, including cooperation, conformity, and group favouritism). We also encourage researchers to further study it across cultures. It is interesting that cross-cultural researchers, including those studying politics, have not studied ethnocentrism much and instead focused on numerous other dimensions of comparisons between cultures and people. Ethnocentrism is undoubtedly a 'delusion' as Gumpłowicz wrote back in 1879. Nonetheless, it is a powerful delusion that has captured the minds of people all over the world and over all time periods. In fact, even psychologists are far from being free of ethnocentrism, as it affects psychology at all levels (see Berry et al., 1992; Bizumic, 2019). Given the numerous threats that humans face and that require human cooperation, we need to become aware of, understand, subdue, and control ethnocentrism as it is unlikely that this particular delusion of the human mind will ever disappear.

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13 Collective Narcissism

How Being Narcissistic about Your Groups Shapes Politics, Group Processes, and Intergroup Relations

Irem Eker, Aleksandra Cichocka, and Aleksandra Cislak

In his February 2020 speech in Greenwich, Boris Johnson compared the UK to Superman. Discussing free trade negotiations, he said that there was a need for a ‘country ready to take off its Clark Kent spectacles and leap into the phone booth and emerge with its cloak flowing as the supercharged champion . . . I can tell you in all humility that the UK is ready for that role’ (Johnson, 2020). What is apparent in this comparison is not only the belief in the UK’s alleged superpowers, but also that the UK is an underdog whose potential is not yet fully recognised (Von Tunzelmann, 2019). The idea that one’s country, or any social group, is not getting the appreciation that it is due is captured by the concept of collective narcissism – a belief in in-group greatness that requires external recognition (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009).

In this chapter, we review the literature on various forms of destructive in-group identity and discuss their relationship to the concept of collective narcissism. We also discuss the origins of collective narcissism. Then, we review the empirical evidence from different group and international contexts that reveal the undesired concomitants of collective narcissism in terms of intra- and intergroup relations. Finally, we discuss the potential political consequences of investment in the

in-group image that is characteristic for collective narcissism.

13.1 In-Group Identity and Its Destructive Forms

Identifying with one’s group(s) is often understood within the framework of the social identity theory. Tajfel (1981) defined social identity as ‘that part of the individual’s self-concept which derives from his or her knowledge of membership to a social group (or groups) together with the value and the emotional significance attached to that membership’ (p. 255). Due to this motivation to maintain a positive identity, people tend to discriminate in favour of the groups to which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, another tradition, rooted in the Frankfurt School, suggested that some forms of identity are more belligerent than others (Adorno et al., 1950). Focusing especially on national identities, Adorno and colleagues (1950) called for a distinction between genuine patriotism and pseudo patriotism – ‘blind attachment to certain national cultural values, uncritical conformity with the prevailing group ways, and rejection of outgroups’ (p. 107). Likewise, Schatz et al. (1999) defined blind patriotism as ‘a rigid and inflexible attachment to country, characterized by unquestioning positive evaluation, staunch allegiance, and intolerance of criticism’ (p. 153). Kosterman and Feshbach (1989) pointed to similar undertones in nationalism, which encompasses beliefs in

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national superiority and dominance (see also de Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Roccas et al., 2008). All these concepts have been linked to destructive and problematic intergroup attitudes. We argue that they can all be rooted in group-based psychological defensiveness, which is captured by collective narcissism (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020). In Section 13.2, we discuss the nature of collective narcissism and explain how it relates to – and differs from – other destructive forms of identity.

13.2 What Is Collective Narcissism?

The idea that people can be vain or narcissistic about the groups to which they belong was first proposed by scholars of the Frankfurt School (Adorno, 1963/1998; Fromm, 1973). In its contemporary conceptualisation, collective narcissism is seen as a defensive, unrealistic belief in the greatness of an in-group that requires external recognition (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). The idea that the idealised in-group is entitled to greater appreciation by others is central to collective narcissism. Collective narcissism can be understood as a counterpart of individual narcissism at the group level. As originally proposed by Fromm (1973), ‘in group narcissism, the object is not the individual but the group to which he belongs’ (p. 203). In line with this idea, the commonly used Collective Narcissism Scale (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009) was based on measures of individual narcissism, such as the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Emmons, 1987; Raskin & Terry, 1988). A sample item, ‘I insist upon my group getting the respect that is due to it’, was inspired by an individual narcissism item, ‘I insist upon getting the respect that is due to me.’ As subsequent studies showed, collective narcissism shows weak to moderate correlations with individual narcissism (Golec de Zavala, 2018; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009).

Measured with respect to national groups, collective narcissism (which we can refer to as national narcissism in this case) is related to the other forms of defensive national identity (see also Chapter 20). For example, national narcissism correlated positively with national glorification, nationalism, and blind patriotism (Cichocka et al., 2016; Golec de Zavala et al., 2016; Lyons et al., 2010). Although collective narcissism and these constructs share similar characteristics (e.g., convictions of superiority, idealisation of a group), they are theoretically different (Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala et al., 2019). To illustrate, nationalism reflects a desire to establish dominance, whereas national narcissism captures concerns with protecting the nation’s image and getting recognition it is allegedly entitled to (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Adherence to a cohesive and idealised group is emphasised in the case of national glorification (Roccas et al., 2006), while in the case of national narcissism, there is more emphasis on feeling underappreciated by others (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Although these constructs are distinct, they tend to be related. It is plausible that the defensiveness of collective narcissism is more strongly predictive of the more dominating (i.e., nationalistic) or more aggrandising (i.e., glorifying) tendencies, depending on the context (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020).

In addition to these theoretical differences, unlike nationalism, national glorification, or blind patriotism, measurement of collective narcissism is free of direct references to nationality (Cichocka, 2016). Therefore, collective narcissism can be measured with respect to any group, including nationality and ethnicity (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), university peers (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013), sport teams (Larkin & Fink, 2019), religious denominations (Marchlewska et al., 2019), or organisations (Cichocka et al., in press). Before reviewing the political, inter- and

intragroup consequences of collective narcissism, we discuss its roots and psychological functions.

13.3 Roots of Collective Narcissism

In the early theorisation of the topic, Adorno (1963/1998) and Fromm (1973) posited that collective narcissism serves a compensatory function. Fromm (1973) argued that ‘Group narcissism ... is extremely important as an element giving satisfaction to the members of the group and particularly to those who have few other reasons to feel proud and worthwhile’ (p. 275). Thus, idealisation of the in-group is thought to help manage individual shortcomings, low feelings of self-worth, or lack of life satisfaction. Accordingly, recent studies show that collective narcissism indeed increases as a response to unsatisfied personal motives (Cichocka, 2016; see Figure 13.1). In particular, researchers examined the role of

two motivations: personal control and self-esteem (Cichocka et al., 2018; Golec de Zavala et al., 2020). Cross-sectional, experimental, and longitudinal studies confirmed that low personal control – that is, individuals’ feelings of not being able to control their life course – increased national narcissism (Cichocka et al., 2018; Marchlewska et al., 2020). Other researchers found that low self-esteem (measured as state and trait, and experimentally undermined via out-group ostracism) also predicted national narcissism (Golec de Zavala et al., 2020). These studies suggest that when individuals feel that their autonomy or self-worth are threatened, they try to use their social groups (in the case of these studies, their nations) to manage these needs. But interestingly, national narcissism does not seem to predict increased personal control or self-esteem over time in longitudinal studies (Cichocka et al., 2018, Study 4; Golec de Zavala et al., 2020, Study 6). While

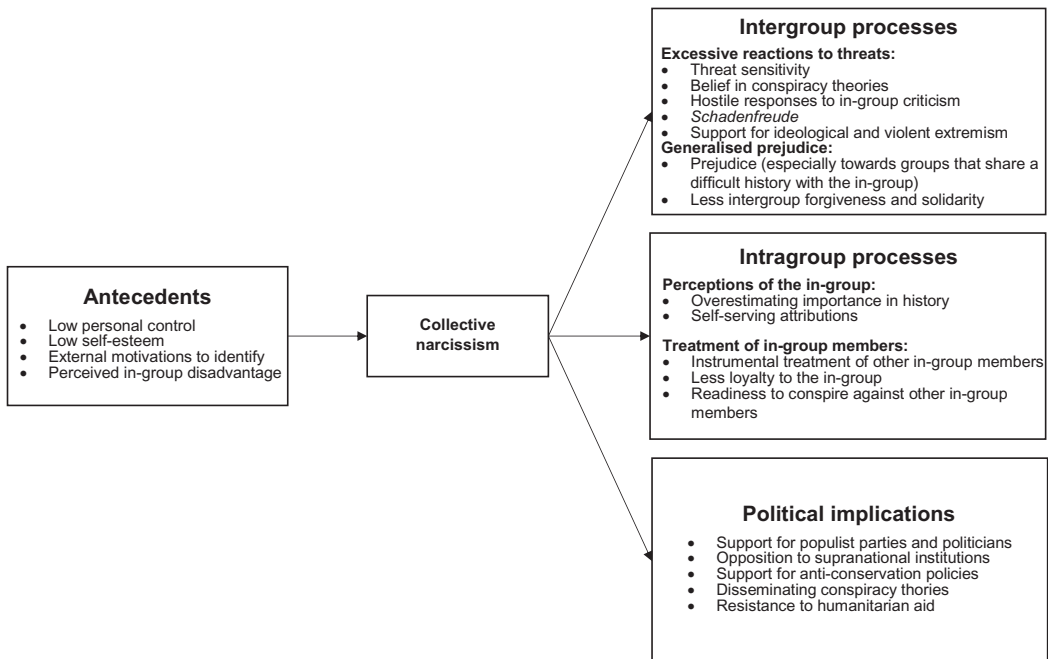


Figure 13.1 Collective narcissism: antecedents and outcomes

collective narcissism emerges as a response to individuals' frustrated needs, it does not seem to succeed in managing them.

Another line of studies investigated the nature of motivations that underpin collective narcissism in more detail (Eker et al., 2020). In the context of personally important social groups and nations, collective narcissism was predicted by externally oriented motivations that reflect embracing an identity to attain benefits such as positive social comparisons and prestige. In religious groups, collective narcissism was predicted by extrinsic religious orientations – using religion to gain personal or social benefits. This pattern of treating groups as a mean to an end highlights that collective narcissism is a conditional love for one's group.

Other studies also demonstrated that collective narcissism can increase when the group itself is seen as being threatened or undermined. For example, a study conducted in the UK found that British national narcissism increased when the UK was presented as being disadvantaged for a long time (vs not) in its relationship with the EU (Marchlewska et al., 2018). Thus, seeing the in-group as being mistreated and not recognised might further increase collective narcissism.

13.4 Outcomes Associated with Collective Narcissism

13.4.1 Intergroup Processes

Excessive Reactions to Threat

Collective narcissism is associated with an extraordinary preoccupation with how the in-group is perceived or treated by others. Therefore, those who score high in collective narcissism are vigilant for potential sources of threat that can undermine the in-group and its reputation (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Those who score high in collective narcissism

see insults even where they are not intended (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016). For example, national narcissism predicted excessive sensitivity to jokes or movies criticising one's nation (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016; Marchlewska et al., 2020). Those scoring high in national narcissism were also sensitive to threats to their culture: Chinese participants high in national narcissism showed negative attitudes towards the USA when exposed to US celebrities on Chinese magazine covers (Gries et al., 2015).

This threat sensitivity is also evident in the robust positive association between collective narcissism and the belief that others conspire against one's group (Cichocka et al., 2016; see also Biddlestone, Cichocka, Žeželj, & Bilewicz, 2020). For example, Poles tend to believe that the first free parliamentary election in Poland is the symbol of the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe (Cichocka et al., 2016). Among Polish participants, national narcissism was associated with a conviction that Western countries were purposefully undermining Poland's role in history by celebrating other events (such as the fall of the Berlin Wall) that mark the collapse of Communism (Cichocka et al., 2016, Study 1). Another study in Poland examined public attitudes after the crash of a Polish presidential plane in 2010. The catastrophe happened in a Russian city of Smolensk and killed all the politicians aboard, including the Polish president. Polish national narcissism was associated with the conviction that Russia was secretly involved in the plane crash and this relationship was mediated by higher perceived threat. Along the same lines, American national narcissism was related to convictions that foreign governments conspire against the USA (Cichocka et al., 2016, Study 3). During the 2016 US presidential election, national narcissism also predicted more conspiratorial thinking about the election among American voters (Golec de Zavala & Federico, 2018).

Collective narcissism is associated with conspiracy beliefs beyond the international context. For example, collective narcissism measured among Catholic participants was associated with the endorsement of a so-called gender conspiracy theory – a conviction that ‘gender studies and gender-equality activists represent an ideology secretly designed to harm traditional values and social arrangements’ (Marchlewska et al., 2019; p. 766). Believing that other groups seek to undermine or control one’s in-group can help explain why the group might be holding a disadvantaged and undervalued position. By shifting blame for misfortunes onto others, those scoring high in collective narcissism might seek to re-establish a grandiose image of the group (Cichocka, 2016; Cichocka & Cislak, 2020).

When the group does not receive the appreciation that it is allegedly due, those scoring high in collective narcissism tend to react defensively. According to Fromm (1973), ‘[t]hose whose narcissism refers to their group rather than to themselves as individuals are as sensitive as individual narcissists, and they react with rage to any wound, real or imaginary, inflicted upon their group’ (p. 276). Thus, the defensive nature of collective narcissism manifests itself in aggressive and hostile responses to perceived humiliation or criticisms that target the in-group (Cichocka, 2016). In a series of experiments by Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, and Iskra-Golec (2013), participants were exposed to information that members of a different group either praised or criticised their in-groups (nations or universities). Participants indicated the extent to which they wanted to respond with hostility (e.g., humiliate or injure out-group members). Those scoring high in collective narcissism were indeed willing to react with aggression when exposed to criticism, but not praise. Their hostility was specifically directed at the offending out-group, but not displaced to

other neutral groups that were non-threatening to the in-group. Importantly, these effects were observed even when accounting for other variables typically associated with animosity at the interpersonal (e.g., individual narcissism) or intergroup (e.g., right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation; see Chapter 11) level.

While retaliation and violence in intergroup relations are explicit ways to protect the in-group image, such reactions are not always possible or acceptable. In cases like this, the defensiveness associated with collective narcissism can manifest more subtly, for instance, via *schadenfreude* (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016). The term refers to taking joy from situations that cause adversity for other groups or individuals (Leach et al., 2003). In one study, Turkish participants were asked to read a fake newspaper report describing Turkey’s wait to be admitted into the EU (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016, Study 1). National narcissism was associated with perceptions of this report as humiliating, which was further related to experiences of *schadenfreude* for Europe’s economic crisis.

The associations between collective narcissism and open hostility are especially pronounced in contexts that are more accepting of violence as a means to achieve ideological goals. A series of studies conducted in Sri Lanka, Morocco, and Indonesia compared the associations between collective narcissism and violent extremism in more versus less radical contexts (Jasko et al., 2019). For example, in Sri Lanka, authors compared two subgroups from Tamil ethnic community. While one subgroup consisted of former terrorists (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), the other one included community members of Tamil who had never belonged to a radical organisation. The results revealed that collective narcissism measured in relation to the Tamil people as a group predicted ideological and

violent extremism, but this relationship was especially strong for those participants who were members of a radical organisation.

Generalised Prejudice

Accompanied by a lack of intergroup trust, collective narcissism also predicts more general negative attitudes towards groups which share a difficult history with the in-group. Cai and Gries (2013) demonstrated that national narcissism predicted reciprocal prejudice among Americans and Chinese. In Poland, national narcissism was related to anti-Semitism, and this relationship was driven by beliefs in Jews conspiring against Poles (Golec de Zavala & Cichocka, 2012; see also Dyduch-Hazar et al., 2019). Similar effects were found beyond the context of international relations. Collective narcissism in relation to a gender-based group (namely, men) predicted stronger prejudice towards LGBT individuals (Marchlewska et al., 2021). The general suspicion and negativity towards out-groups means that national narcissism is also associated with the inability to forgive past grievances (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). For example, in Poland it predicted lower willingness to forgive Germans for the Second World War atrocities (Hamer et al., 2018).

Taking collective narcissism into account sheds light on the association between self-esteem and derogating out-groups. Two hypotheses, derived from the social identity theory, argued that (1) intergroup discrimination should elevate self-esteem and hence (2) low self-esteem should motivate discrimination (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Although initial empirical evidence for this prediction has been weak (e.g., Rubin & Hewstone, 1998), recent studies suggest that collective narcissism might link low self-esteem to intergroup derogation (Golec de Zavala et al., 2020).

Given their focus on the in-group's recognition and their general predisposition for out-group prejudice, those who score high in collective narcissism are also unlikely to express concern for disadvantage experienced by other groups. Górska and colleagues (2019) investigated the relationship between collective narcissism and willingness to participate in solidarity-based collective action. In a series of studies, collective narcissism predicted lower willingness to act on behalf of disadvantaged groups such as refugees, women, and LGBT people. While collective narcissism increases when people perceive their own group as disadvantaged (Marchlewska et al., 2018, Study 2), their sensitivity to injustice does not seem to be afforded to out-groups that are treated unfairly.

13.4.2 Intragroup Processes

Perceptions of the In-Group

Several studies investigated the processes involved in idealising the in-group by those high in collective narcissism. For example, researchers argued that collective narcissism can manifest in exaggerated evaluations of in-group greatness. Zaromb and colleagues (2018) asked citizens of 35 different countries to estimate their nations' contributions to world history in percentages. Summing across all average in-country estimates equalled 1156%, suggesting that people grossly exaggerate the contribution of their own nations. Similarly, Putnam et al. (2018) demonstrated that Americans tended to exaggerate their home state's contribution to US history.

A separate line of inquiry examined how those scoring high in collective narcissism would judge their groups' actions that are morally questionable (Bocian et al., 2021). Two studies conducted in Poland and the UK compared judgements of ambiguous behaviour that benefitted either the in-group or the

out-group. Participants scoring high in national narcissism judged actions favouring interests of the out-group as less moral than very similar actions favouring interests of their in-group. In another study, conducted in the USA, authors asked participants to judge the US Senate's decision to confirm to the Supreme Court Brett Kavanaugh – a Republican nominee who was accused of sexual assault (Abramson, 2018). Unsurprisingly, Republicans judged this nomination more favourably than Democrats, but this effect was especially strong among participants scoring high in partisan narcissism.

A preoccupation with the in-group's reputation also means that collective narcissism is associated with downplaying or challenging criticisms of the in-group. For example, Marchlewska and colleagues (2020) demonstrated that national narcissism was associated with protesting movies that dealt with instances of anti-Semitism in Poland. Two large studies, also conducted in Poland, examined sexual abuse scandals in the Catholic Church. Catholic narcissism was associated with downplaying the priests' involvement in the abuse (Molenda et al., 2020). This association was driven by the perception that the Catholic Church is under attack. Overall, it seems that collective narcissism impedes the construal of an integrated image of the in-group that might consist of both negative and positive characteristics. Indeed, Klar and Bilewicz (2017) suggested that collective narcissism might turn in-group members into lay censors who reject any narratives that do not portray the in-group in a favourable light.

Treatment of Other In-Group Members

Collective narcissism is not only associated with attitudes towards other groups. It can also have important implications for relations within the group (Cichocka, 2016). Because

collective narcissism stems from frustrated personal needs, it is associated with being concerned with how the group reflects on the individual more so than with the well-being of other members of the group (Cichocka, 2016). Therefore, despite seeming to be strongly committed to the group, those whose score high in collective narcissism might not actually benefit other members. Indeed, collective narcissism measured in relation to business or political organisations that individuals worked in predicted treating co-workers instrumentally and using them for personal gains (Cichocka et al., in press).

Collective narcissism is also associated with support for actions that promote personal agendas at the expense of other group members. The compensatory nature of collective narcissism translates into instrumental treatment of the in-group and, ultimately, lower loyalty. In one large survey conducted in Poland, national narcissism was associated with intentions to emigrate permanently if that meant one could be better off abroad (Marchlewska et al., 2020). In other studies, collective narcissism predicted willingness to conspire against one's in-group members and, in the national context, support for governmental policies that normalise citizen surveillance (Biddlestone, Cichocka, Główczewski, & Cislak, 2020). Taken together, these studies illustrate that collective narcissism might have problematic consequences for the in-group as a whole.

13.5 Political Implications of Collective Narcissism

The dynamics of group processes and inter-group relations associated with collective narcissism shows why it might have important implications for political choices and behaviours. Although studies among political elites are scarce, partisan narcissism measured

among Icelandic politicians was associated with politicking – the inclination to engage in secrecy, deception, and political blood sport (Gronfeldt et al., 2020).

Other studies examined the link between voters' collective narcissism and political preferences. For example, collective narcissism emerges as a robust predictor of support for parties or candidates that can be considered populist (see also Chapter 28). A narcissistic national narrative seems prevalent in Trump's call to 'Make America Great Again'. On the back cover of his 2016 book, he argued he wanted 'to bring America back, to make it great and prosperous again, and to be sure [it was] respected by [their] allies and feared by [their] adversaries'. It was then not surprising that people scoring high on national narcissism were more likely to support Trump (vs Clinton) in the 2016 US elections, even after controlling for important factors such as ideology, authoritarianism, and race (Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018; Marchlewska et al., 2018). National narcissism was also associated with voting for national-populist parties in Eastern Europe – the Law and Justice Party in Poland (Marchlewska et al., 2018) or the Fidesz Party in Hungary (Forgas & Lantos, 2019). Overall, these studies suggest that collective narcissism might well capture the populist aggrandised vision of what it means to be a citizen of a certain nation and further divide the country between the loyal 'us' and the threatening 'them' (Muller, 2016).

The need to show off a positive, strong, and independent in-group image implies that collective narcissism might predict decisions that can potentially harm the in-group in the long run. For example, in a series of studies, national narcissism was associated with lower support for pro-environmental policies, but higher support for investing in so-called green-washing – positioning one's group (e.g., company or country) as environmentally friendly

without behaving accordingly (Cislak, Cichocka, et al., 2021). Thus, the focus was on making the group look good to the outside world, rather than actually working on behalf of the group. Collective narcissism also directly predicted support for anti-conservation policies (Cislak et al., 2018). Among Polish participants, national narcissism predicted more support for coal mining and deforestation of the Bialowieza Forest which is a part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The relationship between national narcissism and support for the deforestation policy was mediated by the desire to be able to make political decisions independently. In a similar vein, the view that the European Union crippled national sovereignty and independent decision-making of Britain was central during the 2016 referendum (Niblett, 2016). Therefore, not surprisingly, national narcissism predicted supporting Brexit (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017; Marchlewska et al., 2018; for similar results on support for a potential Poxelit in Poland, see Cislak, Pyrczak, et al., 2020).

Recent studies also indicated important implications of collective narcissism for public health issues. For example, national narcissism predicted beliefs in vaccination conspiracy theories, which in turn predicted support for anti-vaccination policies (Cislak, Marchlewska, et al., 2021). National narcissism also predicted greater belief in conspiracy theories about the COVID-19 pandemic, and likelihood to spread such theories (Sternisko et al., in press). Public health crises, such as the global pandemic, can threaten the idealistic image of one's nation, especially if efforts to contain the spread of a disease are failing (Van Bavel et al., 2020; see also Lincoln, 2020). Thus, national narcissism might promote support for actions that would protect a strong in-group image, rather than in-group members themselves. For example, in a scandal related to the alleged refusal of joining an EU

ventilators scheme, PM Johnson was accused of prioritising ‘Brexit over breathing – so determined to act independently of the bloc that it would risk public health in the coronavirus crisis’ (Guarascio, 2020, para. 4). Although it was later clarified that the opportunity to participate in the scheme was missed due to a miscommunication (Reuters, 2020), one study found that British national narcissism predicted support for refusing participation in the EU ventilators scheme – even if this would threaten the well-being of Brits (Gronfeldt et al., 2021). In a similar vein, recent studies from Indonesia demonstrated that national narcissism predicted resistance to humanitarian aid offered in the aftermath of natural disasters (Mashuri et al., 2020). Together, these results suggest that collective narcissism predicts great concern with autonomy and strong appearances, even if they can threaten the well-being of in-group members.

13.6 Is In-Group Identity Necessarily Narcissistic?

Collective narcissism assumes a positive view of the in-group. However, this does not mean that all forms of identifying with the in-group are narcissistic. Just like we can distinguish individual narcissism (feelings of personal entitlement and superiority) from self-esteem (feeling worthy on equal plane with others; Brummelman et al., 2016; Cichocka et al., 2019), we can distinguish collective narcissism from genuine, secure forms of in-group identity (Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013). These can include constructive forms of patriotism (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Roccas et al., 2006; Schatz et al., 1999) or, beyond the national context, conventional measures of identification with social groups, which capture a ‘Tajfelian’ (Postmes et al., 2012, p. 599) vision of identity comprised of ties to other group members,

satisfaction with the group, and importance of the group to the self (e.g., Cameron, 2004; Leach et al., 2008). Collective narcissism generally correlates moderately positively with conventionally measured social identification as they both capture a degree of positivity about the group. However, researchers can co-vary out their overlapping variance by including collective narcissism and in-group identification in the same regression models (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013; Marchlewska et al., 2020). This method partials out the defensive narcissistic component, and displays the effects of more secure in-group identity (Cichocka, 2016). Secure in-group identity refers to genuine and modest love for an in-group that does not need external validation (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013).

While collective narcissism compensates for individual needs, secure in-group identity (that is, in-group identification net of collective narcissism) seems to stem from a stronger sense of self. For example, it increases when people recall experiences of feeling high (vs low) in personal control (Cichocka et al., 2018; see also Golec de Zavala et al., 2020). Eker and colleagues (2020) found that secure in-group identity was also linked to internally oriented motives (Amiot & Sansfaçon, 2011): embracing an identity because it helps people reach personally important goals and brings them inherent satisfaction from group membership. Therefore, people secure in their identity seem to embrace an identity for its own worth rather than to compensate for their own shortcomings (as often postulated by the social identity tradition; see Golec de Zavala et al., 2020). This is likely why secure in-group identity affords more positive attitudes towards other and own group members.

In-group identification without the narcissistic component is related to lower perceived threat and conspiracy beliefs (Cichocka et al., 2016),

less enjoyment of other groups' misfortunes (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016), and less out-group negativity (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013). It does not seem to predict hostile reactions to in-group criticism (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013). In fact, secure in-group identity predicted greater intergroup solidarity in the form of support for disadvantaged groups' collective action (Górska et al., 2019). Even less surprisingly, it predicts greater group loyalty (Marchlewska et al., 2020; see also Ellemers et al., 1997; Randsley de Moura et al., 2009) and less undesirable treatment of in-group members (Cichocka et al., in press). This is likely because secure in-group identity predicts lesser concern with how the group reflects on the individual and greater willingness to realise one's potential by benefitting the group and its members (Cichocka, 2016).

13.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we reviewed research and theorising on collective narcissism – a belief that one's in-group is exceptional and entitled to special treatment and recognition. Protecting the in-group's reputation promises to satisfy individual needs, but it can result in problematic relations both between and within groups. Although one might cynically assume that promoting the idealised image of one's group can at worst harm other groups, evidence reviewed here clearly demonstrates that it might also backfire and hurt the in-group itself. When the group is being used to manage individual shortcomings, it might be viewed more as a brand or a signboard rather than as a collective of individuals. To make the brand look strong and recognisable, those high in collective narcissism might be willing to sacrifice others, even their own group members. Slogans such as 'Make America Great Again' or 'Take back control' might not only fail to

restore feelings of individual worth or autonomy, but also fail the group as a whole.

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14 Demographic Change, White Decline, and the Changing Nature of Racial Politics in Election Campaigns

Loren Collingwood, Stephanie L. DeMora, and Sean Long

14.1 Introduction

The role that race and racism plays in American elections and politics cannot be understated. As the nation diversifies and moves towards majority-minority status by mid-century, the two major political parties are further polarising on issues of racial inclusion, racial policy, and racial appeals in electoral campaigns. Each year, the electorate becomes a bit less White, meaning that candidates of colour are more likely to run and win, and that White candidates appeal more specifically to various communities of colour. As the more racially progressive of the two political parties, the Democratic Party is poised in the long run to benefit from such continued diversity.

However, perhaps sensing an opportunity to capitalise on the fear of White demographic decline, the Republican Party, then led by President Donald Trump, has moved sharp right on appeals to White racial identity. The very slogan, ‘Make America Great Again’ conjures up notions of an older, Whiter America from a foregone era. Donald Trump’s speeches and rallies consistently included incendiary statements targeting different identity-based groups, such as immigrants, Latinos, Muslims, and the broad category of ‘others’. Trump’s victory in 2016 suggested that such a strategy can provide short-term electoral benefits, as Whites

reshuffled into the GOP based on immigration and race-related attitudes (Mutz, 2018; Reny et al., 2019; see also Chapter 21).

How continued diversity and racial campaign appeals will shape American politics over the next 20–30 years is unknown. However, the notion that race and ethnicity – broadly construed – shape electoral outcomes in the United States is not a new phenomenon at all. A vast literature on the significance of racism, ethnocentrism, racial cues, and White racial backlash in US politics suggests that the recent battle over demographic diversity is not without precedent. This chapter examines such work in an effort to highlight the continuing political significance of race and ethnicity given long-term demographic change. Additionally, we show that appeals to race and racism continue to play a key role in American democracy.

First, we review some of the foundational work on the political significance of White racism. Second, we discuss how recent racial diversification is affecting Whites’ political attitudes and voting decisions. Third, we synthesise the literature that examines how diversification influences voters of colour. Finally, we review some of the more recent work that combines the above into work on cross-racial mobilisation – a phenomenon whereby candidates of one racial/ethnic background interface with voters of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

14.2 White Racism and Its Political Significance

To understand how White racism influences politics today, it is important to grapple with changing conceptualisations of White racial attitudes. Prior to the mid-1960s or so, large shares of the White public openly admitted to holding racist attitudes, endorsing segregation and other policies designed to sustain a racial hierarchy. This came to be known as old-fashioned racism (also known as traditional or Jim Crow racism) which manifests as explicit racial prejudice where Whites are open about their hostile feelings towards people of colour. Under this paradigm, White candidates routinely made explicit racial appeals in campaign messaging, including in stump speeches and advertisements (Collingwood, 2020; Lamont et al., 2017; Mendelberg, 2001; Valentino et al., 2002).

However, the social movements of the 1960s culminated in clear changes to White public opinion seemingly overnight (Lee, 2002). No longer did large shares of Whites openly endorse racist attitudes or racist policies in public opinion surveys. Either White racism had disappeared or had gone underground. Social norms surrounding racist ideology had changed: outward racist appeals would no longer be tolerated, and voters would penalise offending candidates (Mendelberg, 2001).

Instead, Whites collectively adopted a racial ideology of colour blindness (Omi & Winant, 1986). This post-civil rights regime of racial discourse sought to erase explicit discussions of race, instead utilising racial cues in subtle or implicit ways. Along with this new phase of colour blindness came a shift from old-fashioned or explicit racism to modern forms, such as symbolic racism (Carmines & Stimson, 1989; Sears et al., 1979; Sears & Kinder, 1985). The concept of racial resentment is the most common modern racism term today. Racial

resentment is defined as a blend of anti-Black affect and the attribution of personal responsibility to racial minorities for disparities caused by structural problems. Surveys operationalise this concept with a battery of questions, such as whether African Americans could simply work harder to improve their social standing. Sears et al. (1979), for instance, demonstrate that modern racism predicts White political attitudes and preferences in the post-civil rights era. That piece found a robust connection between symbolic racism and White opposition to egalitarian policies like busing, in addition to heavily influencing presidential vote choice. Furthermore, in a study of racial attitudes over the last three decades, Tuch and Hughes (2011) find that racial resentment consistently predicts attitudes and successfully measures out-group animus. Study after study reveals strong relationships between racial resentment and White voting behaviour and White racial policy preferences, including Tesler's (2016) work examining racism during Obama's presidency. Thus, racist ideology among the American public never disappeared, simply the mechanism of expression changed with the times.

Old-fashioned racism and racial resentment are not the only ways to measure racist ideology and its effect on political attitudes (e.g., see Chapter 11). For instance, Sinclair and Kunda (1999) explore how racial stereotypes are primed and shape evaluations of racial minorities in general. Masuoka and Junn (2013) also provide an explanation of the racial hierarchy – where White folks are seated at the very top, and Black folks at the very bottom. One way this hierarchy shapes public opinion, they argue, is through the enforcement of positive and negative stereotypes for different racial groups.

Other scholars like Kinder and Kam (2010) have focused on ethnocentrism (see also Chapter 12). Ethnocentrism does not simply

measure out-group animus. Rather, it captures preferences for the in-group over the out-group. This is obviously a critical distinction from racial resentment and begins to approach what Ashley Jardina gets at in her book on White identity (Jardina, 2019). By looking not just at in-group favouritism or racist attitudes, ethnocentric measures help locate preferences within racial groups, explaining another more subtle alternative to old-fashioned racist attitudes.

While previously dominant attitudes of old-fashioned racism have certainly declined over time, this has not eroded racist attitudes in White public opinion. Instead, the research indicates a shift towards symbolic racism, which operates more subtly than explicit forms of prejudice but continues to heavily shape political attitudes. Symbolic racism, alongside ethnocentrism and the influence of racial hierarchy, continue to play a significant role in White political life, motivating candidates to play off of White racial attitudes and activate such deep-seated beliefs (Sears & Henry, 2005). Section 14.3 will explore how racially resentful Whites continue to operate in American politics.

14.3 Impact of Diversification on Whites

The demographic make-up of the USA is changing rapidly. The US Census predicted in 2017 that the population will be majority non-white by 2044.¹ The Latino population increased by 20% from 2010 to 2019.² There were about 60 million Latinos in the population in 2019, but the census predicts this exponential growth to continue, resulting in about

111 million in 2060. At the same time, the White population is expected to simultaneously decline from 200 million to 160 million in 2060. By this time, the White population will remain the largest single group, but minority populations will claim almost 60% of the total population. This section reviews the impacts of demographic change and the presence of the first Black president on Whites.

Analyses of the 2008 elections consistently find that racial attitudes predicted support for, and opposition to, Obama in ways that were not seen in previous elections. Tesler and Sears (2010) observed that the presence of a Black candidate in 2008 primed respondents' underlying racial predispositions in a way that they were not primed with all-White candidate elections. Other analyses found similar impacts for racial attitudes on White vote choice. For instance, Schaffner (2011) observed that White voters for whom race was salient were much less likely to vote for Obama, amounting to an estimated 3% loss of the White vote. Similarly, Piston (2010) found that racial stereotypes, such as the notion that African Americans are violent or lazy, shaped evaluations of the Obama candidacy in a way that candidate evaluations had not been influenced in previous elections. Krupnikov and Piston (2015) even found that White Democrats, including strong Democrats, were significantly less likely to vote for Obama than other White candidates. This was not limited to racial stereotypes or racial resentment, as Kam and Kinder (2012) also found similar results when looking at measures of ethnocentrism. Racial attitudes also influenced how Americans responded to Obama's victory. As Valentino and Brader (2011) explicate, a broad cross-section of America, and especially conservatives, reacted to Obama's victory by concluding there had been a significant drop in racial discrimination in America. At the same time, many respondents also reported

¹ <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2017/demo/popproj/2017-summary-tables.html>

² <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/65-older-population-grows.html>

increases in racial resentment, especially if they exhibited anxiety before the election.

Tesler (2012) sees this new era of racial resentment and symbolic racism spreading due to the presence of a Black president. Tesler finds that anti-Black prejudice (partly) motivated White opposition to the Affordable Care Act. Moreover, when pooling surveys asking respondents about their attitudes towards Clinton and Obama's healthcare reforms, the racial gap in support for healthcare had widened considerably over time. Opposition to the Affordable Care Act was heavily driven by White Americans' racial resentment measures, and these impacts increased even from 2007 to 2009. Tesler (2016) expands on these findings and reveals that the Obama presidency ushered in a new era of racialised politics in which the mere presence of an African American president primed White racial attitudes on a variety of issues including evaluations of Joe Biden, the strength of the economy, and even the president's dogs.

One prominent feature of this most-racial period is the emergence of race-based social movements, such as the Tea Party. While the Tea Party is not an explicitly racist or race-based organisation, Hochschild (2016) explains the widespread attitude among White Americans that the United States is no longer the country in which they grew up. Parker and Barreto (2013) and Barreto et al. (2011) compellingly connect this sentiment to the Tea Party by showing that feelings of national threat, as well as ethnocentrism and racial resentment, helped fuel support for the Tea Party, as well as racial profiling and other authoritarian measures. Likewise, Arceneaux and Nicholson (2012) reveal that Whites' support for the Tea Party is driven by racial resentment. Omi and Winant (2014), for their part, are even more explicit in explicating the racial element of the Tea Party. They see the

Tea Party as a fundamentally racial movement that simply hides its racism through the colour-blind ideology that modern conservatism uses to conceal the racial motivations behind opposition to government spending and support for welfare cuts.

Obama's election cannot be seen as the only driver of this most-racial public opinion. Instead, levels of immigration have increasingly primed White racial attitudes and driven corresponding political behaviour. For example, Abrajano and Hajnal (2015) track how the steadily increasing immigrant population has been accompanied by consistently threatening narratives from politicians and the media. This has resulted in xenophobic White Americans increasingly voting Republican and demanding more extreme anti-immigration measures from their party (see also Chapter 21). Abrajano and Hajnal situate these findings within the contact literature, which examines the role of interpersonal contact with immigrant populations (see also Chapter 15). Rather than demonstrating the optimistic hope that contact promotes welcoming attitudes, the authors find the opposite.

According to Craig and Richeson (2014) and Ostfeld (2019), the threat that many White Americans feel about rising immigration is tied to concerns that they are losing demographic majorities. These authors find that the salience of demographic shifts lead White respondents to evince more conservative views and support for the Republican Party. Similarly, Enos (2014) uses a field experiment design to prime exposure to Latinos and finds that respondents who are consistently exposed to Latino confederates on their daily commute are later more likely to hold exclusionary immigration attitudes. Enos (2015) extends these findings to exposure to African Americans, showing that Whites who lived in closer contact to Black neighbours were more likely to vote for racially

conservative candidates. Notably, while Hopkins (2010) finds support for these same conclusions, he only does so during times where immigration or race are particularly salient. This helps underscore why hostile intergroup contact might have intensified during the Obama era.

Another feature of the most-racial political era is the changing nature of racial rhetoric in political discourse. Since the civil rights era, White candidates have used implicit racial appeals – showing images and using language but not directly appealing to racism – to inject race into voters' decision-making process. As Mendelberg (2001) finds, implicit racial cues drive support among those high in racial attitudes, but only if the respondents do not see these racial cues for what they are. If politicians attempt to utilise explicit racial messaging by emphasising so-called Black criminality rather than 'inner city' crime, for instance, respondents will see this as explicit and become less supportive of the politician.

While Mendelberg's work exemplifies the consensus of the pre-Obama era, there is increasing evidence that the stigma against implicit cues is waning. Instead, Valentino et al. (2018) found in a series of survey experiments that many respondents are simply unconcerned about the use of explicit racial appeals. While they can still distinguish between explicit and implicit cues, voters are equally susceptible to both. This finding was largely replicated in Reny et al. (2019) which found that explicit racial appeals were accepted when made against African Americans, but not Latinos.

Banks and Valentino (2012) further explore this transition by looking at emotional influences on symbolic racism and the synchronous transition from disgust to anger as triggering White conservative racist attitudes. Banks and Valentino contrast the two and find that old-fashioned racism is associated

with emotional reactions of disgust, whereas racial resentment is more closely tied with anger (see also Chapter 9). However, Banks and Valentino critique racial resentment as being too reflective of conservative individualist mentalities (rather than just racial animus), but nevertheless point to racial resentment as predictive of White opposition to race-conscious policies.

Notably, research has found increasing evidence for the theoretical shift identified in Valentino et al. (2018). McIlwain and Caliendo (2011) track, at length, the history of implicit racial cues during elections involving candidates of colour throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Yet McIlwain and Caliendo (2014) note the presence of both implicit and explicit appeals during the Obama presidency and the 2008/2012 election. The presence of explicitly racist appeals also increased with the emergence of Donald Trump during the 2016 election season. Trump, as Sides et al. (2018) note, openly employed explicit appeals from the moment of his campaign announcement where he called Latino immigrants 'murderers and rapists'. This helps show that, through the Obama presidency and culminating with Donald Trump, the use of explicit appeals rose during the same time that Valentino et al. (2018) find that racism lost much of its stigma.

The increased salience of White identity provides yet another example of this new 'most-racial' political order. Although White identity has long been seen as largely inconsequential and unimportant to White political attitudes, emerging research shows that many Whites are increasingly seeing their race as integral to their identity and that this identification shapes political preferences. Knowles and Peng (2005) examined the neglected position of White identity and found that, despite there being little research on the subject, the potential to

politicise White identity exists. These conclusions were bolstered by Hutchings et al. (2011) who found that, under experimental conditions, Whites primed with threats to their perceived superiority within racial politics were increasingly likely to allow their own White identity to shape political preferences. Similarly, Weller and Junn (2018) find that White identity can shape strategic political decisions where Whites make decisions based on their group interests. Finally, Schildkraut (2017), after noting that previous research on White identity has found few results, identifies broad support for measures of social identity, including linked fate, as of 2012. Schildkraut argues that contemporary White attitudes towards political candidates and in-group descriptive representation closely mimic those found for respondents of colour.

The influence of contemporary White identity, however, has been best documented by Jardina's (2019) book, *White Identity Politics*. Here, Jardina finds that large numbers of American voters identify strongly as White and feel a corresponding sense of group solidarity. These same voters also perceive the rise of immigration as a source of group-threat. Jardina further finds that White identity consistently predicts chauvinistic forms of American identity, policy views on immigration, Medicare, and social society. Jardina concludes by noting that some of the best indicators of support for Donald Trump were White identification and a corresponding sense of political group consciousness.

This trend of most-racial public opinion has had profound consequences for American politics. One of these is the surprising election of Donald Trump to the presidency in 2016. Sides et al. (2019) explores how that election exemplified the relevance of group identities, especially in Whites' support for Donald Trump. Sides and colleagues argue that racial anger was fuelled both by the racialisation of

Republican Party identification and the explicitly racial campaigning that Trump engaged in during the campaign. While Sides et al. end on an optimistic note about the rise in tolerant racial views, their examination of Trump's campaign and support helps show the connection between the racialisation of public opinion and the Trump phenomenon.

These observations have been supported by additional empirical research on the role that racial attitudes had in supporting President Trump. While many commentators explained Trump's victory through economic anxiety, the role of racial primes and perceived threat is clear. For example, Schaffner et al. (2018) find that negative attitudes towards women and people of colour consistently predicted support for Trump, especially among low-educated White voters, dwarfing the role of economic concerns. Similarly, Newman et al. (2018) examined support for Trump at the county level and found that, after Trump employed racist appeals, counties which had seen a growth in their Latino population correspondingly saw support for Trump swell. Finally, despite a broad literature on the stability of party identification, Reny et al. (2019) found that many Democratic voters switched to vote for Donald Trump and that this tendency was predicted by racist and anti-immigrant attitudes. Additionally, Mutz (2018) contests the popular idea that vote switching in 2016 was due to economic hardships. Instead, she shows that vote switching occurred among Whites when the demographic shift to majority-minority in America threatened their sense of racial dominance. Trump's apparent impact was not, however, limited to electoral considerations and vote choice. Newman et al. (2021) find that Trump's racially inflammatory rhetoric emboldened prejudiced Whites to engage in casual and overt racism in the workplace and other less traditionally political spaces.

14.4 Impact of Diversification on People of Colour

While White racial attitudes have remained a prominent feature in American politics, the growing involvement of racial minorities in the political process, alongside their demographic increases, has underscored the importance of ethnic mobilisation and political opinions. This section will explore how politicians, including White politicians, have engaged with this changing electorate.

One emerging area of research assesses how racially grounded persuasion differs based on the race of both the candidate and the voter (Lemi, 2020; McIlwain & Caliendo, 2009, 2011; Pantoja et al., 2001). On its face, the diversification of the United States should benefit candidates and voters of colour, broadly speaking. On the one hand, in majority-minority electoral jurisdictions, minority candidates can vocally tap into co-ethnic appeals without necessarily risking losing an election on account of White racial backlash (Barreto et al., 2004; Tate, 1994, 2001). However, given the wide array of racial heterogeneity, research is only now emerging as to when and how voters of all stripes respond to different types of racial appeals. In this section, we highlight research on co-ethnic appeals, multiracial candidates, and deracialised campaigning.

Many of these studies find that there are significant co-racial or co-ethnic effects between voters and candidates (Ansolabehere & Fraga, 2016; Barreto, 2010; McConaughy et al., 2010). That is to say, in electoral competition between a candidate of one's race and a candidate of another race, voters are more likely to vote for the candidate of their own race. Another series of articles on Latino turnout finds that voters are often mobilised simply through shared ethnicity with a co-ethnic candidate (Barreto, 2010; Barreto & Collingwood, 2015; Barreto & Pedraza, 2009; Barreto et al.,

2004). This is mediated by individual-level measures of in-group solidarity and group consciousness, but it appears divorced from material incentives. Fraga (2016) finds that co-ethnic mobilisation is a main driver of minority turnout, but also notes the difficulty in attributing turnout to co-ethnicity or district characteristics. The main barrier to minority turnout is the lack of candidate engagement, and such co-ethnic engagement can result in high turnout regardless of institutional barriers.

Often, the success of such strategies depends on the presence of Dawson (1995)'s concept of linked fate among minority groups alongside high levels of ethnic identification. Barreto and Pedraza (2009), for example, demonstrate the persistence of group identification among Latino voters, connecting such group identity with successful mobilisation efforts. As Sanchez and Masuoka (2010) find, Latinos evince high levels of linked fate due to the marginalisation created by socio-economic disparities and immigration. It is this linked fate that enables the co-ethnic mobilisation of racial minorities, suggesting that many contexts would not be as fruitful for such tactics.

Lemi (2020) complicates the co-ethnic argument by showing that co-racial voting is a complex issue where racial proximity (between voter and candidate) plays a significant role in determining the level of support for multiracial candidates. Multiracial youth are the fastest-growing group in the USA and becoming increasingly important in politics (Davenport, 2018). For instance, while multiracial candidates can form coalitions with multiple groups, they struggle to appeal to co-ethnic voters with one strong racial identity. In this way, there is an added challenge for multiracial candidates when compared to candidates of a single race, as they are tasked with appealing to more than one co-ethnic group. However, when multiracial candidates are

compared to a candidate who fails to match any racial identity of the voter, the multiracial candidate is better positioned to win (Lemi, 2020).

Another body of work focuses on deracialisation, or the process of minority candidates downplaying their race to garner votes from non-co-racial voters (Perry, 1991). For example, Black candidates often avoid topics and even policies that may be racially salient. Instead, Black candidates may focus on issues that go beyond race like healthcare and the economy (McCormick & Jones 1993; Orey & Ricks, 2007). Famously, Tom Bradley successfully employed this strategy during his tenure from 1973 to 1993 as Los Angeles' first Black mayor (Sonenshein, 2018). Further experiments conducted by Piston (2010), Reeves (1997), and Terkildsen (1993) show that Black candidates easily activate White voters' racial attitudes. By deracialising their campaigns, these candidates may avoid paying an extra race penalty among White voters. Furthermore, this kind of racial anxiety may be quelled by familiarity – which can be activated through incumbency (Hajnal, 2006).

Such deracialised strategies are not always in the best interests of the candidate or their racial base voters (Orey, 2006). For example, where there is a large portion of the co-racial vote to be gained, it may serve a candidate well to embark on a more racialised campaign strategy. Such was the case for Harvey Johnson's efforts in seeking mayoral election twice in Jackson, Mississippi. A similar phenomenon was identified among Latino voters in Los Angeles (Austin & Middleton IV, 2004). Recent work on racialised campaign strategies propose that these appeals are most effective when they do not attack out-group members (Stout, 2015). These data show that this strategy is highly effective for Black candidates seeking the support of Black and Latino voters.

Outside of the racialised or deracialised campaigns debate, there is another robust literature on the intersection of political psychology and the function of race in campaigns. Racial sympathy was brought to the fore by Chudy (2017) in her dissertation focusing on White voters who support non-White candidates. She found additional evidence that the campaigns of non-White candidates captured high rates of support among Whites who are high in White collective guilt. This is an especially insightful development when we consider that White Democrats have become exceedingly more progressive on race in the past few years. For instance, Englehardt (2020) finds that over the last two decades, partisan loyalties and racial sentiments have become increasingly intertwined, suggesting that White Democrats are becoming increasingly progressive on racial issues. Chudy et al. (2019) further find that White collective guilt may be an independent racial attitude which explains support for candidates of colour, as well as certain racially progressive policies.

Overall, the changing American electorate is creating unprecedented opportunities for both political mobilisation and for participation. Candidates utilise a variety of approaches including racialised campaigns directed at co-racial or co-ethnic voters. Appealing to their shared sense of identity can become an especially powerful form of political mobilisation, though such co-ethnic mobilisation faces potential animus from out-groups. On the other hand, deracialised campaign strategies among non-co-racial voters, as well as guilt-evoking strategies among Whites with high levels of White guilt, can also be an effective campaign strategy. The country is becoming increasingly diverse, and the phenomenon described in these growing bodies of literature will become even more apparent and important for candidates and campaigns on the ground. However, in addition to efforts at

co-ethnic mobilisation, a growing number of candidates, especially White candidates, are also seeking to capitalise on minority voters.

14.5 Cross-Racial Mobilisation

Campaigns are frequently imagined to minimally impact election outcomes (see Chapter 30), however, literature shows that constituents are significantly primed by campaigns in ways that are important and can affect election results (Hillygus & Jackman, 2003; Holbrook, 1996; Shaw, 1999a, 1999b; Vavreck, 2009). As discussed in Section 14.3, there is a plethora of scholarship that highlights White candidates' success in activating racial attitudes among White constituents. However, White candidates and campaigns often mobilise non-White constituencies as well. These appeals became more overt after the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and candidates began to focus directly on necessary policy changes to assist non-White constituents (Black & Black, 2009; Glaser, 1998). This becomes clear when looking at the hotly debated policy issues of today, many of which disproportionately affect minority communities (namely, immigration and police-gun violence). It is no surprise that where one falls on these debates lines up with partisan preference as well, further exacerbating the racial and ethnic cleavages between the parties.

In order to explicate this phenomenon, it is helpful to focus on exemplary cases. This includes Texas native Beto O'Rourke who attempted to increase his vote share within non-White communities (primarily Latino) by emphasising his secondary social identity throughout his campaign (Alamillo & Collingwood, 2017). Even when candidates have no way to racially or ethnically identify with minority communities, an attempt at respect and accommodation through genuine policy positioning can go a long way. In this

sense, White candidates can prove to minority communities that they are working for them and secure their electoral support (Collingwood et al., 2014). This phenomenon is not only prevalent and effective when it comes from solely White candidates (Collingwood et al., 2014; Manzano & Sanchez, 2010). Indeed, Barack Obama used similar tactics to mobilise Latino communities in 2008 and (much more effectively) in 2012. Taking a strong stance on pro-immigration policy by supporting the Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals policy rallied the support of minority communities of which Obama was not racially or ethnically part (Barreto & Collingwood, 2015). While not directly speaking to ethnic or racial identification, these positions tap into increasingly important non-White political identities which are extremely powerful (Barreto, 2010; Dawson, 1995).

Appeals on the grounds of racial and ethnocultural sensitivity can also influence election results. For instance, Get Out the Vote (GOTV) field experiments demonstrate that culturally competent, in-person contact with constituents increases voter turnout among Latino populations (Michelson, 2003, 2005, 2006; Nuño, 2007; Ramírez, 2005; see also Chapter 30). Door-to-door campaigns carried out by canvassers who distribute Spanish-language materials are even more likely to increase Latino mobilisation to the ballots (Abrajano & Panagopoulos, 2011). Another influential factor is whether the canvasser or messenger is a local or not, as locals increase mobilisation over non-locals (Sinclair et al., 2013). Yet, scholarship shows that mobilisation and GOTV efforts are not effective equally across non-White communities. For example, among Latino communities in particular, we know that materials in Spanish are most effective among recent immigrants and those who hold ethnic identity close (Abrajano, 2010; Golash-Boza, 2006; Mann

et al., 2020; Pulido & Pastor, 2013; Valenzuela & Michelson, 2016).

Before 1965, and particularly in the South, White candidates most often vied for the support of non-White communities through less obvious means – namely, through the provision of monetary support or through embedded community leaders (Collingwood, 2020; Collingwood & Gonzalez-O'Brien, 2021). White candidates, in their aim to maximise vote share, would not often risk openly campaigning to non-White communities. Similarly, minority candidates are found to limit such appeals in order to avoid the loss of White votes (Citrin et al., 1990; McCormick & Jones, 1993; Orey & Ricks, 2007; Perry, 1991). The literature shows that public and targeted appeals to non-White constituents increase as minority populations' electoral strength grows. In other words, the benefits of cross-racial mobilisation outweigh the potential risks. In fact, a growing area of research shows that non-Latino candidates can effectively gain the support – and perform well – among Latino voters by supporting culturally informed policies (Collingwood et al., 2014), and by emphasising aptitude (Manzano & Sanchez, 2010). Such is the case for Beto O'Rourke's 2018 and Barack Obama's 2008 appeals to Latino voters discussed above.

Collingwood (2020) explains the process through which cross-racial appeals can effectively be made to capture non-co-ethnic support. As the United States eventually becomes majority-minority, candidates will be hard-pressed to find groups of solely co-ethnic or co-racial voters to win over. When they do appeal to these groups, it will likely not be enough to win an election. It is in those environments, especially during competitive elections, that cross-racial mobilisation is most common. It is also more common when there are fewer institutional barriers to voter participation, the candidate has a reputation for

racial competency, and Whites in the area generally have liberal attitudes.

Cross-racial mobilisation is going to be paramount for future candidates. However, partisanship surely plays a significant role in campaigns, as the two major parties are increasingly divided on racial lines. Cross-racial mobilisation may be less useful for Republican candidates as Whites self-sort into the party. Democrats must develop cross-racial and cross-ethnic competencies and policy expertise in order to run and win.

While the importance of developing such a strategy cannot be overstated, there is still the potential for a White backlash. This occurs when White candidates engage in the direct and non-covert appeals to non-White communities. Accordingly, the Republican Party may rely on the support of White voters who grow dissatisfied with the Democratic Party's direct appeals to non-White constituents (Ostfeld, 2019). The growth of non-White populations can also trigger racial and cultural threat among Whites in the USA (Craig et al., 2018; Enos, 2014; Hopkins, 2010; Newman, 2013). This growth tends to increase conservative sentiment and affiliation with the Republican Party among Whites (Craig & Richeson, 2014; Newman et al., 2018; Reny et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Republican candidates may electorally capitalise on the Democratic Party's use of cross-racial mobilisation via the anti-White sentiment held by their members. In contrast to cross-racial mobilisation, these candidates may persuade voters to support them through both implicit and explicit racist appeals (Reny et al., 2019). This effect was present in the vote switching between Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump in the 2016 election. A significant number of voters switched their vote between the two candidates on racial attitude lines rather than the economic ones popularly posited by the media (Reny et al., 2019). In sum, the parties appear to be headed

into racially opposite camps. With the spectre of demographic changes on the horizon, it seems inevitable that Republicans will eventually have to moderate on racial appeals should they wish to remain broadly competitive. How long this process takes, though, is a matter of considerable debate.

14.6 Conclusion

Race remains a pivotal force within American politics. While racial politics have changed dramatically over time, the presence of out-group animus still plays a decisive role in Whites' behaviours and attitudes. With forms of modern and symbolic racism replacing more explicit attitudes, Whites continue to allow out-group animus to shape their political preferences. This phenomenon has become even more decisive as increased demographic diversity and the salience of Barack Obama's presidency have reaffirmed the importance of racist attitudes. Moreover, with the rise of Donald Trump, explicit racism and White identity are increasingly rising to prominence.

Despite the prevalence of White racism, the role of racial minorities in political campaigning has never been more important. The rising number of racial minorities has created an important source of potential support for both White and co-ethnic candidates. Co-ethnic candidates have increasingly mobilised support by leveraging linked fate and group identification, granting them unique pathways to an increasingly diversified government. Similarly, White candidates, hoping to gain comparable support, have increasingly practiced cross-racial mobilisation to diversify their voting blocs. In this sense, race will continue to be a primary driving factor in American politics and will continue to have ubiquitous impact for years to come.

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15 Macro-diversity and Intergroup Attitudes

Oliver Christ, Katharina Schmid, and Eva G. T. Green

Due to increased immigration, many Western societies are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse. Since the successful integration of immigrants is one of the key challenges faced by receiving societies and has become a major policy issue in many host countries (De Haas et al., 2020; International Organisation for Migration, 2019), it is unsurprising that the anticipation of potential consequences of this increase in ethnic and cultural diversity has fuelled extensive societal and political, as well as academic, debate. The central question herein is thus whether ethnic diversity is good or bad for receiving societies, communities/neighbourhoods, and individuals – that is, whether diversity has positive or negative consequences on a range of outcomes. In this chapter, we focus on whether diversity at a macro level (that is, diversity of individuals' social contexts) is beneficial or disadvantageous for intergroup attitudes.

Our aim is to review research in political and social psychology on the consequences of macro-diversity for majority members of the host societies, focusing particularly on social trust, intergroup attitudes, and political behaviour. We start by conceptualising macro-level diversity and outlining some methodological considerations. Next, we briefly review the evidence on the question whether ethnic diversity has positive or negative consequences for intergroup relations. We then focus on two potential psychological mechanisms explaining the effects of increased macro-diversity on individual outcomes: perception of threat versus

intergroup contact. Moreover, we discuss individual and contextual moderators of the relation between ethnic diversity and intergroup attitudes. Finally, we end this chapter by outlining future directions for research.

15.1 Conceptualisation of Macro-level Diversity and Methodological Considerations

Research on diversity and intergroup attitudes has considered two conceptualisations and operationalisations of diversity: perceived diversity on the one hand and macro-level diversity on the other. Perceived diversity is typically captured by self-reported assessments concerning individuals' perceptions of diversity in a given context, for example, individuals' subjective percentage estimates of different minority groups living in their neighbourhood. Macro-level diversity, however, constitutes an objective measure of diversity, as captured in population statistics and indices, for example, the official percentage of different minority groups living in a defined geographical region. In this chapter, we focus on macro-level ethnic diversity, and discuss the context-level consequences on various outcomes related to intergroup relations. We will therefore not consider in detail the effects of perceived diversity (for an overview, see Craig et al., 2017), nor will we refer to research that has considered additional aspects related with ethnic diversity on multiple levels of analysis, such as research on ideological beliefs regarding diversity on the

individual level (e.g., Whitley & Webster, 2019), nor the content of policies concerned with ethnic diversity on the macro level (e.g., Huo et al., 2018). For those interested in detailed reviews of these different facets of ethnic diversity, we refer readers to recent reviews by Jones and Dovidio (2018) or Verkuyten and Yogeeswaran (2020). Our focus here rests solely on the effects of macro-diversity on different individual outcomes, as well as on the interplay between macro-diversity and variables on the individual (e.g., political ideologies) and contextual level (e.g., integration policies).

As the focus on macro-diversity concerns an examination of context effects, it is not surprising that most empirical analyses on the potential consequences of macro-diversity have been conducted not in political and social psychology, but in neighbouring disciplines of political science (e.g., Putnam, 2007), sociology (e.g., Van der Meer & Tolsma, 2014), and economics (e.g., Alesina et al., 1999) – disciplines that regularly consider macro-level effects in a variety of domains and on a variety of outcomes. One of the key debates in these disciplines is whether macro-diversity undermines social capital, especially social trust between different ethnic groups in a given social context (Putnam, 2007). This line of research has thus focused more broadly on the question of whether ethnic diversity undermines social cohesion in societies that face an increase in ethnic diversity. In political and social psychology, however, the focus is typically more narrowly on examining intergroup outcomes (e.g., intergroup attitudes) and less on macro-level effects. Yet political and social psychological research considering ethnic diversity at a macro level has increased in recent years. This psychological perspective has helped to expand research from other social science disciplines by looking at both mediators (i.e., psychological processes

involved that help explain how diversity may exert effects) and moderators (i.e., variables at the individual and social context level that help explain the conditions under which diversity exerts effects) of the effects of macro-level diversity. Our chapter provides an overview of this recent work on the link between macro-diversity and intergroup attitudes.

Before we begin, we must address two methodological issues researchers face when studying the link between macro-diversity and intergroup attitudes. First, in order to examine the effects of a macro-context feature (i.e., macro-diversity) on individual outcomes (e.g., intergroup attitudes), one needs to consider the hierarchical structure of the data: individuals (micro level of analysis) are nested in macro contexts (macro level of analysis). Second, there are different ways to operationalise macro-diversity that might lead to different conclusions.

Whenever data are collected at multiple levels of analysis, it results in a hierarchical data structure. The defining characteristic of a hierarchical data structure is that observations at one level (in our case, different individuals living in a given neighbourhood or country) of analysis are nested within observations at a higher level (in our case, different macro contexts, such as neighbourhoods or countries). Researchers interested in the link between macro-diversity and intergroup outcomes thus typically sample data from multiple individuals located in different social contexts, so that individuals constitute the so-called level 1 unit of analysis, and social contexts constitute the level 2 unit of analysis. The resulting hierarchical data structure, however, has two important consequences (for a detailed discussion, see Nezlek, 2001). First, in many cases, level 1 observations are non-independent. Therefore, the assumption of independent observations of many single-level methods like ordinary least squares regression

analysis are violated. Ignoring the hierarchical data structure and, thus, the non-independence of observations results in biased estimates of standard errors, and in turn, affects the likelihood of false positive 'significant' results, that is, the type 1 error probability (Hox, 2010). Second, single-level analyses, which ignore the hierarchical data structure, often yield misleading results, particularly when results from the social context (or higher) level are interpreted at the individual level or lower level (i.e., ecological fallacy) or vice versa (atomistic fallacy; Pettigrew, 1996). Indeed, when examining the effects of macro-diversity, the clustering of data can be quite complex: individuals are nested in more narrowly defined social contexts like neighbourhoods, which are further nested in broader contexts like regions or countries. For instance, researchers have found that, depending on the level of analysis, different – either positive or negative – relations between percentage of minorities and intergroup attitudes can be observed (e.g., Dinesen & Sønderskov, 2015; Wagner et al., 2006). This suggests that it might be false to infer from effects found on the more narrow contexts to the broader social context or vice versa.

Multilevel modelling (MLM) is, therefore, needed to simultaneously handle data from different levels of analysis (e.g., Christ et al., 2017), as it accounts for the interdependence of observations due to the nested data structure. Moreover, relations between variables are analysed at their appropriate level, thereby avoiding ecological and atomistic fallacies. Prior to MLM, preliminary tests ensure that a significant part of individuals' attitudes is due to them being embedded (e.g., living, working, studying) within a given context (e.g., country or neighbourhood, organisation, classroom). If not, basic statistical tests (e.g., OLS regressions) can be performed and only the impact of individual characteristics is

investigated. Indeed, the development of large-scale, international social surveys including immigration-related questions, such as the European Social Survey (ESS – www.europeansocialsurvey.org/), International Social Survey Programme (ISSP – www.issp.org), or World Values Survey (WVS – www.worldvaluessurvey.org) has stimulated cross-national and cross-regional research using MLM. In this chapter, we focus only on research that has used such appropriate sampling and MLM procedures.

The second methodological issue concerns the different operationalisations of macro-diversity (for a detailed discussion, see Budescu & Budescu, 2012; Koopmans & Schaefer, 2013). A narrow definition of ethnic diversity focuses on *ethnic fragmentation* (or fractionalisation), operationalised with indices (e.g., the Herfindahl index) that are commonly interpreted as the probability that two randomly selected individuals in a given context will be of the same ethnic group. A higher value in these indices reflects a higher degree of diversity. For example (Budescu & Budescu, 2012, p. 217), a particular social context that consists of 25% African Americans, 33% Hispanics, and 42% Whites has a value of 0.65, and a social context with 55% Whites, 25% African Americans, and 20% Hispanics has a value of 0.40, indicating that the former social context is more diverse than the latter.

However, most research in political and social psychology conceptualises ethnic diversity more broadly (Hewstone, 2015), examining the impact of varying aspects of the ethnic composition in a given social context (for example, a concentration or polarisation of ethnic groups; ratio of people of foreign origin, ratio of specific immigrant or ethnic groups, or change in ratio of immigrant or ethnic groups). In most Western societies, the different operationalisations of macro-diversity tend to overlap (Schaeffer, 2013). We therefore

consider in this review all relevant research that has examined the effects of macro-diversity regardless of the operationalisation of diversity, but note, where necessary, the particular measure used to capture diversity.

15.2 Consequences of Macro-diversity for Intergroup Outcomes

As mentioned above, much of the prior work considering consequences of macro-diversity has been carried out in the social sciences, typically focusing on social cohesion or social capital, and similar outcomes. Social cohesion refers broadly to concepts that capture aspects of conviviality and generalised trust in others, while work on social capital distinguishes between bonding social capital, that is, trust in one's own group (in-group trust) and bridging social capital, that is, trust in other groups (out-group trust). Putnam (2007) conducted one of the most influential analyses on the consequences of ethnic diversity that sparked much of the recent debate and ensuing research on macro-diversity. Based on data from a large general population sample in the United States, he concluded that an increase in ethnic diversity has negative consequences for a range of social cohesion-related outcomes, including reduced trust towards a range of groups, at least in the short term. Because ethnic diversity was not only related to less out-group trust but also less in-group trust, he argued that ethnic diversity reduces both in-group and out-group solidarity, thus undermining both bonding and bridging social capital.

However, a recent narrative review by van der Meer and Tolsma (2014; see also Dinesen & Sønderskov, 2018; Schaeffer, 2014) concludes that the evidence that ethnic diversity negatively affects group relations is less conclusive than suggested by Putnam (2007).

Indeed, their analyses showed that the relationship between ethnic diversity and indicators of social cohesion, such as generalised in-group and out-group trust, varies a lot: although some studies support Putnam (2007), a majority of studies report mixed findings or even contrary findings such as *higher* social cohesion in more ethnically diverse social contexts. And importantly, particularly for the focus of our current chapter, only 1 out of 11 studies reviewed by van der Meer and Tolsma that included indicators of *interethnic* social cohesion (such as out-group trust) reported a negative correlation with ethnic diversity. A recent meta-analytic summary of 87 studies (Dinesen et al., 2020) substantiates this general pattern, although the analysis revealed an overall significant negative relationship between ethnic diversity and social trust of moderate size. Specifically, social trust (as an indicator for social cohesion) was found to be lower in more ethnically diverse contexts, but the effect varied between the different studies and the size of the effect was generally small. And again, the reported effect was smaller for out-group trust compared to in-group trust and generalised social trust. Finally, this negative effect is mainly found in smaller social contexts (i.e., neighbourhoods), and less pronounced – or even reversed – in more aggregate settings (e.g., districts). In another recent meta-analysis examining the links between macro-diversity and prejudice in 55 studies, Pottie-Sherman and Wilkes (2017) found mixed effects: over half of the studies revealed no relationship and the remainder showed either positive or negative relationships.

Overall, research has thus revealed no clear evidence for a negative effect of macro-diversity on intergroup outcomes (nor on social cohesion more generally). In addition, there is much variation in the reported effects. However, much of this evidence has primarily

considered *direct* effects of macro-diversity at the context level on various outcomes at the individual level (such as trust and out-group attitudes), that is, involving analyses that simply regressed the individual-level outcome variables onto the context-level macro-diversity indicators. Notwithstanding the contribution of this work on understanding the link between diversity and intergroup outcomes, much of it has fallen short of capturing and examining the mechanisms (i.e., mediators) that explain *how* diversity may influence intergroup outcomes. Indeed, this may help explain the sometimes negative, sometimes positive, effects of ethnic diversity on intergroup outcomes in prior work. Recent work, particularly in political and social psychology, has started to do just that, considering not only *whether*, but also *how* (i.e., by which processes and mechanisms), *for whom*, and *when* macro-diversity is related with intergroup outcomes. We review this work in Section 15.3.

15.3 Two Potential Pathways: Conflict Theory versus Intergroup Contact Theory

Two central and simultaneously opposing theoretical assumptions on the effect of an increase in ethnic diversity on intergroup attitudes have been put forward (Wagner et al., 2008; see also Dinesen et al., 2020). According to conflict theory (Blumer, 1958; Bobo, 1999), an increase in the proportion of ethnic minorities threatens majority group members' status (Blalock, 1957) and affects the actual or perceived competition over material (e.g., jobs) and immaterial (e.g., values, traditions, power) resources. This (perceived) competition increases feelings of realistic and symbolic threat, respectively (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), and leads to more negative intergroup attitudes and less out-group trust. This classic theoretical account which focuses

on the national majority group's perspective thus considers perceived threat as the key pathway by which macro-diversity negatively affects intergroup relations.

An alternative account, rooted in intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954; Brown & Hewstone, 2005), argues that an increase in the size of ethnic minorities provides more opportunities for intergroup contact (Stein et al., 2000) and thereby offers the possibility for diversity to exert positive effects on out-group attitudes. A multitude of studies have examined the effects of intergroup contact on various intergroup outcomes, typically showing contact correlates positively with harmonious intergroup attitudes (e.g., Swart et al., 2011), out-group trust (e.g., Tam et al., 2009), and intergroup forgiveness (e.g., Hewstone et al., 2006). Meta-analytically summarising the evidence based on intergroup contact, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) concluded that contact with members of other groups improves intergroup relations across a range of conditions and contexts. Extending this reasoning further, an increased proportion of ethnic minority groups in a given context (i.e., macro-diversity) should positively affect intergroup outcomes because it provides individuals with increased contact opportunities and, consequently, a greater amount of actual contact with members of the out-group.

Although both of these processes (i.e., perceived group threat and intergroup contact) have long been implicitly prevalent in theories of diversity and intergroup relations, their actual involvement in the link between ethnic diversity and intergroup attitudes have, until recently, not been directly assessed (Hewstone, 2015; Schmid et al., 2015). In other words, despite several classic studies conducted in the conflict theory tradition that argue for threat as the key process explaining negative effects of diversity on out-group attitudes (e.g., Blalock, 1957), these studies did not actually

measure and test perceptions of threat at the individual level. In their seminal multilevel study analysing Eurobarometer 47.1 data across 15 countries ($N = 12,728$), Scheepers et al. (2002) showed that ethnic diversity (the proportion of non-EU citizens in a country) was linked to heightened anti-immigration attitudes (see Lubbers et al. (2002) for a similar effect on right-wing voting) through increased threat perceptions.

Conversely, despite the implicit assumption inherent in contact theory that greater diversity offers opportunities for contact, most studies in the contact theory tradition have focused predominately on individual-level phenomena, largely ignoring effects of context-level diversity. One of the first tests of whether ethnic diversity is related to more intergroup contact and, therefore, more positive intergroup attitudes was presented by Wagner et al. (2006). Wagner and colleagues used cross-sectional survey data ($N = 2,722$) of the German adult population and tested whether the mean quantity of intergroup contact within a given region mediated the effects of macro-diversity on ethnic prejudice of the survey respondents. As an indicator of macro-diversity, they used the proportion of ethnic minorities on the district level (a district in Germany is an administrative unit of about 50,000 inhabitants with a wide range of sizes). Results of multilevel analyses showed that the proportion of ethnic minorities in the district and respondents' prejudice were negatively correlated, meaning that a higher proportion of ethnic minorities within a district was related with lower prejudice scores of respondents living in this district on average. Moreover, a multilevel mediation analysis showed that the negative relationship between ethnic minority proportion and prejudice was partly mediated by direct contact experiences, such as cross-group friendships.

Beyond testing hypotheses derived either from conflict or intergroup contact theories, research has moved towards a synthesis of these theoretical approaches by simultaneously considering both contact and threat as processes in the relationship between macro-diversity and attitudes. Here, the core assumption is that macro-diversity should lead to more threat perceptions and, by virtue of offering opportunities for contact, also to more contact with out-groups. Contact would further be associated with lower threat perceptions, and consequently with less negative out-group attitudes. By this reasoning, diversity should not only exert direct effects on out-group attitudes, but also indirect effects, thereby providing a more complete test of the effect of diversity (i.e., in statistical terminology, total effects that consider the sum of all effects). Indirect effects might thus take the form, for example, of positive indirect effects (such as macro-diversity being associated with more positive out-group attitudes, via more contact) or negative indirect effects (such as macro-diversity being associated with less positive out-group attitudes, via more threat).

In one of the first studies testing simultaneously contact and threat effects as potential mediators of the relationship between macro-diversity and out-group attitudes, Schlueter and Wagner (2008) directly compared the relationship between macro-diversity and perceived group threat and intergroup contact, respectively. The authors based their analysis on the 2002 European Social Survey ($N = 35,047$), which included indicators for intergroup contact, perceived group threat, and a social distance measure (willingness to have social contact with different out-group members) as the main individual-level outcome. As a proxy of macro-diversity, they used the proportion of the non-national workforce on a regional level ($N = 158$; NUTS 1 regions;

Eurostat, 2004). Multilevel analyses (multilevel structural equation modelling, or MSEM; Christ et al., 2017) revealed that macro-diversity was positively associated with perceived group threat *and* intergroup contact on the social context level. Moreover, perceived group threat was associated with a higher level of social distance, while intergroup contact was negatively linked with the outcome measure. Testing of the indirect effects (i.e., the effect of macro-diversity on social distance via perceived group threat and intergroup contact) showed that both mechanisms, threat and intergroup contact, operated in parallel on the social context level. Thus, macro-diversity was associated with both threat perceptions, as predicted by conflict theory, and intergroup contact, as proposed by intergroup contact theory. Importantly, in support of the in-group contact theory rationale, the total effect of macro-diversity on social distance as the intergroup outcome measure was negative, showing that, on this broad social context level, a higher share of ethnic minorities is associated with less social distance among majority respondents.

Schmid and colleagues (2014) provided an additional test of the propositions from both conflict theory and intergroup contact theory (see also Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010), with the advantage of focusing on the neighbourhood level in the UK. Smaller units of analysis provide a more meaningful social context, as the plausibility of opportunities for contact is greater when diversity is assessed in smaller rather than larger units. They examined the effects of neighbourhood ethnic diversity on three different types of trust – out-group, in-group, and neighbourhood trust – as well as on out-group attitudes, and tested both direct and indirect (via intergroup contact and perceived threat) effects on these different types of trust and out-group attitudes. Moreover, they tested these effects among White British majority and

ethnic minority respondents. The results of their study conflict with Putnam's (2007) claim that neighbourhood diversity had a negative effect on trust, since their analysis did not reveal any negative total effects of macro-diversity at the neighbourhood level, neither for the majority, nor the minority, group. Further, the results for the complex multilevel mediation model revealed mostly non-significant indirect effects, except for a positive indirect effect via contact and threat: for all outcomes, macro-diversity was associated with more intergroup contact, and intergroup contact with lower threat, which resulted in higher out-group, in-group, and neighbourhood trust, respectively, as well as more positive intergroup attitudes. Thus, Schmid and colleagues found no evidence that macro-diversity undermines intergroup relations, nor that it undermines social trust more generally (but see Dinesen & Sønderskov, 2015).

Yet another example of unpacking effects consistent with conflict and contact theories consists of differentiating between types of immigrant group when assessing ethnic diversity (see also Chapter 21). In a study using 2002 ESS data from Switzerland (1,472 Swiss citizens across 185 municipalities), Green et al. (2010) found that the presence of culturally close and valued Western European immigrants correlated positively with intergroup contact (cross-group friendships), which in turn was related to reduced threat perceptions, as well as to more inclusive immigration attitudes through reduced threat perceptions. The presence of stigmatised immigrants from Muslim countries (in Switzerland, mainly originating from Turkey, the former Yugoslavia and Albania), in contrast, provided a more complex picture. It was related to both threat perceptions and heightened intergroup contact (see also Savelkoul et al., 2011). Thus, differences due to varying forms of diversity occur despite providing the same opportunities for

interaction. Indeed, one explanation is that communication with immigrants originating from culturally close countries is easier and interactions are less defined by pre-existing stereotypes than with immigrants from culturally distant countries. Whether an immigrant group is valued or stigmatised will vary across contexts and over time. However, these findings show that exposure to different types of ethnic diversity differently shape immigration attitudes in ways that support both conflict and intergroup contact theories.

Beyond research that has focused more narrowly on attitudinal intergroup outcomes like prejudice or out-group trust, the effects of macro-diversity have also been examined on other outcomes relevant for intergroup relations. For instance, Green et al. (2016) use data from the 2011 Swiss Electoral Studies to examine whether macro-diversity is associated with voting for radical right-wing parties via threat perceptions and positive intergroup contact. As an indicator for macro-diversity, the authors used the proportion of stigmatised immigrants (from former Yugoslavia and Albania) on the district level (an administrative division in Switzerland). The authors predicted that the proportion of stigmatised immigrants increases both threat perceptions and contact opportunities, which, in turn, should respectively heighten and attenuate voting for parties on the far right of the political spectrum. Using actual election results at the social context level, the authors tested a micro-macro link with individual threat perceptions and contact experiences as predictor variables and actual election results as a social context level outcome variable. The authors applied MSEM, an analytic approach that enables the test of such micro-macro links (Christ et al., 2017). Results showed that the proportion of stigmatised immigrants heightened threat perceptions, which, in turn, increased actual radical right-wing voting via an increased willingness

to vote for right-wing parties. Positive intergroup contact – albeit unrelated to immigrants' presence – was associated with *reduced* radical right-wing voting through an attenuated willingness to vote for right-wing parties and reduced threat. Unfortunately, the authors did not report the total effect of macro-diversity on voting behaviour so it is not clear whether macro-diversity was positively, negatively, or not at all associated with voting for radical right-wing parties.

In the United Kingdom, Biggs and Knauss (2012) showed that the probability of being a British National Party (BNP) member was lower in neighbourhoods with a substantial proportion of non-whites, in particular, South Asians and Muslims. The probability was higher, however, in cities (a bigger unit of analysis compared to neighbourhoods) with a larger proportion of non-whites (see also Ford & Goodwin, 2010 and Werts et al., 2013), but only where they are also highly segregated. Analysing the ESS 2002 ($N = 14,653$ in 11 countries), Lucassen and Lubbers (2012) found that the proportion of Muslims in a country was positively related to perceived material threat, but negatively related to perceived symbolic threat, and unrelated to right-wing voting intentions. These results showed that both threat and intergroup contact processes operate simultaneously as a function of level of analysis, while also playing a central role in explaining the link between macro-diversity and intergroup outcomes.

Based on this evidence, we can conclude that both conflict theory and intergroup contact theory help us understand how macro-diversity affects intergroup relations, with contact playing a key role in driving potential positive effects of diversity. While diversity may be perceived as threatening, it also offers opportunities for contact, which, if taken up, can translate into lower threat and more favourable out-group attitudes.

However, an important question remains: *for whom* is diversity particularly threatening, and which individuals are more or less likely to take up vital opportunities for intergroup contact? In Section 15.4, we review research that has examined such potential moderators that identify individual and contextual factors that help explain when – and for whom – diversity is more or less likely to bring about positive or negative outcomes.

15.4 Individual and Contextual Moderators

Although research on potential moderators of the macro-diversity–prejudice link is still scarce, a growing number of studies have started to examine variables on both the level of individuals (e.g., individual difference variables) and on the level of the social context (e.g., norms, segregation). Because there is yet not a specific line of research within political and social psychology that examines these issues, we also include studies from neighbouring disciplines. To these ends, Van Assche and colleagues (Van Assche et al., 2014, 2016, 2018; for an overview see Van Assche et al., 2019) have focused on the extent to which individuals may differ in how exposure to macro-diversity affects their attitudes. Specifically, this work has focused on individual differences in right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), a social attitudinal expression of values of collective security and order originating from the belief that the social world is an inherently dangerous, unpredictable, and threatening place (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). Using a person \times context interaction perspective, they examined for whom macro-diversity poses a threat and thereby leads to more negative intergroup outcomes (e.g., increase in prejudice). Since individuals high in RWA should view diversity as a threat to security, social cohesion, and traditional norms and

values, they expected macro-diversity to be related to more negative intergroup outcomes for individuals high in RWA. Supporting this assumption, Van Assche et al. (2014, 2016) showed that RWA moderated the association between macro-diversity and different intergroup outcomes, finding, for example, that macro-diversity was associated with more prejudice and less out-group trust for individuals high in RWA. Comparable results have also been found over time (Van Assche et al., 2018), and for politically relevant attitudes like cynicism and mistrust in politics (Van Assche et al., 2018).

Beyond individual-level variables moderating effects of macro-diversity, other contextual variables may also attenuate or intensify the effect of macro-level diversity. Contextual characteristics can thus interact (*level-2 interactions* in multilevel terminology). For example, in line with conflict theory, Quillian (1995) demonstrated across 12 European countries ($N = 11,676$) that, while macro-diversity (the proportion of immigrants from non-European countries) was related to heightened racial prejudice, this relationship was intensified in countries with poor economic conditions.

The effects of macro-diversity can also be shaped by social norms regarding diversity and the organisation of multicultural societies. Social norms thus express appropriate and acceptable ways to think about cultural diversity and immigration within a country or organisation, and thereby orient individuals' attitudes regarding diversity (Crandall et al., 2002; Guimond et al., 2014). Such norms are conveyed notably via policies and legislation, media messages, politicians, and fellow citizens' attitudes and political stances. For example, Gundelach and Manatschal (2017) examined the influence of subnational integration policies in shaping the effects of macro-diversity on social trust using data from the

Swiss Volunteering Survey – Communities 2010. Although the overall effect of macro-diversity on social trust was negative, their analysis showed that more liberal integration policies attenuated – and even erased – this negative effect. However, for certain policy categories like civic rights and family reunification, an amplifying effect was observed. Likewise, analysing ESS data across 20 countries ($N = 32,093$), Green et al. (2020) found that both macro-diversity and inclusive integration policies (assessed with the Migrant Integration Policy Index; MIPEX) were related to less symbolic threat perceptions and more intergroup contact. However, as the focus of the paper was on the interplay of contact and policies, these authors did not test the moderating effect of integration policies on macro-diversity, but merely controlled for immigrant share, as well as changes in immigrant share, on the country level. Nonetheless, the results demonstrate the beneficial effect of inclusive integration policies in increasing (positive) intergroup contact when contact opportunities (macro-diversity) are controlled for. In support of contact theory, Green et al. (2018) further showed with data from the ISSP 2013 National Identity module across districts in Switzerland (containing 1,019 Swiss respondents nested in 136 districts) that diversity buffered the effects of conservative normative climates assessed with past referenda results: a conservative climate was positively associated to an ethnic conception of nationhood only in districts with a low ratio of immigrants (see, however, Fasel et al., 2013). In districts with a high ratio of immigrants, conservative climate and ethnic conception of nationhood were unrelated.

An additional contextual factor that interacts with macro-diversity is the degree of segregation between ethnic groups in a given context (Laurence et al., 2019). While indicators of macro-diversity in a given context

provide details about the absolute level of diversity (e.g., as captured in percentages of ethnic minorities in a context), the degree of segregation between groups can nonetheless vary. For example, two similarly diverse areas with 50% ethnic minority share may differ starkly in levels of segregation if one of these areas is characterised by clearly separated areas in which majority and minority individuals live segregated from each other, while in the other area majority and minority residents live largely interspersed, with little segregation. Examining this interplay with data from different neighbourhoods in the UK, Laurence et al. (2019) showed that macro-diversity was only positively associated with out-group attitudes when the area majority and minority residents lived in highly diverse, integrated areas (i.e., diverse areas with low levels of segregation); for those living in highly diverse but segregated areas, attitudes were more negative. These findings underscore the importance of studying additional contextual factors when examining the effects of macro-diversity.

Although research on moderators is still in its infancy, the work reviewed above underlines the importance of understanding the interplay between macro-diversity and variables on the individual and contextual level. Results of this research should help inform policymakers in more specific ways about how to best implement policies and interventions to prevent negative consequences and help societies to cope with the challenges of an increase in macro-diversity.

15.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we reviewed recent political and social psychological research on the effects of macro-diversity for majority members of the host societies on intergroup outcomes. Many (Western) societies have seen an

increase in ethnic and cultural diversity due to immigration and international mobility, a trend that is still continuing and growing. The question of whether ethnic and cultural diversity is good or bad for receiving societies is thus understandably a hot topic in the public and scientific debate. In line with findings from other social science disciplines (i.e., economics, political science, sociology), this research shows that there is no clear and simple answer to this question. Looking at social trust, intergroup attitudes, and political behaviour as the main (individual-level) outcomes, findings are very mixed. Consistent with conflict theory, studies show that (some) majority group members react with an increase in threat perceptions posed by incomers, increasing negative intergroup attitudes and undermining social trust. However, results also show that macro-diversity – due to offering contact opportunities with ethnically and culturally different people – is related with more intergroup contact and thereby improved intergroup attitudes, supporting intergroup contact theory.

However, to reach a more complete answer on the possible consequences of an increase in macro-level diversity, future research needs to continue identifying individual and contextual characteristics that help to explain these opposing effects. While we reviewed recent research looking at individual (e.g., political ideologies) and contextual moderators, work in this area is still scarce and requires future consideration.

There are also many unresolved methodological and conceptual issues that require research attention. At the outset of this chapter, we acknowledged that the conceptual foundation and operationalisation of the different macro-diversity indices vary and that not all indices capture different facets of diversity in the same way (Koopmans & Schaeffer, 2013). This obviously complicates

the comparison of research findings. Future research might benefit from using more complex and therefore informative measures of diversity (Budescu & Budescu, 2012), and from pursuing a systematic comparison of the effects of different indicators of diversity. Likewise, the social contexts vary by the level of aggregation. While some research is based on national comparisons, other research focuses on more narrow social contexts like districts or neighbourhoods. Again, a more systematic approach to this is needed, not least because results can vary depending on the level of aggregation (Dinesen & Sønderskov, 2015).

The overviewed research was cross-sectional and thus does not allow for firm causal conclusions. In theory, national majority intergroup attitudes could influence migration intentions and thus macro-diversity. Positive majority attitudes may encourage, whereas negative attitudes may deter, immigration. Whether individual attitudes predict macro-diversity on the contextual level would be a particularly interesting and important future research avenue (see Christ et al., 2017; Green et al., 2016).

Another critical aspect concerns the disproportional focus of research to date in Western societies (see also Chapters 37 and 38). Indeed, the overviewed research on the effects of macro-diversity primarily considered national majorities in receiving societies in the global North, yet immigration between countries of the global South is at least as frequent as South–North immigration. However, currently most large-scale international surveys (ESS and ISSP) that allow researchers to examine the effects of macro-diversity on intergroup outcomes with MLM have been mainly conducted in the global North. To draw more encompassing conclusions of the effects of macro-diversity on immigration attitudes, it is thus imperative to broaden the sampling of countries and contexts in future

work. Similarly, the immigrant and ethnic minority perspective is rare in MLM research examining effects of macro-diversity (Schmid et al., 2014). For example, whether and how macro-diversity (higher presence of fellow immigrants) shapes acculturation strategies and migration intentions are key questions in current multicultural societies.

In sum, research on the effect of macro-diversity on individual outcomes is a prime example of a contextual social psychology (Pettigrew, 2018). The research on effects of macro-diversity is a showcase of how the social context (e.g., share of immigrants, immigration policies) influences psychological phenomena (e.g., perceived out-group threat, intergroup attitudes) and vice versa. Moreover, this research shows how important and necessary an interdisciplinary perspective and communication across disciplines is: to fully understand the consequences of an increase in macro-diversity for receiving societies, communities/neighbourhoods, and individuals, an interdisciplinary perspective is certainly needed (see also Chapter 1). Political and social psychology can contribute to this endeavour by providing insights into key psychological mechanisms (mediators) and moderators to complement work in other disciplines.

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16 The Persistence of Gender in Campaigns and Elections

Kathleen Rogers and Kira Sanbonmatsu

16.1 Introduction

While only four countries – Rwanda, Cuba, Bolivia, and the United Arab Emirates – have 50% or more women in their lower or single houses of parliament, women have made gains in officeholding globally over time. As of June 2020, 52 countries have at least 30% women in their lower or single house, compared to only 26 countries in 2010. During that time, the United States House of Representatives increased its voting members from 16.8% women to 23.6% women (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020).

Despite these modest improvements in women's officeholding, gender persists as an important category in candidate evaluation. Some scholars argue that gender stereotypes or media bias against women candidates play a relatively insignificant role in elections (Brooks, 2013; Dolan, 2014; Hayes & Lawless, 2016). Others suggest that candidate gender can play a substantial role in elections depending on the electoral context (Campbell & Heath, 2017), partisanship (Sanbonmatsu & Dolan, 2009; Schneider & Bos, 2016), and race and ethnicity (Carey & Lizotte, 2019; Cargile, 2016; Frasure-Yokley, 2018). Scholars continue to research the content of voters' gender stereotypes about candidates. They also investigate the contexts in which gender matters, how it interacts with other categories, and how it is used in decision-making and under what conditions.

16.2 Candidate Evaluation

Most investigations into the political implications of gender are built on scholarship about gender in society. For example, one of the most important accounts of the origins of gender categorisations and stereotypes is social role theory, and particularly Eagly's (1987) work on how occupational differences and the sexual division of labour give rise to gender differences in social behaviour. Individuals associate agentic traits with men and communal traits with women (Bem, 1981; Deaux & Lewis, 1984) – associations that affect social interaction, identity, and self-presentation. Despite significant changes in gender roles and women's advances in the economy and society, gender differences in the division of labour in the home and segregation in jobs and the economy persist. Observing women and men holding different roles at work and at home leads individuals to associate the traits consistent with those roles with women and men, respectively (Eagly, 1987).

Social role theory explains a diverse set of findings about gender and politics (Schneider & Bos, 2019). For example, the traits associated with leadership are consistent with traits expected of men; the reverse is true for women. As a result, women leaders can be punished for violating the public's expectations for female behaviour (i.e., displaying agentic rather than communal traits). Eagly and Karau (2002, p. 574) argue that 'prejudice toward female

leaders follows from the incongruity that many people perceive between the characteristics of women and the requirements of leader roles'.

A full understanding of how gender operates in politics requires nuance and attention to context and to other categories, including categories intimately connected to ideas about gender. For example, experimental studies that manipulate parental status distinguish the work of parenthood from gender in shaping voter inferences about politicians (Bell & Kaufmann, 2015). Combining politics with parenthood seems to place women at a disadvantage, and women in politics are much less likely to have young children than men in politics (Carroll & Sanbonmatsu, 2003). At the same time, women candidates suffer a penalty for being childless (Stalsburg, 2010). Parenthood affects men as well. In the Stalsburg (2010) study, men without children fared *better* than men with children. But Teele et al. (2018) find that voters prefer traditional family arrangements, including candidates who are married and parents; ultimately, these preferences work to men's advantage because women in politics are less likely to have these profiles. However, characteristics of the voters, such as political party, can condition parental effects (Greenlee et al., 2017).

16.2.1 Party and Ideology

One of the central concerns of gender and political psychology scholarship is the disentangling of gender from other core political categories including political party and ideology. In one of the most influential studies in this area, Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) used an experiment to compare the effects of gendered traits (e.g., masculine and feminine traits) versus gendered belief stereotypes (e.g., partisan affiliation, ideology). Overall, they found that traits had more purchase than beliefs in explaining gendered issue competency

stereotypes, or expectations about whether women or men office holders are best suited to handle distinct policy domains.

At the same time, however, politician gender and politician party overlap significantly in the USA: women voters, candidates, and office holders are much more Democratic than Republican. According to the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP, 2020), Democratic women constituted 83% and Republican women just 17% of all women members of Congress in 2020; the imbalance was better at the state legislative level, where 68% of all women state legislators were Democrats and 32% were Republicans.

Sanbonmatsu and Dolan (2009) found that gender stereotypes about traits, issue competency, and policy positions operate within both political parties; however, certain gender stereotypes may help Democratic women's candidacies more than Republican women's candidacies. Depending on what policy issues become salient, party and gender combinations may create different electoral opportunities for different groups of women. Other research suggests that Republican women and Democratic women have access to different electoral strategies because of partisan stereotypes. Whereas Democratic women – by virtue of being Democrats and women – are likely to be perceived as less able to handle terrorist threats than other politicians, Republican women may be advantaged as a result of their partisan affiliation (Holman et al., 2011, 2016).

Other scholars see a more powerful role for politicians' partisan identities compared with gender identities. For example, Hayes (2011) argues that partisan trait stereotypes hold more explanatory power than gender trait stereotypes in the United States. Along the same lines, Dolan (2014) finds that party identification is a stronger predictor of vote choice than gender stereotypes.

The extent to which women candidates compete in all parties and the overall level of women's political representation can also shape whether gender stereotypes matter. For example, in Finland, which is much more accustomed to women in politics than other countries, gender stereotypes do not seem to affect voting behaviour (Lefkofridi et al., 2019).

Pitting the explanatory power of gender stereotypes against partisan stereotypes is one analytic strategy. But as Schneider and Bos (2016) point out, how voters process information about both party and gender may depend on what type of evaluation is at hand. They found that some evaluations are consistent with the idea that party is the dominant consideration, while other evaluations of traits and issues revealed evidence of a parallel processing model.

Winter (2010) argues that ideas about US parties and gender overlap because the traits that the public associates with the two parties are themselves gendered – increasingly so. The Democratic party image – as more compassionate and expert on education and health-care – is gendered female while the Republican party – as stronger and better able to tackle crime and defence issues – is gendered male. The existence of these associations, which he finds operate consciously and unconsciously, allow for a much more influential role for gender in American politics than most scholars envision.

Similar to political party, ideology may coincide or interact with candidate gender. For example, Koch (2000) found that US voters perceived women candidates to be more liberal than they were, with more harmful implications for Republican women than Democratic women. For the most part, however, the belief that women politicians are more liberal is believed to be detrimental to Republican women because they need to win

support of conservative voters in order to secure the nomination (King & Matland, 2003; Matland & King, 2002).

While low-information contexts may prompt voters to rely on stereotypes for candidate information, political knowledge predicts familiarity with gender stereotypes on policy views (Sanbonmatsu, 2003). This finding suggests that some stereotypes originate in the political sphere.

How parties and ideology connect to gender depends on the party system, however, given that 'left' and 'right' parties are defined somewhat differently across countries (O'Brien, 2018). As scholars continue to interrogate how gender and party interact (Cowell-Meyers et al., 2020), including through 'women's parties', attention must be paid to the political and country context in which gender and party stereotypes operate.

16.2.2 Competence and Qualifications

Competence is perhaps the most critical category of candidate evaluation. More so than honesty, integrity, or compassion, a candidate's competence level directly reflects their ability to perform the role and functions of political leadership. To the extent that voters hold stereotypes that women are less competent than men, women candidates are at a major disadvantage in the electoral process.

Scholars do not always agree about the groups that voters compare women candidates and politicians against when evaluating their competence, experience, and leadership abilities. Schneider and Bos (2014) argue that while there is substantial overlap in stereotypes about men and male politicians, female politicians constitute a unique 'subtype' of women with distinct stereotypes. In a survey of US undergraduates, they found greater overlap between the traits ascribed to female politicians and female professionals than between

female politicians and women in general. Compared to male politicians and politicians in general, female politicians scored significantly lower on leadership and competence without demonstrating any advantage on empathy or integrity. As such, female politicians appear to lack positive masculine stereotypes without benefiting from positive feminine stereotypes. These findings may be context-dependent, however. An experiment with a sample of Turkish undergraduates found that fictional women candidates were perceived as being more honest, qualified, and decisive than their male counterparts and better able to handle education and women's rights issues. There were no statistically significant advantages for male candidates in this study, but the advantages for the women candidates did not translate to more votes either (Matland & Tezcür, 2011).

Voters may also shift their standards for women candidates depending on whether they are evaluating their qualifications generally or considering them for a particular leadership role. Bauer (2020) argues that because women in general are not associated with political leadership, women candidates will appear more qualified than a typical woman, leading to higher ratings of women candidates' general political qualifications. When asked about voting for a woman candidate in a specific contest, voters shift their perspective by comparing the candidate to a typical political leader rather than a typical woman, resulting in lower ratings of the woman candidate's qualifications. Across two national US surveys, Bauer (2020) finds that voters may simultaneously describe a woman candidate as having more legislative skills than a male opponent *and* rate her as less electorally viable because of these shifting standards.

Bauer's work builds on psychological studies of stereotypes. For example, Biernat and Manis (1994) demonstrate that gender and

racial stereotypes may be hidden when researchers use subjective measures rather than objective measures. They conclude that subjects take their stereotypes about men and women into account when applying subjective judgements, using different frames of reference for men and women.

Voter stereotypes about gender and competence tend to have an indirect, rather than a direct, effect on vote choice. A slip-up during a campaign, such as a poor debate performance, may lead voters to question the competence of a woman candidate, while they may be more likely to give a man the benefit of the doubt. This may factor into their vote choice, even if it is not determinative. In the absence of campaign mistakes, a woman may not be affected by negative stereotypes about competence because such stereotypes were not made salient for voters (Ditonto, 2017). And since women candidates tend to be more qualified than their male counterparts (Fulton, 2012), observational studies of actual electoral outcomes may underestimate the impact of stereotypes about gender and competence on women's political fortunes.

As voters learn about candidates throughout political campaigns, they pay attention to different information depending on the candidates' gender. Researchers have used Dynamic Process Tracing Environment (DPTE) experiments in which subjects engage in simulated campaigns to understand how voters collect information during campaigns and use that information to make decisions about how to vote. In one such study, Ditonto and colleagues (2014) find that US subjects seek out more competence-related information about women candidates than their male counterparts. A follow-up study by Ditonto (2017) manipulated the candidates' competence by allowing undergraduate and non-student subjects to view summaries of debate performances, newspaper editorials, previous

job performance, and comments from political opponents and staff members. She found that in-party female candidates were rated significantly less favourably than their opponents when they were portrayed as incompetent; the same was not true for in-party male candidates. This did not translate into vote choice, however. Intersectional research has found that US voters distinguish between levels of political experience for White male candidates while evaluating Black and/or female candidates similarly regardless of experience level (Carey and Lizotte, 2019).

16.2.3 Intersectionality

Gender is typically theorised as a singular, separable category. Most gender and politics scholarship from Europe and North America has not incorporated race/ethnicity explicitly. However, psychological research is often based on fictitious candidates who are presumptively White while other studies probe reaction to actual candidates – candidates who are disproportionately of European descent. Respondents in large public opinion surveys, as well as lab experiments, are usually predominantly White, as well. However, social psychological approaches are increasingly used to understand how gender intersects with racial/ethnic categories in politics (Bejarano, 2017). Like gender, race/ethnicity is a highly accessible social construct – although gender may be more accessible (Stangor et al., 1992).

Intersectional theorists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) contend that separating race from gender analytically and politically can erase the experiences of Black women and women of colour more generally. As Black feminist scholars including Crenshaw (1989) and Hill Collins (2000) note, cultural portrayals of women in the United States have always differed by race. Black women, who were originally brought to the United States

as slaves, were never put on a pedestal nor deemed in need of masculine protection; negative, controlling images have predominated instead (Giddings, 1996; Hill Collins, 2000). As Hill Collins observes, ‘controlling images are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life’ (p. 77).

Similarly, indigenous women, Latinas, and Asian American women have been socially and politically constructed throughout American history in both raced and gendered terms in ways that have differed from the construction of White women and from each other (Cohen et al., 1997; Garcia Bedolla et al., 2014; Hardy-Fanta et al., 2016; hooks, 1984; Lien, 2001; Roth, 2004). But intersectionality could position women of colour with advantages, meaning that they are not inherently or perpetually disadvantaged (Bejarano, 2013, 2017; Fraga et al., 2008).

One way that psychological studies have incorporated intersectionality is to experiment with candidates who vary by race and gender. For example, Cargile (2016) found racial differences in how respondents evaluated Latino versus White men and women candidates, with Latina candidates disadvantaged in some evaluations, but advantaged on others, particularly among Latinos. Latina candidates were evaluated less favourably than other candidates among non-Latinos, which may help explain the underrepresentation of Latinas in elected office. And researchers such as Carey and Lizotte (2019) go further in identifying how candidate race and gender can condition the effects of other candidate characteristics, such as experience. Overall, experimental research shows that solely focusing on either race or gender obscures the intersectional nature of stereotypes and the shortcomings of additive models of inequality (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013).

An intersectional framework can also be extended to the dimension of sexuality and how LGBTQ identity intersects with the gender category (Golebiowska, 2001). For example, Doan and Haider-Markel (2010) find differences in how women and men evaluate gay male candidates compared with lesbian candidates, with women respondents providing less negative evaluations of lesbian candidate traits and issue competency compared with men respondents. One implication of their research is that typically 'male' and 'female' strengths depend on sexual identity, which further buttresses calls for an intersectional approach. Although LGBTQ identity, and especially transgender identity, can lead to obstacles for candidates, research also finds that shared policy views can increase voter support (Haider-Markel et al., 2017).

16.2.4 Gender Affinity and Symbolic Representation

Most theories of candidate evaluation assume that candidates' descriptive characteristics, including gender and race, serve as information shortcuts for voters (see also Chapter 8). The use of such heuristics often results in reliance on stereotypes about traits and issue competencies when there is little individuating information available about a candidate. An additional mechanism for the relevance of gender to candidate evaluation is a 'gender affinity effect', which posits that women are a natural source of support for women candidates (Dolan, 2008).

Sanbonmatsu (2002) argues that voters' use of gender as a heuristic can either help or hurt women depending on whether a voter has a 'baseline gender preference' for male or female candidates. In a survey of Ohio residents, most respondents – 51% of men and 62% of women – expressed a general preference for a male or female candidate. A majority of those

expressing a preference indicated the candidate of their own gender. These baseline gender preferences are the product of gender stereotypes and can influence vote choice but also persist beyond the context of an individual electoral contest.

Using American National Election Studies (ANES) data between 1990 and 2000, Dolan (2008) examines whether women know more about and feel more positively towards women candidates and whether these indicators of gender affinity lead to a greater likelihood of voting for a woman candidate. She finds that women know less about candidates than men overall, but this gap closes and even reverses for Democrats when the candidate is a woman. Additionally, women demonstrate greater positive affect when a Democratic candidate is a woman, but women Republicans do not experience the same advantage. As such, to the extent that a gender affinity effect exists, it is often conditioned by partisanship. In a study of the 2010 British election, Campbell and Heath (2017) find that women voters' support for women candidates is dependent on their attitudes about the descriptive representation of women. Women who expressed support for women in politics in the 2010 British Election Study were more likely to vote for a party that put forward a woman candidate than women who did not express such views. In contrast, men's attitudes towards women's political representation were unrelated to their vote choice.

Research on symbolic representation in US politics suggests that the descriptive presence of a competitive woman candidate can convey to voters that the political system is responsive to women's interests (Atkeson, 2003; Reingold & Harrell, 2010). It can also galvanise women based on a sense of shared group identity (Dolan, 2008; Fridkin & Kenney, 2014), or can serve as a source of inspiration for women (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Ladam et al.,

2018). As a result, women voters may be more likely to participate in politics and provide a base of support for future women candidates (Atkeson, 2003; Burns et al., 2001; Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Fridkin & Kenney, 2014; Ladam et al., 2018; Reingold & Harrell, 2010). However, null findings for such effects (Dolan, 2006; Lawless, 2004) have led scholars to focus on the necessary role of partisan congruence (Dolan, 2008; Reingold & Harrell, 2010) and, more recently, racial and ethnic congruence (Simien & Hampson, 2017; Uhlener & Scola, 2016). In other words, women voters tend to be most attuned to women candidates of the same partisan and/or racial group.

In their study of symbolic representation, Uhlener and Scola (2016) find that it is important to consider the intersection of race and gender identities. They write, ‘treating “women” as a single group is misleading. The politically relevant experiences of African American women diverge widely from those of White women, and “race” has been a defining cleavage in the United States for far longer than gender’ (p. 233). By separating their analysis by race-gender groups, they find strong positive relationships between increases in the percentage of each race-gender group in the state legislatures and voter turnout among that specific race-gender group. They further find that, while White women also turn out in higher numbers when the percentage of women overall increases in the state legislatures, African American women’s turnout levels are only responsive to increases in the percentage of Black women. Simien and Hampson (2017) also find racial and ethnic differences in women’s responses to Hillary Clinton’s candidacy in the 2008 Democratic presidential primary. They found that Black women and Latinas demonstrated greater positive affect and feelings of pride in response to Clinton’s candidacy than did White women. However, when women experienced positive

affect and pride in response to Clinton, only White women and Latinas were more likely to proselytise and state an intention to vote in the primary election.

16.2.5 Sexism and Violence against Women in Politics

Current research on the role of sexism in campaigns and elections often relies on measures of ‘ambivalent sexism’ devised by Glick and Fiske (1996). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) is a 22-item self-report scale, including two 11-item subscales that measure both hostile and benevolent forms of sexism (see also Chapter 17). Glick and Fiske (1997, p. 121) write:

Hostile sexism seeks to justify male power, traditional gender roles, and men’s exploitation of women as sexual objects through derogatory characterizations of women. *Benevolent sexism*, in contrast, relies on kinder and gentler justifications of male dominance and prescribed gender roles; it recognizes men’s dependence on women . . . and embraces a romanticized view of sexual relationships with women.

While benevolent sexism may seem to have a positive charge, both hostile and benevolent sexism bolster patriarchal social structures and diminish women’s opportunities. Other scales developed around the same time, such as the Modern Sexism scale (Swim et al., 1995), similarly aim to tap into subtler negative attitudes about women. Glick and Fiske’s measure of ambivalent sexism was initially developed using studies of US undergraduates. Still, they have been used successfully in studies of non-students and cross-nationally to predict positive and negative attitudes towards, and stereotypes about, women (Glick & Fiske, 2011).

The 2016 US presidential election inspired a great deal of research on the role of sexism in

Donald Trump's victory against Hillary Clinton. For example, Valentino et al. (2018) argue that sexism was an underrated contributor to the 2016 presidential election outcome. They note that sexism was particularly salient in 2016 because of the historic nature of Hillary Clinton's candidacy and Donald Trump's sexist rhetoric. Across three studies, they find that hostile sexism is strongly related to support for Trump – more so than authoritarianism and equally strong as ethnocentrism among White respondents. They also found that feelings of anxiety substantially reduced the impact of sexism on support for Trump. Counter to their expectations, anger did not significantly increase the impact of sexism on voting for Trump, but anger did increase the likelihood that voters high in sexism would turn out to vote. Another two studies by Cassese and Holman (2019) examined the impact of Trump's accusation of Clinton playing the 'woman card' on candidate evaluations and voter engagement. They found that exposure to the 'woman card' accusation led hostile sexists to rate Clinton less favourably, become less likely to vote for her, and be more likely to participate in politics than hostile sexists not exposed to the accusation. Benevolent sexists exposed to the accusation rated both candidates more favourably and were more likely to support Clinton.

While racial and ethnic differences in women's voting patterns have long been evident, the 2016 election drew considerably more attention to the issue. Weighted ANES data puts the percentage of women who voted for Trump at 42%, but this number includes 52% of White women and only 15% of women of colour. Frasure-Yokley (2018) finds that – controlling for racial resentment, attitudes towards immigrants, economic anxiety, and partisanship – hostile sexism predicts a vote for Trump among women. When disaggregated by race, however, this finding only

persists among White women. Taken together, research on the 2016 election suggests that sexism can impact the vote choices of both men and women, but it is crucial that scholars do not lump together White women and women of colour.

New research by comparative scholars Krook and Restrepo Sanín (2019) describes violence against women in politics (VAWIP) as a distinct form of political violence perpetrated against women because they are women and because they are involved in politics. VAWIP can take various forms, including physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and semiotic. Drawing from the FBI's *Hate Crime Data Collection Guidelines and Training Manual*, Krook and Restrepo Sanín offer six criteria to identify cases of violence motivated by gender bias: (1) the offender made statements indicating bias, (2) the offender left bias-related drawings or symbols, (3) the victim was involved in activities relating to the identity in question, (4) the offender has a record of involvement in a similar incident, (5) a substantial portion of the community perceived that the incident was motivated by bias, and (6) the victim was evaluated negatively based on a double standard. These criteria allow scholars and practitioners to differentiate between general political violence and gender-motivated political violence so that appropriate policies and penalties can be enacted. Kuperberg (2018) builds on this work by applying an intersectional lens to VAWIP. She argues that such violence can also involve structures such as 'ability, sexuality, race and ethnicity, religion, national origin, language, religiosity, age, or geography' (p. 688).

16.3 Campaigns and Strategy

Campaigns may activate the gender category. But campaigns potentially reshape gendered meanings as well. Dittmar's (2015) study of

US political consultants and the internal workings of statewide campaigns found strong evidence that candidates and their campaign teams are conscious of, and strategically respond to, voters' gender stereotypes. Following the tradition of scholars such as Kahn (1996) and Fox (1997), Dittmar revealed that most political consultants in a national survey – and Democratic consultants more than Republican consultants – see gendered advantages with respect to those traits and issues candidates portray in their campaigns. By tailoring campaigns to accommodate or assuage voter stereotypes, candidates and their teams must take responsibility for their part in reproducing gender. Dittmar identifies campaigns themselves as 'gendered institutions', even while allowing for dynamism via candidates' strategic decision-making. This means that departures from expected, gendered presentations in campaigns potentially disrupt conventional understandings of gender (Dittmar, 2015, 2019).

Using an experiment to manipulate campaign messages, Schneider (2014) found that men and women can successfully use 'gender-bending' campaign strategies to persuade and prime voters, running on issues that are more typically associated with the other gender. Schneider thus confirms that candidates' strategic decisions are consequential. But gendered repertoires persist to some extent: she found hints of an overall male advantage and evidence that women seemed to benefit more than men when running on 'women's issues'. Candidates must also defend themselves from their opponents. Cassese and Holman (2018) show that expectations about party, as well as gender, can condition the effects of campaign attacks. In their study, Democratic women suffered the most when violating voters' expectations about traits and issues. Bauer (2017) also finds that counter-stereotypic strategies interact with party.

Scholars have also investigated how candidate gender can affect public perceptions more broadly. The presence of women candidates in elections can have positive effects on the electoral system because of gender stereotypes about women's honesty and ethics. For example, an experiment by Barnes and Beaulieu (2014) showed that the presence of women can lessen public perceptions of corruption. Voters – particularly men – who did not share the candidate's partisanship were most likely to be positively affected by the presence of the female candidate.

16.4 Conclusion

As this review demonstrates, the role of gender in candidate evaluations and voting behaviour is often conditional on a variety of factors. Campbell and Heath (2017) note that 'the link – if any – between candidate sex and voting behavior is not straightforward and is also highly context-specific' (p. 210). They point out that, in contrast to 2001 and 2005, candidate sex only had a significant effect on vote choice in the 2010 British election, a year when a record number of women candidates ran and won. Likewise, in the USA, candidate sex played a larger role in 1992 than in other years because of a record number of women candidates and winners (Dolan, 2004). The decision to vote for a woman candidate may depend on the partisanship of candidates and voters (Sanbonmatsu & Dolan, 2009; Schneider & Bos, 2016), the race and ethnicity of candidates and voters (Carey & Lizotte, 2019; Cargile, 2016; Frasure-Yokley, 2018), or feminist or sexist attitudes held by voters (Campbell & Heath, 2017; Cassese & Holman, 2019; Valentino et al., 2018). Moreover, gender stereotypes can be applied in complex ways (Bauer, 2020; Schneider & Bos, 2014) and may only have an indirect

effect on voting behaviour through information-search patterns (Ditonto, 2017).

While the research covered in this review generally treats gender as a dichotomous variable, often interchangeably with sex, it is possible to operationalise gender in more complex ways (McDermott, 2016; Oliver & Conroy, 2020). For example, Bittner and Goodyear-Grant (2017) compare a traditional dichotomous sex variable to a gender continuum measure, which asked survey respondents to place themselves on a scale ranging from 0 (100% masculine) and 100 (100% feminine). They found that 77% of men and 68% of women placed themselves within 10 points of the masculine and feminine ends of the continuum, respectively. About 12%–13% of respondents placed themselves in the middle or crossed over to the opposite side of the continuum. Using the dichotomous measure, women appeared more liberal than men on various policy issues; however, the results were less consistent with the gender continuum measure. Masculine women appeared to be more left-leaning than masculine men, and feminine men appeared to be more left-leaning than feminine women.

Distinguishing between sex and gender, therefore, presents new puzzles for future research. As gender and politics scholars refine their measures and questions to dig into the specific contexts and ways in which gender matters in elections, it becomes clear that gender remains a highly relevant analytic construct.

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17 The Politics of Abortion, Pregnancy, and Motherhood

Robbie M. Sutton, Amy Murphy, Aino Petterson,
and Karen M. Douglas

17.1 Introduction

Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* was written in 1985 as a response to the rise of the American religious right. It portrays a conservative theocracy that has been installed after a violent revolution in the United States. The revolution followed shortly on the heels of a catastrophic collapse in human fertility, and may have been triggered by it. Women who remain fertile are highly prized. They are also kidnapped, enslaved as 'Handmaids', and ritually raped in order to produce offspring for the leaders of the revolution. The regime's Biblical justifications for this brutality may be hypocritical and paper-thin, but are Biblical all the same: its warped and extreme practices are cloaked in the legitimacy of old religious (and political) ideas.

Though Atwood's dystopia is racist, repressive, and rigidly hierarchical, its infamy has been earned above all by its treatment of women. In 2015, three decades after the novel was published, at a time when extreme, authoritarian, and religiously justified conservatism seemed to be in the ascendancy (see also Chapter 18), it inspired a hit TV series by the same name. A few years later, a Booker Prize-winning sequel, *Testaments*, was published. It also inspired protests and provided them with a new iconography. After President Trump – in one of his first acts as president – signed an executive order restricting funding for women's reproductive health,

feminists took to the streets in the vivid red gowns and white bonnets of Atwood's handmaids (Bell, 2018; British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 2017). Ever since, the attire has been a symbol of feminist resistance.

This chapter, through the lens of psychological science, examines much the same issues as *The Handmaid's Tale*. We review research literatures in social and political psychology that bear on the contentious politics of pregnancy, abortion, and motherhood. We review evidence that motherhood has been reified across cultures, history, and prehistory. We argue that this reification is underpinned by some basic ideas about men's dependence on women and the relative scarcity of women's reproductive capacity. These ideas apparently venerate women, yet ensure their subordination. In no small part, they do this by ordaining the moral subordination of women. As moral patients, women's interests are given lower priority than their foetus or child's. As moral agents, women's choices are undermined (Ntontis, 2020), curtailed, and placed, to varying degrees, in the hands of others.

In the following pages, we briefly review recent and historical examples of these phenomena, before reviewing theoretical frameworks that help to explain the moral subordination of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood. We then review the growing body of psychological research that these theories have inspired. We conclude by discussing the implications of this work for

further theory and research, gender relations, and political processes more generally.

17.2 Examples

Throughout history, numerous cultural practices exemplify the value placed in women's fertility, and how this leads, ironically, to their oppression. The reverence of female fertility is to be found in most if not all religions and dates back at least to exaggerated female forms with swollen breasts and genitalia carved into mammoth ivory in Ice Age Europe: these 'fertility symbols' are some of the earliest artefacts made by human beings with no practical purpose (Conard, 2009). Forced marriages (Choudhry et al., 2012), forced pregnancies (Markovic, 2007), virginity testing (Kelly, 2002), and the strict social control of the sexuality of girls and women – including pressures to dress 'modestly', avoid interactions with male peers, and to express no curiosity about sex (Fox, 1977, Marcus & Harper, 2015) – are just some examples of society's valuation of women's fertility and associated curtailment of their rights.

In general, the past decades have seen gradual improvements in women's reproductive rights across the globe (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2020). However, recent political developments both in the USA and Europe dispel the notion that the road to women's reproductive autonomy is either straightforward or right around the bend. Several states in the USA are currently passing legislation intended to make access to abortion and other reproductive health services near impossible (BBC, 2019). Some states have attempted to introduce so-called heartbeat bills which effectively ban abortion after six weeks, before many women even know they are pregnant, while others like Alabama have passed a blanket ban on abortion (Glenza, 2020a). Ohio went as far as passing a bill that would allow

charging doctors with 'abortion murder' should they fail to reimplant an ectopic pregnancy, despite this procedure having no basis in medical science (Glenza, 2020b).

These infringements on women's reproductive rights are not unique to the USA. Several European countries have seen similar moves to restrict women's access to reproductive health-care. In 2016, further restrictions on the already limited abortion rights in Poland – in which abortion is only permitted in cases where there is a risk to the woman's health or she has been the victim of sexual assault – led thousands of women onto the streets in a strike against the proposed changes (Petó & Grzebalska, 2016). Similarly, Slovakia recently proposed several restrictions on both information and access to abortion (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2019). Although some countries have put much effort into restricting women's reproductive rights, the effect this has on actual abortion rates is questionable. Research shows that restrictive abortion laws do not necessarily mean lower abortion rates (Sedgh et al., 2012). In contrast, the impact of restrictive abortion laws on women's safety is clear – every year, about 68,000 women die globally from unsafe abortions at the hand of illicit practitioners (Grimes et al., 2006). The majority of unsafe abortions occur in less developed countries (Grimes et al., 2006). However, restrictive abortion laws have cost lives in more developed countries, too. For example, Savita Halappanavar died from septicaemia in Ireland after being refused an abortion following a miscarriage that rendered her 17-week foetus unviable (Filipovic, 2012).

All these examples speak to Glick and Fiske's (1996) theorising that societies have a vested interest in attempting to control women's sexuality and fertility. The following sections of this chapter will review research on the different factors that shape attitudes to women's rights reproductive in more detail.

17.3 Attitudes to Abortion

There is perhaps no more vivid example of the curtailment of women's choices over reproduction and fertility than restrictions on abortion. Early research on opposition to abortion rights had a distinctly sociological flavour and linked it to many social and demographic variables. Using data from NORC (National Opinion Research Center) surveys conducted in the USA, Granberg and Granberg (1980) found that more educated people had more liberal attitudes towards abortion. On the other hand, Granberg (1991) found that being a practising Catholic and having a Catholic spouse was associated with more restrictive attitudes. Using General Social Survey data, Walzer (1994) replicated these findings and also found that Black, more educated, and urban women were more supportive of legalised abortion. Not all of these demographics (e.g., race) had the same effect among men.

Though important, these findings did not provide a theoretical understanding of social and psychological mechanisms that shape attitudes to abortion and which might explain the roles of variables such as religion. Such an account was put forward by Reiss (1980, 1986), who proposed that abortion attitudes need to be understood in the context of wider gender role ideologies that spring from the relationship between social-cultural forces and sexual attitudes. These gender ideologies include traditional (vs egalitarian) beliefs about women in the workplace and in political roles.

Inspired by this approach, Wang and Buffalo (2004) examined changes in attitudes to abortion in America between 1972 and 1998. Some fluctuations were found in these attitudes, though the public generally became more supportive of abortion as time wore on. These changes were underpinned by the decline of traditional gender role attitudes,

increasing levels of education, lower levels of fundamentalist belief, and decreasing number of children ideally preferred per family. Education, in this study, predicted both egalitarian gender roles and desired number of children. Wang and Buffalo noted that more educated individuals may be more adaptable to changing political and social environments than those who were less educated.

The recognition that attitudes to abortion are steeped in gender role ideology has informed psychological research on the topic, although this research emerged only recently and remains surprisingly scant. The psychological research, under the influence of ambivalent sexism theory and research on attitudes to pregnancy (Sutton et al., 2011, reviewed in Section 17.4) focused on the role of benevolent sexism. Huang et al. (2014) theorised that because benevolent sexism reveres motherhood, benevolent sexism should be negatively associated with support for women's reproductive rights both in the case of elective abortion (e.g., abortion regardless of the reason) and traumatic abortion (e.g., when the woman's life is endangered). In contrast, hostile sexism should only correlate negatively with support for traumatic abortion, due to its punitive component. Their findings provided strong support for these predictions.

In a later investigation, the researchers provided further evidence for the adverse effects of benevolent sexism on support for women's reproductive rights. In a nationally representative longitudinal panel of 12,299 New Zealanders, Huang et al. (2016) found that benevolent sexism had cross-lagged effects on opposition to both elective and traumatic abortion, while hostile sexism did not. In a second study, they found that attitudes towards motherhood mediated the association between benevolent sexism and opposition to

abortion, supporting the proposition that it is the reverence of motherhood in particular that accounts for this effect.

In more recent research across several studies, we (Sutton et al., 2020) also found that benevolent sexism was a stronger predictor of abortion attitudes than hostile sexism. Further, this relationship was mediated by attitudes to motherhood. Whereas Huang et al.'s (2016) mediating variable focused on the reification of motherhood as the highest possible calling for women, ours (Sutton et al., 2020) focused specifically on the doctrine of maternal sacrifice: the notion that women's interests should be sacrificed when they are perceived to come into conflict with their children's.

Beyond opposition to abortion per se, women's reproductive autonomy can also be restricted by men assuming control over women's decisions. For example, in some countries spousal authorisation is required in order for women to have abortions (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2020). Further, in both the USA and the UK, some men have attempted to prevent their partners from having abortions (BBC, 2001; The Herald, 1997). Across two correlational studies, Petterson and Sutton (2018) found that hostile sexism was positively associated with the endorsement of men's control in decisions about abortion and childbirth. Not only did hostile sexism predict support for a man's right to veto a woman's decision to have an abortion, but it was also associated with the view that a man should not be obligated to support an unwanted child financially. Rather than merely coming down on a particular side of the abortion debate, hostile sexists seemingly favour *any* position that grants men control over women's reproductive health.

Any system of social control requires a system of sanctions, as well as incentives such as the esteem that benevolent sexism can give to women. We have already reviewed examples

of the legal and social consequences that confront women who exercise their reproductive rights. Across two experimental studies, Pacilli and colleagues (2018) uncovered some of the psychological underpinnings of these consequences. A woman's decision to have an abortion was met with increased moral outrage both towards her and her partner. Further, the researchers found that the decision to have an abortion resulted in the dehumanisation of both the woman and her partner. Importantly, negative reactions also extended to the perception of the woman's professional competence in traditional female jobs.

As we might expect of an attitude linked to support for traditional gender ideologies, opposition to abortion seems to underpin policies that have detrimental consequences for women. Evidence for the harm that restrictions on abortion can do to women comes from the comprehensive Turnaway Study (Foster, 2020). This study tracks outcomes for women who were granted versus denied abortions across the USA. It shows, contrary to 'abortion myths' associated with opposition to abortion (Berglas et al., 2017; Cates, 1982; Ralph et al., 2017; Swartz et al., 2020), that women who have abortions do not experience negative outcomes such as adverse mental health outcomes. In fact, women who have abortions tend, one year later, to be less prone to anxiety and low self-esteem, less likely to be tied to an abusive partner, and more likely to have aspirational life plans than their counterparts who were denied their right to choose (e.g., Biggs et al., 2017; Foster, 2020; Foster et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2014).

17.4 Proscriptive Attitudes towards Pregnancy

The research we have reviewed so far shows that opposition to abortion rights is located in a wider set of gender attitudes and restrictions

on women's autonomy. Opposition to abortion is not the only proscriptive attitude to women's choices during pregnancy. Restrictions and taboos apply to a much wider range of behaviours, and appear to be founded on similar ideological underpinnings. In an early study, Sutton et al. (2011) culled from various sources a range of behaviours that, according to evidence or myth, present a risk to the foetus during pregnancy. These behaviours spanned international travel, keeping house plants, using a microwave, exercising, having sex (including oral sex), sleeping on one's side, and sleeping on one's back. Participants were asked to rate how safe they thought these behaviours were for the foetus. They also rated how likely they would be to intervene on pregnant women's choices in hypothetical scenarios based on actual cases that had been reported in the media. For example, participants were asked whether, if they were working in a supermarket delicatessen, they would serve a pregnant woman unpasteurised cheese. Or, if they were working in a gym, whether they would allow a pregnant woman to work out. Some weeks prior, participants had completed the ambivalent sexism inventory (including hostile and benevolent sexism) as part of a battery of measures.

Building on ambivalent sexism theory and anthropological analyses of gender relations, Sutton et al. (2011) reasoned that benevolent sexism motivates the willingness to intervene to restrict women's autonomy (e.g., by refusing service in delicatessens, bars, and gyms). Their reasoning was that benevolent sexism is rooted at least in part in the value of women's finite ability to have children. In other words, women are wonderful *because* their childbearing capacity is scarce and has important value to the community. They argued that the value placed by benevolent sexism in women's reproductive capacity motivates the taboos that have surrounded pregnancy across cultures in

an apparent effort to avoid miscarriage, stillbirth, or foetal deformity. Thus, they predicted, and found, that benevolent sexism would be associated with an exaggerated perception of risk to the foetus in pregnant women's behaviour, and that this would mediate its relationship with the inclination to restrict their autonomy. In follow-up studies, Murphy et al. (2011) found that women who flout even arbitrary, unwarranted restrictions are judged as worthy of punishment. Thus, these restrictions can be seen, just like restrictive attitudes to abortion, as part of a system of control that must be enforced by sanctions.

While the attitudes towards pregnant women's behaviours in our studies (Murphy et al., 2011; Sutton et al., 2011) were hypothetical, Hebl et al. (2007) conducted a field experiment to explore behavioural discrimination targeting pregnant women in real-world settings. In this study, a confederate posing as a job applicant in a department store was treated more rudely when she wore a prosthesis that made her look pregnant. When she posed as a customer, on the other hand, she was treated in a more, rather than less, friendly way when she appeared to be pregnant. In a follow-up study, being led to believe that job applicants were pregnant caused participants to rate their applications to stereotypically masculine, well-paid jobs (e.g., corporate lawyers) unfavourably. The same manipulation had the opposite effect when participants considered applications to stereotypically feminine jobs (e.g., family lawyers). Though Hebl et al. (2007) took some care to match the gendered jobs on pay and prestige, this is not, of course, the case in the 'real' job market in which feminine jobs often attract lower pay and prestige. This pattern of bias can therefore be expected to work against pregnant women's career prospects. Further, these effects were stronger among participants who scored highly on hostile and benevolent sexism. These studies

demonstrate that restrictive attitudes to pregnant women, and those associated with ambivalent sexism, may not only limit women's autonomy and social standing, but also their economic welfare.

17.5 The Motherhood Penalty

Restrictive attitudes towards women during pregnancy impinge in various ways on women's wealth and welfare. Nothing, however, does more damage to women's relative economic standing than becoming a mother. The *motherhood penalty* is the name given to this drop in women's pay, job prospects, and career progression (Anderson et al., 2003; Budig & England, 2001; Correll et al., 2007). According to the National Women's Law Center, mothers in the USA make only 70 cents to every dollar paid to fathers. The motherhood penalty also has high costs for women's career opportunities, with 60% of working Americans reporting that career opportunities are given to less-qualified employees instead of working mothers who may be more skilled (Bright Horizons, 2018). Similarly, 69% of working Americans state that working mothers are more likely to be passed up for a new job than other employees (Bright Horizons, 2018).

All in all, the motherhood penalty is a major contributor to the stubborn persistence of gender inequality. In many countries, the gap between men and women's earnings has shrunk to small, even negligible, levels, only to widen again when they become parents (Misra & Strader, 2013). Various explanations have been laid out for the motherhood penalty. All of these explanations circle back, in our view, to the extraordinary cultural value placed on motherhood. Ironically, since motherhood is highly prized as a service to children, men, and the community, women end up paying a heavy price for it.

Some of these explanations focus on mothers' values and choices. Gaunt (2008) found that women see themselves as better suited and capable of performing the core, time-consuming tasks of childcare. As a result, some women keep men away from these tasks, in a pattern of behaviour known as *maternal gatekeeping* (Gaunt & Pinho, 2018). Gaunt and Scott (2014) found that the more women prized their identity as mothers, the more hours their partners worked in paid employment, and the fewer they put into looking after children. Thus, the social value of the motherhood identity to women may cause them to maintain and guard it voraciously. Similarly, a prominent explanation for the motherhood penalty is the so-called work-effort theory, which suggests that women's greater devotion to parenting has a detrimental effect on their productivity, leading to reduced pay and promotion prospects (Becker, 1985).

Other explanations suggest that, even though women's choices play some role in the motherhood penalty, these choices are not entirely voluntary. If women's work effort declines as a result of fatigue and interrupted work schedules arising from childcare and domestic duties, this may be due to their partners' refusal to play an equal role at home. Similarly, mothers' reduced participation and commitment to paid work may reflect a rational response to pay inequality. That is, if fathers' paid work is more lucrative, it makes sense from an economic point of view for mothers to focus less on pay and career and more on the home (Lips & Lawson, 2009). Further, research shows that there is a powerful incentive for women to make career sacrifices when they become mothers. Just as non-traditional pregnant women are reviled (Hebl et al., 2007), so are non-traditional mothers. Even when they choose to commit fully to their careers, their progress is likely to be hindered by the discriminatory reactions of others.

Discrimination against working mothers was demonstrated across two experimental studies by Heilman and Okimoto (2008). They found that working mothers were evaluated especially low in competence compared to working fathers and non-parents of both genders. Further, mediation analyses revealed that lower ratings in competence accounted for the negative bias towards mothers of the screening recommendation for a promotion. Another experimental study by Correll et al. (2007) showed a similar negative effect on ratings of competence. The researchers also found that, compared to working fathers, working mothers received a lower starting salary. Research further shows that the bias against working mothers is present even when there is clear evidence of their competence and commitment to paid work, in which case they are rated as lower in warmth and likeability, and higher in interpersonal hostility (Benard & Correll, 2010).

Not only are mothers negatively evaluated in terms of their work role, but they also face bias in terms of their ability to parent. In four experimental studies, Okimoto and Heilman (2012) found that working mothers, but not working fathers, were rated as less effective parents when working in a traditionally male occupation. This effect was especially pronounced when the woman was working out of personal choice and was successful in her role.

One explanation for the persistence of the negative evaluations of working mothers is so-called motherhood myths – a set of ideas that entail that women's work threatens children and family life (Verniers & Vala, 2018). In turn, these ideas justify the opposition to working mothers' careers. Using a large-scale dataset with 51,632 respondents from 18 different countries, Verniers and Vala (2018) found that motherhood myths mediated the relationship between sexism and opposition to women's

career advancement. The researchers argue that the endorsement of these motherhood myths can legitimise existing inequalities and hinder women's economic participation. Central to this process is the veneration of self-sacrificial motherhood as women's highest calling.

17.6 Politics

For the most part in this chapter, we have conceptualised attitudes to abortion, pregnancy, and motherhood as political in the sense that they are *gender political*: they are informed by gender ideology and contribute directly or indirectly to gender inequality. Of course, in some parts of the world they are also *party political*. One study of the 1992 presidential election showed that significantly more pro-life Democrats defected to vote for the Republican Party than pro-choice Republicans defected to vote for the Democratic Party. This illustrates the impact that the abortion issue has on voting, and explains why a pro-life position remains a major vote winner for the Republican Party, even though most people in the USA are broadly pro-choice (Abramowitz, 1995). Against prevailing social trends, more Republicans self-identified as pro-life in 2020 than in 1996 (Gallup, 2020). Abortion has become a defining issue for the Republican Party that wins it lasting loyalty and votes.

The abortion issue affects party and national politics in other ways. We have seen how President Trump clamped down on funding for women's reproductive autonomy in one of his first executive orders. Similarly, other right-wing populist regimes in Poland, Slovakia, and Brazil acted early after gaining power to restrict women's reproductive autonomy (Grzebalska & Petó, 2018; Žuk & Žuk, 2017). The priority given by these regimes to this issue suggests that it is a more

animating force in right-wing populism than is immediately obvious. In regimes with authoritarian tendencies, this could be understood as a nostalgia for real or imagined pasts in which men called the shots and family and social structures were simpler and more patriarchal.

This points to another sense in which attitudes to abortion, pregnancy, and motherhood are political: they are rooted in political ideology. In fairly obvious ways, they connect to conservative ideology by helping to justify and perpetuate economic and social inequalities. Indeed, attitudes to abortion have been linked to conservative political orientation and related individual differences in social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism (Chambers et al., 2006; Ho & Penney, 1992; MacInnis et al., 2014; Osborne & Davies, 2009; Rye & Underhill, 2019). Though linked to authoritarianism, abortion and related attitudes may also be associated with an ideological system that appears its direct opposite: libertarianism. Indeed, our recent work has uncovered a surprising set of relationships between various attitudes towards abortion and a different political standpoint: libertarianism (Chalmers et al., 2021). Despite the avowed libertarian commitment to personal choice and liberty, we found no relation, in two well-powered studies, between libertarianism and support for abortion rights. In contrast, libertarian identity and ideology were associated with support for men being able to veto women's reproductive choices. This relationship was mediated by hostile sexism. This suggests that libertarians tend to have an aversion to women, and so might not have them in mind when championing the rights and freedoms of the individual. Libertarians also supported financial abortion, which as we have seen is the notion that men do not need to provide financial support for a child they wanted

aborted (Pettersen & Sutton, 2018). This finding was less surprising, since financial abortion is often advocated using libertarian arguments (Brake, 2005; Deveny, 2016; McCulley, 1998; Taylor, 2016). Importantly, however, this effect was also mediated by hostile sexism. Further, this and our other effects remained significant when we adjusted for the tendency for libertarians to identify as politically conservative.

17.7 Concluding Remarks

The Handmaid's Tale struck a chord in the 1980s and even more loudly in the second decade of the 21st century. Its author, Margaret Atwood, took care to ensure that each manifestation of the oppression of women it portrayed had really occurred at least once, somewhere. It was therefore a prime example of art imitating life. Life also imitates art: as we have seen in the present chapter, many of Atwood's intuitions are broadly supported by psychological research. The oppression of women's reproductive autonomy is motivated by ideological systems that prize women's reproductive capacity and reify self-sacrificial motherhood as the apotheosis of womanhood. This exaltation of a certain kind of motherhood appears to have a profound effect on the economic and social disparities between men and women. Similarly, restrictions on women's autonomy during pregnancy impair women's physical, social, and economic well-being. As well as being underpinned by broad ideological systems, opposition to women's reproductive autonomy helps animate and sustain conservative and populist interests in electoral politics (see also Chapter 28). In sum, achieving gender inequality requires a widespread re-evaluation of attitudes towards pregnancy and motherhood.

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18 Religiosity and Openness to Authoritarian Governance

Ariel Malka

As forces structuring political life, religion and democracy seem to represent a stark contrast. Democracy has characterised a portion of the world's political systems for what amounts to a sliver of history. It involves checks on power, commitment to procedural rules, and compromise on matters of deep social importance. And it consists of institutions and norms that check or redirect proclivities for tribalism and out-group animosity. In contrast, religion has been central to human social organisation and the way power is distributed since the earliest recorded history. For many people, religion satisfies needs to find certainty and clear purpose in a complex and unpredictable world. It is also frequently at the heart of important social identities that structure behaviour and experience, often in ways that defy commitment to impartiality and deference to secular institutional procedures.

This chapter addresses a straightforward question about the link between religion and democracy: are religious citizens more open to authoritarian governance than secular citizens within countries around the world? This question has importance as both a theoretical and practical matter. On the theoretical front, social scientists have long sought to understand whether religiosity and related attributes organically relate to anti-democratic sentiment (e.g., Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1996; Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012; Canetti-Nisim, 2004; Ludeke et al., 2013). As a practical matter, understanding the link between religious commitment and democracy attitudes

can shed light on risks to the development and preservation of liberal democracy. A range of leaders who have taken authoritarian actions in their societies – such as Viktor Orban, Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi, and Donald Trump – attract and mobilise support with appeals to traditional religion. Others, of course, do not make religion central to their appeals. Are religious people especially amenable to a leader using autocratic means to achieve desired ends?

Writing a few weeks prior to the 2020 United States election, I note that this seems to be an important time for Americans in particular to reckon with this type of question. The United States is characterised by sharp political polarisation with a clear cultural-religious dimension (Mason, 2018). Within this polarised context, Americans seem to prioritise partisan and ideological considerations over democratic principles in their political behaviour (Graham & Svobik, 2020). Moreover, the major American political party that appeals most to religious citizens has contributed disproportionately to the recent degradation of American democratic norms (e.g., Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018) and is dominated, as of this writing, by a leader who has remained overwhelmingly popular among his partisan base while flagrantly defying democratic values. How open different ideological groups are to authoritarian governance will of course vary across political and social contexts. And, historically, both secular and religious ideologies have motivated authoritarianism. But political

psychologists should be open to the possibility that there are attitudinal correlates of anti-democratic sentiment within mass publics that largely transcend political contexts. In this chapter I evaluate evidence addressing whether religiosity is one such correlate. I do so with a focus on measurement and analytic issues that often complicate the interpretation of findings in this area, and I provide substantive and methodological suggestions for future research.

18.1 Religiosity

Religion manifests itself in a great variety of experiences and behaviours. This makes it challenging to settle on a single definition of religion, and likely underlies the widespread appeal of multidimensional conceptualisations of religiosity (e.g., Batson & Ventis, 1982; Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012, 2013a). Of particular relevance to the potential undesirable social consequences of religion, some have distinguished religious fundamentalism from more benign expressions of religiosity, using fundamentalism items such as, ‘God’s true followers must remember that he requires them to constantly fight Satan and Satan’s allies on this earth’ (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992, p. 131) and ‘The Bible is the final and complete guide to morality; it contains God’s answers to all important questions about right and wrong’ (McFarland, 1989, p. 328).

In contrast, I presently conceptualise religiosity in the bare-bones way characteristic of survey research (e.g., Malka, 2013). First, I define religion as a belief system involving notions of supernatural power, sacredness, and transcendence, and the feelings, thoughts, and behaviours that are associated with commitment to such a belief system (Saroglou & Cohen, 2013; Wulff, 1997). I then regard religiosity as individual differences in behavioural and experiential commitment to religion. In the studies reviewed here, religiosity is generally

operationalised as one or more behavioural (e.g., religious attendance), experiential (e.g., personal importance of religion), belief (e.g., belief in God), or identity-based (e.g., considering oneself religious) manifestations of religious commitment. Sometimes this operationalisation is unidimensional and sometimes it is multidimensional.

I see two advantages to this type of bare-bones conceptualisation. One is widespread applicability of the components and indicators across religious cultures around the world. Belief that the Bible is inerrant is characteristic of religious belief within some traditions, but not others (Layman & Green, 2006). The same is true of belief in Satan, allegiance to supreme religious figures such as the Pope or a caliph, and adherence to specific dietary restrictions. However, individual differences in subjective importance of religion, participation in religious ritual, and prayer capture variation in a general religiosity construct that is broadly applicable across religious traditions. The second advantage of this sort of conceptualisation is that indicators such as these are not inherently tied to the liberal democratic mindset, as is the case with some religious fundamentalism items that tap intolerance of those with divergent religious beliefs or acceptance of absolute moral imperatives to block actions that contravene religious strictures. The religiosity indicators on which I presently focus, on the other hand, are neither inherently democratic nor undemocratic.

18.2 Democracy Attitudes

Narrowly defined, democracy is a political system characterised by free elections that determine who holds power. But a polity can hold regular elections while institutions and norms are in place that assure uninterrupted rule by one group regardless of the public’s preferences. This is accomplished by harassing

or jailing political opponents, weakening or dismantling institutions that constrain executive power, rigging electoral rules, punishing critical speech and reporting, and so on. Therefore, democracy scholars typically opt for a conceptualisation that is described as ‘liberal democracy’ or a ‘thick definition’ of democracy, which, in addition to elections, involves separation of powers, protection of minority rights, free speech and press, institutional constraints on executive power, impartial application of the law, freedom from unjustified detention, and other features related to rule of law and open political competition (e.g., Diamond, 2008; see also Chapter 29). Of course, no country is or has been fully democratic when applying this definition. However, democracy, defined this way, may be represented as a latent continuum on which countries at a particular time vary (e.g., Lindberg et al., 2014).

What, then, are attitudes towards democracy? A key distinction here is that between abstract allegiance to the concept of ‘democracy’ and unconditional rejection of authoritarian actions. Most people around the world will say in response to survey questions that ‘democracy’ is desirable. However, a number of these people will also report an openness to, or will fail to firmly reject, authoritarian alternatives (e.g., Graham & Svobik, 2020; Inglehart, 2003). Also, a number of these people will express unwillingness to tolerate the basic democratic rights of disliked groups (e.g., Gibson & Gouws, 2005; Sullivan et al., 1982). Such people might continue to express support for ‘democracy’ because they are misdefining democracy as whatever societal conditions they desire (e.g., Bratton, 2010; Kirsch & Welzel, 2019), or because they fail to consider ways in which authoritarian actions might appeal to them when they are not explicitly prompted to do so by the survey question (Kiewiet de Jonge, 2016). Therefore,

I conceptualise democracy attitudes as a broad continuum reflecting both high versus low professed support for democracy and rejection of, versus openness to, non-democratic actions, governance structures, and norms. Such a definition captures a favourable orientation towards democracy, commitment to the ‘democratic creed’ (political tolerance, separation of powers, etc.), and rejection of authoritarian options that might be appealing at certain times.

18.3 Why Might Religiosity Relate to Democracy Attitudes?

A common view about the relationship between religiosity and democracy attitudes is that these forces are inherently in a state of tension (e.g., Altemeyer, 1996; see Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan, 2012, 2013a). This is because religious people favour traditional social structures and behavioural patterns rooted in transcendent, sacred, and non-negotiable moral imperatives. Liberal democracy may be viewed as contradicting these imperatives because it confers on citizens who work against them equal rights to try to access power. It also defers to institutional procedures no matter the implications for sacred religious values.

This type of viewpoint is consistent with several observations. For example, Sullivan et al. (1982) noted that Western norms for political tolerance – that is, willingness to accept political freedom for those deemed malign – evolved from efforts to moderate violent religious conflict in Europe. Thus, a key component of liberal democracy might have specifically emerged to counteract the destructive consequences of religious zeal. Others argue for a natural congruence between religious sentiment and an authoritarian orientation characterised by prioritising obedience to traditional sources of authority and desire for

such authority to deal decisively with challenges to traditional social life (Canetti-Nissim, 2004; Ludeke et al., 2013). Religiosity is associated with low inclination and ability to think effortfully (Razmyar & Reeve, 2013; Zuckerman et al., 2013), endorsement of traditional morality (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2013a; Malka, 2013), and, in some cases, ethnic antipathy (Johnson et al., 2010), all of which are linked with anti-democratic sentiment (Bartels, 2020; Drutman et al., 2018; Miller & Davis, 2021; Sullivan et al., 1982; Welzel, 2013). Finally, it is useful to consider attitudes towards democracy as in part reflecting a position on the political trade-off between order and autonomy (e.g., Miller, 2017), and adherence to religion may reflect a prioritisation of order, stability, and harmonious coherence of the social unit (e.g., Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012; Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008).

Having said this, it is quite clear that many religious people do not hold absolutist religious convictions that incline them to support the subversion of democracy. Moreover, there are reasons to expect that aspects of religion might even promote democracy support, at least in certain contexts. Perhaps most importantly, as Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2012, 2013a, 2013b) note, social involvement in religious life has often nurtured civic mobilisation skills, which might promote greater commitment to achieving desired ends through the democratic process. The Black American civil rights movement, which pressured the federal government to codify and enforce liberal democratic ideals during the 20th century, was largely religious in nature (Harvey, 2016). It is also the case that religious power structures have facilitated democratic transitions, as was the case with Catholicism during the third wave of democracy from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s (Philpott, 2007). Thus, religion has been mobilised to both promote and subvert democracy.

18.4 The Empirical Relationship between Religiosity and Democracy Attitudes

I now summarise evidence concerning the relationship between religiosity and democracy attitudes among people around the world. Space limitations preclude a comprehensive summary, but I aspire to cover large survey studies that address this relationship.

Importantly, I review this literature with a focus on specific methodological features that I believe complicate interpretations of findings. These are: (a) simultaneous entry of multiple interrelated religiosity variables as predictors of democracy attitudes without first noting their zero-order relationships with democracy attitudes, (b) simultaneous entry of religiosity variables and potential mediators of the effect of religiosity on democracy attitudes without first noting effects of religiosity variables free of such covariates, and (c) under-representation of content directly pertaining to amenability to authoritarian actions and norms within democracy attitude measures.

18.4.1 Survey Studies of One or a Few Nations

Some studies have tested relationships between individual differences in religiosity and attitudes towards democracy within a single or a small number of national contexts. These studies often show small to moderate relationships between religiosity and anti-democratic sentiment. For example, using a large sample of Jewish Israeli students, Canetti-Nissim found a correlation of -0.29 between a belief-based religiosity measure tailored to Jewish respondents and an index of support of the democratic creed, focusing on equal political rights, free speech, and unconditional deference to democratic procedures. Using Public Opinion Barometer

data from 2005 in Romania, Sandor and Popescu (2008) found that a broad religiosity index (encompassing religious beliefs, attendance, and personal importance) correlated positively with preference for a non-democratic strong leader ($r = 0.10$) and preference for a military regime ($r = 0.08$), negatively with preference for a democratic regime ($r = -0.10$), and not at all with the democratically ambiguous preference for granting experts decision-making power. Using the 1993 Polish General Social Survey, Karpov (1999) examined the association between three religiosity measures (church attendance, religious commitment, and political support for the Roman Catholic Church) and political intolerance (measured as willingness to allow political rights for atheists and communists). Correlations between the religiosity measures and political tolerance were all significantly negative, ranging from -0.25 to -0.37 . Even when the author simultaneously entered these strongly intercorrelated religiosity measures (r s between 0.48 and 0.57), each had a significant negative main effect, although the independent effect of religious participation was very small. In these studies, much of the effect of religiosity seemed to be accounted for by indicators of sociocultural conservatism, which had a large negative effect on tolerance.

The relationship between religiosity and political intolerance has also extended to the United States general population, and to intolerance measures that extend beyond left-wing groups. In their landmark study on political intolerance in the United States, Sullivan et al. (1982) found a strong link between possessing no religious affiliation and a 'content-controlled measure' of political tolerance, for which each respondent rated willingness to extend political rights to the specific group they disliked the most. Using General Social Survey (GSS) data from 1974, 1977, and 1980, Smidt and Penning (1982) found that religious

attendance was strongly associated with unwillingness to extend political rights to communists, atheists, and homosexuals. Using GSS data from 1988, Ellison and Musick (1993) found that religious attendance predicted lower tolerance, measured as a composite of willingness to extend civil rights to racists, militarists, communists, atheists, and homosexuals. This was so even though fundamentalist denominational preference was controlled. In this study, the effect of religious attendance was accounted for by 'theological conservatism', which represented doctrinal certainty and fundamentalism and, itself, displayed a large negative link with political tolerance.

Because Islam has been singled out as a religion that might be inimical to liberal democratic governance (e.g., Huntington, 1996), several studies have tested religiosity variables as predictors of democracy attitudes within Muslim majority nations (also see Chapter 38).

These studies often conclude that religiosity has negligible relations with democracy attitudes among Muslims. However, as I explain below, certain methodological choices might account for these null findings.

In one example, Tessler (2002) examined associations between religiosity and democracy attitudes in four Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Algeria) using data from Wave 4 (2000–2002) of the World Values Survey (WVS). The author simultaneously entered as predictors 'personal religiosity' (composite of mosque attendance and participation in mosque activities), a two-item composite measure of belief that religious people should hold office, a single-item measure gauging belief that religious leaders should influence how people vote, and a set of control variables. The democracy measures were a two-item composite involving professed support for 'democracy' and a three-item composite of belief that democracy has bad side

effects. Personal religiosity did not predict either dependent measure in any country, and the two 'political Islam' measures had small, inconsistent, and usually non-significant effects.

Ciftci (2010) ran similar analyses using Wave 4 of the WVS, but expanded Tessler's (2002) analysis to 10, rather than 4, Muslim majority nations. Religious attendance, support of political Islam, views about gender equality, and several control variables were entered simultaneously to predict the same dependent variables used by Tessler (2002). Religious attendance did not predict either democracy attitude measure, and support of political Islam displayed an overall negative association with democracy support and belief in democracy's efficaciousness, but this effect varied considerably across nations.

Jamal and Tessler (2008) used Arab Barometer data from 2006 from Morocco, Algeria, Palestine, Jordan, and Kuwait to test the relationship between belief in political Islam and a single item gauging belief that democracy is the best system of government (see also Tessler, 2010). Across all countries, support for democracy was only four percentage points higher among those opposing political Islam than among those supporting it. Belief in equal gender opportunity and racial tolerance were only six and four percentage points higher, respectively, among those opposing political Islam. The authors conclude that 'the persistence of authoritarianism in the Arab world cannot be explained by the religious orientations and attachments of ordinary men and women' (Jamal & Tessler, 2008, pp. 101–102).

The results of these studies might seem to contrast with those of non-Muslim majority countries in which religiosity often predicts lower democracy support. Although this possibly reflects a difference in predictors of democracy attitudes across Muslim and other

societies, it is important to consider some methodological choices that might account for their null effects.

First, Tessler (2002) and Ciftci (2010) simultaneously entered inter-related religiosity measures as predictors. This might obscure an effect of a general religiosity construct, represented by the shared variance across these measures, on democracy attitudes. Second, these studies did not include available democracy attitude items that capture openness to authoritarian arrangements (such as military and strongman rule), rather than professed allegiance to 'democracy'. Religious individuals might profess support for 'democracy' but still be open to authoritarian governance in practice (e.g., Kirsch & Welzel, 2019). Finally, Tessler (2002) and Ciftci (2010) included a measure of perceived outcomes of democracy which, as acknowledged (Tessler, 2002, p. 243), is not an indicator of democracy support.

18.4.2 Large-Scale Cross-National Studies

The most comprehensive cross-national analyses on the religiosity-democracy attitudes link that I am aware of were reported by Meyer et al. (2008) and Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2012, 2013a). I describe them here.

First, Meyer et al. (2008) examined 46 nations using data from Wave 3 (1999–2001) of the WVS. They measured 'support for democracy' using a five-item composite containing two items expressing professed support for 'democracy' and three items (reverse-scored) assessing belief that democracy has negative economic and political consequences. They simultaneously entered three religiosity variables as predictors, along with a set of nation- and individual-level control variables. The three religiosity variables were religious attachment (four items gauging importance

of religion and God in one's life), a single-item religious attendance measure, and a four-item measure gauging support of blending religion and politics. They found that support of blending religion and politics negatively predicted democracy support, religious attachment positively predicted democracy support, and religious attendance had no effect on democracy support. The authors concluded that, although religiosity does not make one less supportive of democracy, 'individuals seeking a prominent role for religion in government are likely to be substantially less supportive of democracy' (p. 625).

Second, Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2012) used Wave 4 (1999–2001) WVS data from 45 democratic nations. They used a measure of support for democracy (which included a reverse-scored item asking about approval of a non-democratic strong leader) and a measure of the perceived efficaciousness of democracy (a reverse-scored measure of belief that democracy has bad consequences). They simultaneously entered religious belief and religious social behaviour variables as predictors, along with a set of nation- and individual-level control variables. They found that religious belief negatively predicted both support for democracy and belief in democracy's efficaciousness, with effect sizes larger than those of all other covariates. Meanwhile, controlling for religious belief, religious social behaviour displayed a small positive effect on support for democracy and belief in its efficaciousness. The authors concluded that while religious belief strength is detrimental to democracy support, religious social behaviour promotes greater democracy support.

Finally, Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2013a) expanded on the above analysis by incorporating both Wave 4 and Wave 5 (2005–2007) WVS data, spanning 54 democracies. Again, they computed measures of support for democracy and belief in the efficaciousness of

democracy. In addition, for Wave 5 respondents, they computed measures of 'substantive support for democracy' (endorsement of a mostly correct definition of democracy as essentially involving free elections, civil rights protections, ability to change laws in referendums, and equal rights for women and men) and 'non-instrumental support' for democracy (rejection of an incorrect definition of democracy as essentially involving government redistribution, state aid for the unemployed, economic prosperity, and severe punishment of criminals). Religious belief had consistent and strong (typically stronger than any other covariate) effects on anti-democracy stance, belief that democracy is not efficacious, low 'substantive support' for democracy, and low 'non-instrumental' support for democracy. Religious social behaviour (entered simultaneously) displayed a small effect on support for democracy, belief that democracy is efficacious, and 'substantive' support for democracy. The negative effects of religious belief were mediated by holding traditional and survival values, whereas the small positive effects of religious social behaviour were mediated by political involvement and trust in institutions. The authors concluded that detrimental effects of religious belief on democracy support are explained by values pertaining to traditionalism and security, and that the beneficial effects of religious social behaviour on democracy support are accounted for by an active civic orientation.

These cross-national studies were broad in scope, informative, and based in well-grounded theoretical propositions. Nonetheless, it is worth considering how their conclusions might be affected by certain methodological features of the work.

First of all, analyses were limited to data from one survey project, the WVS. Though it is common for cross-national studies of political attitudes to use data from a single survey project, it is advantageous to test whether

findings replicate across different survey projects that vary in measurement and other methodological features.

Second, the above studies excluded one or more WVS items querying support for autocratic government that may be particularly appealing to religious people. Specifically, the WVS administers a four-item democracy–autocracy preference battery that includes two items asking about clearly authoritarian forms of governance: desirability of a non-democratic strong leader and desirability of military rule. Meyer et al. (2008) did not include either of these items in their composite, whereas Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2012, 2013a) excluded the military rule item.

Third, these studies included some content in their democracy attitude measures that do not reflect support for democracy versus autocracy. This includes belief that democracy produces bad political and economic side effects (i.e., instrumental efficaciousness items, included in all three studies), and correct and incorrect personal definitions of democracy (included in Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2013a). One may believe that democracy has some bad side effects but still reject authoritarian governance, and one may support actual democratic institutions and norms unconditionally while possessing an inaccurate definition of democracy.

Fourth, all three studies involved the simultaneous entry of interrelated religiosity variables as predictors (e.g., $r = 0.56$ in Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012) and reported the effect of each controlling for the others(s). However, they did not report effects of these religiosity variables without controlling for the other(s), and it is unclear if these effects reflect a suppressor situation. For example, religious social behaviour may have no link or a negative link with democracy support, but a positive effect when religious belief is controlled. And religiosity variables that relate to openness to

authoritarian governance may no longer show this effect (and indeed show an opposite effect) when potentially endogenous variables (such as cultural conservatism and desire for religion to influence politics) are controlled. Such situations would warrant a more complex interpretation that is mindful of potential causal influences among the various facets of religiosity, as well as the value of a general religiosity construct, akin to a superfactor in personality trait research (John & Srivastava, 1999).

Finally, as the authors of these studies acknowledge, the cross-sectional correlational data used is inadequate for drawing causal inferences of the effect of religiosity on democracy attitudes, a matter addressed next.

18.4.3 Experimental Research on the Religiosity–Democracy Attitudes Link

To the extent that religiosity correlates with democracy attitudes, a variety of causal explanations are possible. For example, cognitive attributes (Zuckerman et al., 2013) and value orientations (Welzel, 2013) could underlie both, with little to no causal influence exerted between religiosity and democracy attitudes. Similarly, both religiosity and openness to authoritarian governance may reflect a general genetic predisposition to obey traditional sources of authority (e.g., Ludeke et al., 2013). Or, openness to authoritarian governance could impact religiosity, as political orientations seem to causally impact religiosity in certain contexts (Margolis, 2018). And, of course, religiosity might causally impact democracy attitudes, the implicit assumption in much of the survey research in this area.

Given that religiosity is a largely temporally stable (e.g., Patrikios, 2008) and heritable (e.g., Vance et al., 2010) attribute, it is a great challenge to experimentally study its effects in an ecologically valid way. Recognising this difficulty, Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2013b)

used a religious priming approach. Two small undergraduate samples – one of Israeli Jews ($N = 91$) and one of Muslim Turks ($N = 97$) – reported their democracy attitudes after reporting (based on random assignment) either their religious belief, their religious social behaviour, or neither. The democracy attitude dependent variable consisted of five items pertaining to allegiance to democracy, rejection of authoritarian governance, and belief that democracy has favourable instrumental consequences. As the authors predicted, priming religious belief significantly decreased support for democracy, whereas priming religious behaviour significantly increased support for democracy, when the two samples were combined. These effects did not significantly differ across individuals of different levels of religiosity, although this study had low power to detect interaction effects.

18.4.4 Variation across Cultural and Religious Groups

This chapter focuses on the link between religious commitment and democracy support. However, scholars debate whether certain cultural and religious groups possess attitudes, values, and norms that are incompatible with liberal democracy. Needless to say, this is a sensitive and controversial topic. It is also one for which conclusions at one historical juncture might soon reveal themselves to be inapplicable to other historical junctures (e.g., Philpott, 2007).

Two key examples of such views in relatively recent scholarship are the ‘Asian values hypothesis’ and the view that Islam is incompatible with democracy (see Huntington, 1996). The former stipulates that Western liberal democracy is incompatible with East Asian cultural traditions rooted in principles of Confucian philosophy emphasising social duty and collectivism. The latter stipulates that

Western liberal democracy is incompatible with Islam because Islam requires absolute and uncompromising allegiance to its religious tenets and rejects pluralism, tolerance, and open competition among ideas.

A comprehensive summary of literature on religious cultural groups and potential for democracy is well beyond the scope of this chapter. Here, I will briefly note evidence about relationships between religious affiliation memberships and democracy attitudes. Analysing Wave 4 (1999–2001) of the WVS, Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2012) concluded that ‘religious affiliation by itself is not a decisive factor affecting individual attitudes towards democracy. With the exception of Hindu identifiers, identifying with major religious traditions does not, in and of itself, lead to anti-democratic attitudes’ (p. 250). This was based on analyses of data from 45 democratic countries, with democracy attitudes being predicted by two religiosity indicators, a set of religious affiliation dummy variables (with no affiliation as the comparison category), and several other individual- and nation-level covariates. Interestingly, being Muslim was associated with slightly greater democracy support in this model. Being Hindu was associated with less support for democracy, consistent with the finding of Meyer et al. (2008) that members of Eastern religions in general were less supportive of democracy. It must be noted, though, that religious affiliation effects might be mediated by variables included as controls in these analyses, such as religiosity and authoritarian disposition. Thus, if members of a certain religious affiliation are especially open to authoritarian governance because they are, on average, highly religious or possess an authoritarian disposition, this would not be detected in these analyses. Also, the Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2012) analysis was limited to democratic countries and, thus, did not include the non-democratic Middle Eastern

Muslim countries or China (but see Meyer et al., 2008 and Norris & Inglehart, 2013). Next, other evidence suggests that citizens of Muslim nations are especially likely to define democracy in authoritarian terms (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019), a finding that reinforces the notion that research on mass democracy attitudes should include measurement content that taps support of specific authoritarian actions without invoking the term ‘democracy’. Finally, although being Muslim did not predict anti-democracy attitudes in Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan’s (2012) models, Muslims did display a stronger link between religiosity and anti-democratic sentiment in these analyses.

18.5 Tentative Summary of the Findings

The link between religiosity and democracy attitudes is difficult to pinpoint both because of methodological choices in prior work and because the link might be a moving target that varies across time and place. That being said, the following tentative conclusions are warranted. Indicators of religious belief strength and commitment do seem to correlate, on average, with openness to authoritarian governance. The existence and size of this effect likely varies across religiosity and democracy attitude indicators as well as context, which makes it difficult to discuss the effect size in relation to effect sizes of some other predictors of democracy attitudes, like political engagement and college education. These effects are most apparent when the democracy indicators deal with support for the democratic creed, especially political tolerance (e.g., Canetti-Nisim, 2004; Karpov, 1999). And religious attendance might not relate to opposition to democracy – in fact, the opposite might be the case (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012, 2013a, 2013b).

Second, notwithstanding the difficulty of pinpointing an effect size for religiosity, indicators of social conservatism (Malka et al., 2020), fundamentalism (Ellison & Musick, 1993), and desire to blend religion and politics (Meyer et al., 2008) all seem to have larger and more reliable relationships with openness to authoritarian governance than do bare-bones religiosity indicators. Indeed, these might constitute the main mechanism by which religiosity influences openness to authoritarian governance.

18.6 Recommendations for Future Research

I offer the following recommendations for future research on religiosity and democracy attitudes. First, research should use a wider range of cross-national survey projects that differ in their assessments of democracy attitudes and religiosity. The WVS is an excellent source of information on this matter, but one must be mindful of the limited measurement of democracy attitudes in this data source and the possibility that findings will differ across data sources.

Second, research should clearly distinguish between attitudes towards democracy per se and other related constructs such as correct versus incorrect definitions of democracy and instrumental beliefs about the efficaciousness of democracy. These latter variables may be integrated into testable theory about the mechanisms linking religiosity and democracy attitudes, but they should not be treated as interchangeable with direct indicators of democracy support.

Third, it would be worthwhile to examine the extent to which religiosity relates differentially to professed support of ‘democracy’ on the one hand, and openness to actual authoritarian actions, on the other. These types of indicators are often combined into single

measures, and sometimes the latter type of indicator is not examined at all (e.g., Meyer et al., 2008; Tessler, 2002). Given links between religiosity and social desirability response bias (e.g., Leak & Fish, 1989) and the fact that many people express allegiance to ‘democracy’ while simultaneously expressing openness to authoritarian governance (e.g., Kiewiet de Jonge, 2016), the possibility that religious people are especially inclined towards the latter pattern is worthy of investigation.

Fourth, research should explicitly incorporate both unidimensional and multidimensional views of religiosity in analyses. There is utility in both types of conceptualisations, just as there is utility in examining both facet-level and superfactor-level personality traits and general and domain-specific cognitive abilities. Crucial here is that researchers should clearly report when a religiosity indicator (e.g., religious attendance) has a notably different effect depending on whether or not other religiosity indicators (e.g., religious belief) are controlled. In such situations, researchers should offer testable theory to account for this situation, and should not automatically assume that the analysis with other religiosity covariates yields the most accurate estimate of causal influence.

Fifth, and related to the above, researchers should report effects of religiosity with and without controlling for potentially endogenous control variables, especially cultural conservatism, fundamentalism, and desire for religion to impact political life.

Finally, researchers should further address causal direction using both panel and experimental designs. It now seems likely that religiosity (Margolis, 2018) and other presumably pre-political characteristics (Egan, 2020) are influenced by political orientations in certain contexts. Furthermore, religiosity and amenability to authoritarian actions might stem

from a common genetically rooted predisposition to favour traditional sources of authority (e.g., Ludeke et al., 2013).

18.7 Conclusion

The last few years have brought concerning news for the prospects of liberal democracy around the world. Several transitioning democracies have experienced backsliding, and the established liberal democracies of the West are experiencing stressors to their democratic institutions and norms. Because polarisation between cultural progressives and traditionalists is one such stressor (see Chapter 25), it is uncomfortable to consider the possibility that one side of this divide is a greater threat to liberal democracy than the other. But respect for truth requires an honest reckoning with this question. This review focused on religiosity, specifically, as a predictor of democracy attitudes, and reached some tentative conclusions about the nature of this link. But a related matter that is far more clear is that a broader religiously relevant social traditionalism versus progressivism construct – including sexual morality, immigration, nationalism, and other traditional versus progressive attitudes – is a reliable predictor of openness to authoritarian governance, definitions of democracy, and actual democratisation of societies.

Cultural traditionalists are more open to authoritarian governance than cultural progressives (Malka et al., 2020), they are more likely to define ‘democracy’ in autocratic terms (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019), and a high concentration of them in a society predicts a lower likelihood of democratisation (Welzel, 2013). Moreover, when religiosity does predict openness to authoritarian governance, constructs related to cultural traditionalism are likely to account for this effect (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arian, 2013a; Canetti-Nisim, 2004; Karpov, 1999). It is no

accident that authoritarian leaders have so often found it useful to base appeals on culturally traditional messages. Given the centrality of religiosity to many people's lives, the prospects for liberal democracy may depend on a larger number of religious people attaching less of a broad culturally traditionalist meaning to their religious conviction.

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19 The Consequences of Moral Conviction in Politics

More Negative Than Positive?

Brittany E. Hanson, Daniel C. Wisneski, and G. Scott Morgan

Moral conviction – ‘the belief that a given attitude is a reflection of one’s core feelings or beliefs about fundamental right and wrong; morality and immorality’ (Skitka et al., 2021) – plays a critical role in political psychology. For example, moral conviction leads people to stand up for their beliefs and engage in protests and other forms of collective action (see also Chapter 31). Moral conviction can also lead people to engage in acts that are violent or terrible such as when protests turn violent or, at the extreme end, actions that could be considered terrorism. A growing body of research has indicated that moral conviction is a double-edged sword that leads to both normatively good and normatively bad consequences. Although people often associate the word ‘moral’ with prosocial outcomes, a look at research that has investigated moral conviction yields a surprising observation – many, if not most, of the consequences documented in the literature describe a dark side of moral conviction.

In this chapter, we review both the positive and negative sides of moral conviction. After describing the theory of moral conviction and how morally convicted attitudes differ from otherwise strong, but non-moral ones, we review the consequences of moral conviction that can be considered normatively positive and negative. Following this review, we discuss why moral conviction research paints such a dark picture, that is, why there are more negative consequences in the literature than positive. Is it the case that moral conviction

researchers tend to overly focus on the dark side of morality? Or is it the case that something about the psychology of moral conviction itself leads to more negative than positive consequences?

19.1 The Domain Theory of Attitudes and the Theory of Moral Conviction

Moral conviction is a type of meta-cognition that describes people’s impressions of their own attitudes – similar to other concepts in the attitude strength literature such as attitude importance and certainty (Bassili, 1996; see also Chapter 7). Beyond this definition, moral conviction is embedded in a broader domain theory of attitudes (DTA) that makes predictions about how morally relevant attitudes differ from otherwise strong, but non-moral, attitudes.

The DTA builds upon Nucci and Turiel’s (1978) social domain theory by applying it to the specific case of people’s attitudes. Similar to the three domains of social concern described in social domain theory, three domains of attitudes are proposed in the DTA. A critical distinction between the three domains is how acceptable people view attitudes different from their own. First, some attitudes people hold fall within the domain of personal preferences. People perceive attitudes within this domain as reflecting one’s personal tastes, assume that attitudes vary from person to person, and experience this variation as acceptable. Second, the DTA

predicts that some attitudes fall within the domain of norms and conventions. People perceive attitudes within this domain as relating to how things are ‘commonly done’ within a group. These norms are often the product of authority dictates and are meant to help provide coordination rules for navigating life within a group. Violations of these norms within the group are viewed as unacceptable, but variation in these norms between groups is viewed as acceptable as each group develops its own practices to coordinate its members’ behaviour. A common example of one such norm relates to which side of the road different people drive on in different countries. Although variation in whether different countries have decided to drive on the left or right side of the road is viewed as perfectly acceptable, failing to follow that rule within a country can carry considerable negative consequences.

Finally, the third domain in the DTA is attitudes that relate to people’s sense of moral right and wrong – that is, they are attitudes held with moral conviction. Attitudes held with moral conviction differ from those in the domains of norms and preferences in several ways. People tend to view their moralised attitudes as objective facts about the world similar to scientific facts and to assume that their moral stance should apply universally beyond their immediate group, culture, or even historical moment (Morgan & Skitka, 2020). Furthermore, morally convicted attitudes are more strongly associated with emotion compared to those low in moral conviction (Garrett, 2018; Skitka & Wisneski, 2011). Morally convicted attitudes also tend to be independent of authority rule or dictate. In fact, people appear to use their moral beliefs to inform how they view authorities (i.e., whether the authority upholds or violates their moral beliefs) rather than looking to authorities for their sense of morality (Skitka et al., 2009).

It should be noted that, although the DTA makes predictions about the characteristics of attitudes that fall within each of the three domains (e.g., people tolerate and even expect variation in personal preferences, whereas morally convicted attitudes are applied universally), the theory does not specify the contents of each domain. Exactly which attitudes people perceive to be preference, norms, or morals is – according to the DTA – subjective and in the eye of the perceiver. The result of this aspect of the theory is that there are no social or political issues that are morally relevant by definition. Rather, the moral conviction people associate with any sociopolitical issue will vary from person to person, even for issues that are commonly thought of as ‘moral’ such as abortion or stem cell research (Ryan, 2014; see also Chapter 17).

Many of the aspects of morally convicted attitudes described in the DTA are neither normatively positive nor negative. For example, there may be nothing necessarily good or bad about associating a moralised political stance with strong emotion. That said, a large body of research has found that holding a political attitude with moral conviction is associated with a number of consequences that most would consider normatively good, as well as a number of consequences that most would consider normatively bad. Such a large body of research has accumulated that it has led some to describe attitude moralisation as a double-edged sword (Skitka & Morgan, 2009; Täuber et al., 2015). In terms of the current paper, we defined normatively positive and negative consequences based on whether most people would agree that, free from context, the outcome is mostly good or bad. Any of the consequences described in the sections below could be positive or negative under the right circumstances, but we would still argue that, generally, our distinctions apply. For example, most people may agree that there are some circumstances where

it is appropriate to be intolerant of particular political opinions such as those based in overt racism or white supremacy, but outside of these specific contexts, most people would likely also say that intolerance is generally negative. Similarly, most people would also likely agree that political engagement is generally positive even while thinking that some forms of engagement, such as intentionally spreading disinformation, are wrong. In the following sections, we will review research showing that moral conviction is related to normatively positive and negative political outcomes. We will also note that a negativity bias is apparent in the existing literature with both a greater number of studies finding that moral conviction leads to negative political consequences and moral conviction being associated with a greater variety of negative outcomes – as is evident in Table 19.1. Finally, we will provide two possible explanations for this negativity bias: (1) it reflects something inherent to moral conviction itself being more normatively negative than positive and (2) it reflects a bias in terms of the questions and attitudes researchers choose to study.

19.1.1 (Normatively) Negative Consequences of Moral Conviction

Holding an attitude with moral conviction impacts how one views attitudinally dissimilar

others, the political outcomes one is willing to accept, and what behaviours are deemed acceptable to achieve those outcomes. In each case, moral conviction leads to normatively negative outcomes. People are intolerant of morally dissimilar others. They are unwilling to compromise on their morally convicted attitudes and oppose politicians who do. Also, people are willing to accept unethical, sometimes even illegal, means to achieve what they see as the correct moral outcome. In this section, we will review research exploring these normatively negative consequences of holding an attitude with moral conviction.

Intolerance and Political Polarisation

Moral conviction's relationship with how people view attitudinally dissimilar others has received considerable attention. The majority of this work has looked at its relationship with various forms of intolerance. One common way to assess intolerance has involved measuring how socially and physically distant people want to be from people who disagree with them on one of their morally convicted attitudes. Preferred social distance is usually measured by asking participants how willing or unwilling they would be to interact with someone who disagrees with them on a political issue across a number of contexts such as 'a roommate', 'someone I personally date', or

Table 19.1. *The consequences of moral conviction*

Normatively Negative Consequences	Normatively Positive Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polarisation • Intolerance • Unwillingness to compromise • Accepting any means (lying, cheating, vigilantism) to achieve moral ends • Undermining legitimate authorities • Antisocial behaviour following a violation of a moral conviction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic engagement (activism, volunteerism) • Political engagement

‘as my personal physician’. Stronger moral conviction is associated with greater preferred social distance (Skitka et al., 2005; Wright et al., 2008), an effect that has been replicated outside the USA in the Netherlands and Britain (Zaal et al., 2017, studies 1 and 2) and China (Skitka et al., 2012). Perhaps even more convincing than the findings using self-report measures, behavioural measures demonstrate that people also physically distance themselves from and share fewer resources with those who disagree with them on a political issue when the person feels strong (compared to weak) moral conviction about the issue (Skitka et al., 2005; Wright et al., 2008).

Research using other measures of intolerance has mirrored the findings looking at social and physical distancing. Moral conviction predicts how unacceptable people think it is for others to hold different opinions from them on a political issue. Across samples of adults (Wright et al., 2008) and children and adolescents (Wright, 2012), stronger moral conviction predicted greater unacceptability of dissimilar attitudes. There is also evidence that, at least in some cultures, stronger moral conviction about a political attitude is positively associated with greater support for political intolerance in the form restricting the civil liberties of attitudinally dissimilar others (Skitka et al., 2012).

Consistent with the findings that people are intolerant of including those who disagree with their moral convictions in their social circles, people also express more negative affect towards those who disagree. Specifically, the propensity to moralise many political issues is associated with a greater affective partisan gap (as measured by political party feeling thermometers) and greater feelings of anger, incivility, and antagonism towards opposing partisans (Garrett & Bankert, 2018; see also Chapter 25).

In sum, feeling morally convicted about an attitude can lead to a host of negative

outcomes related to how people view and interact with those they disagree with. Across several self-report and behaviour measures, moral conviction is related to people viewing those with whom they disagree more negatively, wanting to distance themselves from them, and at times even being willing to restrict their rights.

Unwillingness to Compromise

Moral conviction can also undermine people’s ability to find common ground with those they disagree with. People are less willing to compromise when they hold a political attitude with moral conviction. Living in a diverse, pluralistic society like the United States requires different groups, often with competing interests, to compromise on important issues – a process that can be undermined if the parties involved have moralised their positions. For example, attitudinally heterogeneous groups who hold morally convicted positions are less likely to come to an agreement on solutions for resolving their disagreements (Skitka et al., 2005). Similarly, people who moralise their attitudes on political issues (1) view proposed compromises related to the issues less favourably, (2) are less likely to support a political candidate who was willing to negotiate on the issues than those low in moral conviction, and (3) are more likely to take aggressive bargaining positions in negotiation contexts (Delton et al., 2020; Ryan, 2017, 2019).

Achieving Morally Convicted Ends Regardless of the Means

Related to people’s unwillingness to compromise on their morally convicted views, they are heavily invested in achieving the outcomes they see as morally ‘correct’ regardless of the means used to bring them about. Moral

conviction appears to shift people's thinking to focus on achieving their preferred outcome and away from the fairness of the processes used to decide the outcome. When considering different political outcomes related to their morally convicted opinions, people tend to focus primarily on achieving the morally 'correct' ends, regardless of how they are achieved. As such, judgements of outcome fairness and acceptance, as well as evaluations of the authorities who made the decision, are better predicted by people's sense of moral conviction than about how fair they thought the procedures were to achieve the outcome (Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Skitka, 2002; Skitka et al., 2009; Skitka & Houston, 2001; Skitka & Mullen, 2002).

Related to this focus on achieving moral outcomes are findings that people are willing to accept unethical means to achieve their morally convicted ends. People positively evaluate others who engage in advocacy in the name of one of their morally convicted attitudes even if unethical means (i.e., lying) are used (Mueller & Skitka, 2017). People are also willing to accept violent forms of collective action in the name of their moral beliefs (Zaal et al., 2011), as well as retribution and collateral damage in the form of greater civilian deaths in the context of intractable armed conflict (Reifen Tagar et al., 2014).

Other Negative Outcomes

Moral conviction also predicts other outcomes that may impact the democratic process and interpersonal relations. For example, greater moral conviction about the legal status of physician-assisted suicide was associated with less trust in the Supreme Court to decide the issue, an institution with historically high levels of legitimacy (Wisneski et al., 2009). Consistent with people's pre-ruling lack of trust, people also viewed the Court as less

legitimate and accepted the decision less when the actual ruling was inconsistent with their morally convicted stance on the issue, even when they view the Court's procedures as fair (Skitka et al., 2009). However, one could argue that it is not normatively negative, but instead appropriate, to view an otherwise legitimate authority as less legitimate when its decisions violate a person's moral beliefs. Perceived violations of people's moral convictions can also affect unrelated subsequent behaviours. For example, after learning about or recalling a moral violation, people were more likely to engage in deviant behaviour like stealing a borrowed pen or cheating to win money (Mullen & Nadler, 2008).

In sum, moral conviction is related to a number of consequences that most people would consider negative: intolerance of dissimilar others, unwillingness to compromise which undermines the democratic process, acceptance of unethical means to achieve moral ends, and antisocial behaviour such as cheating. However, the consequences of feeling moral conviction are not all dark. Next, we turn to outcomes of moral conviction that most would consider positive.

19.1.2 (Normatively) Positive Consequences of Moral Conviction

The positive consequence of moral conviction that has received the most attention and empirical support is that it predicts greater political engagement and voting. Research supporting this relationship has spanned a wide variety of contexts, political issues, and forms of engagement. Several studies, for example, have found that moral conviction in the context of US presidential elections is related to both voting intentions and (retrospective) voting (Morgan et al., 2010; Skitka & Bauman, 2008; Ryan, 2014). Moral conviction has been found to positively predict both

activism intentions (Mazzoni et al., 2015; Morgan, 2011; Skitka et al., 2017), self-reported activism and volunteerism (Kende et al., 2017), and activism behaviour (Sabucedo et al., 2018; van Zomeren et al., 2012; Zaal et al., 2011). A meta-analysis also found the relationship between moral conviction and different forms of political engagement to be positive and reliable (Skitka et al., 2015). Furthermore, this work showed that the relationship was equally strong among those on the political left and the political right.

Studies that explored the variables that might explain the relationship between moral conviction and activism have found a variety of different answers. Several have found various emotions explain the link including anticipated pride and regret for taking/failing to take action (Morgan, 2011; Skitka et al., 2017), as well as feelings of anger (Kende et al., 2017; van Zomeren et al., 2012). Others have found evidence that feelings of obligation to act explain the relationship (Morgan, 2011), whereas some identify efficacy and political identity as viable mediators (Mazzoni et al., 2015; van Zomeren et al., 2012). In sum, this work shows that, although moral conviction's ability to motivate engagement is very consistent, the source of that motivation is variable and multifaceted.

19.1.3 (Normatively) Ambiguous Consequences of Moral Conviction

For some consequences of moral conviction, it is less clear whether the outcome is normatively good or bad. People's morally convicted attitudes tend to be independent of social influence, such as the rulings of authorities and majority influence, but whether that outcome is normatively good or bad may depend on the issue at hand. For example, one study found that people who felt morally convicted about the use of stress techniques when

interrogating suspected terrorists were less likely to conform to a unanimous group that supported the use of such techniques compared to those low in moral conviction (Aramovich et al., 2012). Resisting group influence to support torture seems normatively good. However, if we consider another issue such as wearing a mask to protect public health, then resisting group influence because one is morally convicted about their personal freedom would likely be viewed as a negative consequence. Other studies found that when Australian college students learned that the majority of students on campus opposed their views on same-sex marriage or a government apology to Aboriginals, those low on moral conviction conformed to the majority attitude whereas those high in moral conviction did not (Hornsey et al., 2003). Whether or not people view this conformity as positive or negative will likely depend on their own stance on the issue.

In sum, moral conviction is also associated with positive outcomes, namely, in the form of greater civic and political engagement. Notably, however, the current literature has only identified two closely related positive outcomes of investing one's political attitudes with moral conviction compared to the several negative outcomes reviewed above.

Similarly, whether or not resisting authority dictates is normatively good or bad will often depend on whether you agree with that stance. On the one hand, resisting authority influence could be viewed as positive if people are using their sense of morality as a check on authorities going too far beyond the will of the people. On the other hand, sometimes authorities act as opinion leaders and influence public opinion in a positive direction, such as the Supreme Court's desegregation of public schools in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) or granting equal protection under the law to same-sex couples by legalising

same-sex marriage in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015). Ultimately, whether or not people view resisting these authority decisions as normatively good or bad most likely depends on whether they agree with the outcome or not.

19.2 Negativity Bias in Moral Conviction Research?

The research cited in the previous sections clearly demonstrates that moral conviction predicts a host of positive and negative political outcomes. There also appears to be an imbalance between the two sets of consequences, as the negative seems to outnumber the positive. In this section, we will discuss possible explanations for why this is the case. On the one hand, the universe of all consequences of moral conviction may simply contain more negative consequences than positive ones, and maybe moralising politics really does more harm than good. On the other hand, this negativity bias could originate in researchers themselves as they decide which consequences of moral conviction to study and what political attitudes to test. Perhaps researchers choose to focus on the more negative side of moral conviction and less on the positive. Before turning to each of these possibilities, it should also be noted that we do not mean to imply that the negativity bias in moral conviction work must be due to only one or the other explanation. Rather, the negativity bias could be attributed to each of these explanations to some extent. It is entirely possible, in fact, that both could be true at the same time.

19.2.1 Do the Consequences of Moral Conviction Reflect Something Intrinsic about the Construct?

The greater number of negative, compared to positive, consequences of moral conviction

may occur, quite simply, because combining morality with politics does more bad than good. Put differently, it is possible that, if we could look at the population of all possible outcomes of moral conviction that could be studied, there would be more that would be classified as normatively bad than normatively good and that this accounts for the discrepancy found in the literature. Indeed, there are at least two reasons to think that this may be the case.

One possible reason that moral conviction leads to more normatively negative outcomes than positive is because morality, in general, may be more about avoiding immoral outcomes than achieving moral ones. That is, although morality can encompass both prescriptive rules about what people should do and proscriptive rules about what they should not do, there is a bias towards proscription (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2009). In terms of moral conviction, this bias towards avoiding immorality could lead people to be more attuned to those who violate their morally convicted attitudes, as well as trying to avoid attitudinally inconsistent outcomes, than to forming coalitions with those with whom they morally agree and achieving attitudinally consistent outcomes. Consistent with this view, some have shown that moral conviction more strongly predicts activism intentions among prevention- than promotion-oriented individuals, suggesting people are more motivated to prevent immorality than to promote morality (Zaal et al., 2011).

Another possible reason that moral conviction may have more negative than positive consequences could lie in the characteristics described in the DTA that define moralised attitudes. When considering the characteristics of morally convicted attitudes described in the DTA, they seem, on their face, to lead to more negative than positive outcomes. Specifically, when people hold an attitude with moral

conviction they (1) view it in absolutist, objective right or wrong terms, (2) think it should apply to everyone, (3) view behaviour in attitude-consistent ways as obligatory and self-justifying, and (4) associate it with strong emotion. Taken together, these characteristics do not seem to fit well with a democratic system based on tolerance and compromise. Rather, it would not be surprising for a political system to suffer from the political gridlock and polarisation found in the research described in Section 19.1.1 if it also had large numbers of people holding morally opposing attitudes.

19.2.2 Do the Consequences of Moral Conviction Reflect Bias on the Part of the Researchers?

Another possible explanation for why researchers find more negative (compared to positive) consequences of moral conviction is that the differences reflect a bias on the part of the researchers. Given that humans may possess a more general bias towards negative than positive phenomena (Baumeister et al., 2001; cf. Corns, 2018), a likely candidate for the source of negativity bias in the moral conviction literature may be the researchers themselves. Specifically, moral conviction researchers can impact the scope of the literature through both the research questions and the specific attitude object they choose to study.

First, it is possible that moral conviction researchers – up until this point – have simply chosen to study the negative outcomes of moral conviction more than the positive outcomes. Perhaps reflecting the more general tendency for negative phenomena to ‘weigh’ heavier than positive (Baumeister et al., 2001), researchers may have thought that the negative outcomes were more important to study than the positive ones. Similarly, it also could mean that research questions related to

normatively negative phenomena are easier to generate than for positive phenomena. If this is the case, future research should intentionally focus on the potential positive outcomes in order to systematically test whether or not moral conviction leads to equal amounts of positive and negative outcomes.

The second possibility is that the overrepresentation of negative outcomes is the product of the specific attitude objects researchers have selected to study. Most research on moral conviction has selected controversial, hot-button political issues (e.g., abortion, gun control, physician-assisted suicide, the use of torture) as the focal attitude object. Often these issues are selected for methodological reasons because they are likely to have large numbers of both supporters and opponents (and, thus, are controversial) so that one’s position on the issue could be measured and ruled out as possible alternative explanations of a given phenomenon (e.g., Skitka et al., 2017). It is possible that moralising divisive political issues leads to more negative outcomes, but issues where there is more moral consensus may lead to more positive outcomes. For example, avoiding murder or striving for honesty are not normatively divisive and are likely to be high in moral conviction for most people. For issues such as these, moral conviction could increase social cohesion and harmony.

Why might issues with moral consensus lead to more positive outcomes? In defining what functions human morality serves, theories differ in terms of whether it is meant primarily to constrain immoral behaviour (e.g., Haidt, 2001) or to also promote morally good behaviour (e.g., Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013). If morality functions to constrain immoral behaviour and there is no consensus on whether a behaviour is immoral, then constraining others’ behaviour can lead to the negative outcome observed in the moral

conviction literature (e.g., intolerance, unwillingness to compromise). However, when there is a broad consensus on whether a behaviour is immoral (e.g., murder, rape), then constraining the behaviour of those who deviate from the consensus through intolerance or unwillingness to compromise can serve an important social function. Legal systems around the world are largely based on codifying and constraining behaviour that we, as a society, have deemed immoral. Similarly, if morality functions to promote morally good behaviour but there is no consensus on what the moral outcome of an issue is, then conflicting sides will promote what they believe to be the moral outcome at cross-purposes. However, if there is agreement that something is morally good (caring for the sick, educating children), then societies tend to build systems to support those moral goods (hospitals, schools) to society's benefit. Testing this perspective, however, is challenging. By definition, the ability to test the effect of a variable such as moral conviction on different outcomes requires there to be some variance in the construct. If there is a moral consensus on an issue, there is no variance to explore. That does not mean, however, that everyone in a society feeling morally convicted about something like murder does not have a normatively good outcome.

19.3 Conclusion and Future Directions

In this chapter, we argue that the negative outcomes (i.e., intolerance, unwillingness to compromise, acceptance of unethical means to achieve morally convicted ends) seem to outnumber the positive outcomes (civic and political engagement) of moral conviction. On the one hand, there may be something intrinsic about imbuing attitudes with moral conviction that results in them leading to more negative than positive consequences. On the

other hand, the negativity bias in the moral conviction literature could also result from researchers' choices – choosing to study the negative consequences more than the positive and choosing to study attitudes that are controversial. We should also note that the two sources of the negativity bias discussed here are not necessarily mutually exclusive. That is, it is entirely possible for them both to contribute to the observed negativity bias in the literature to some extent.

The current paper predicted that the presence or absence of moral consensus on an issue might play an important role in whether the consequences of moral conviction are viewed positively or negatively. Future research should explore the role of consensus in moral conviction's relationship with both positive and negative outcomes. Specifically, does consensus moderate whether the outcomes of moral conviction are more negative compared to positive? Do we observe more prosocial positive outcomes under conditions of moral consensus? Are normatively negative outcomes such as intolerance perceived as a positive outcome when there is moral consensus on the issue? For example, issues such as racial desegregation were once controversial and those on opposing sides likely viewed each other in the negative ways described in this review. As societal consensus was achieved, however, viewing supporters of segregation in a negative way was no longer seen as normatively wrong and was viewed as acceptable.

The current paper also assumed that people would perceive outcomes such as intolerance and unwillingness to compromise as normatively negative in general, but would be more accepting in the case of their moralised beliefs. Future research could test this possibility more directly. That is, will people normatively believe that an outcome is bad in general, but then, when they feel moral conviction about the issue at hand, no longer condemn it to the

same extent? Similarly, will people perceive political engagement to be positive in the abstract, but more negative when the goal of the engagement is inconsistent with their moral convictions? Anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that people's perceptions of whether protest movements such as the Tea Party Movement and Black Lives Matter are legitimate depends on whether they agree with the group's goals. Does viewing one's acceptance or rejection of the movement's goals as a reflection of one's moral beliefs exacerbate this division?

Beyond establishing the relationship between moral conviction and its positive and negative consequences, little research has looked into the boundary conditions for these effects. Previously, most research has sought to establish the relationship between moral conviction and a possible consequence and to demonstrate that it cannot be explained by related variables such as political extremity or attitude strength variables such as importance or certainty. More work is needed to look at the boundary conditions around when moral conviction does or does not predict the positive and negative outcomes described here. For example, beyond showing that people are intolerant of those who disagree with their moral convictions, future work could look into the contexts under which this relationship is stronger or weaker. Similarly, research could explore the possibility that some people may be less tolerant of diverse moral opinions than others. Up until this point, moderator variables have been elusive. For example, though past work has tested whether political ideology and status quo moderate the relationship between moral conviction and activism, no evidence was found in support of those potential moderators (Skitka et al., 2015, 2017).

Future research should also take a more experimental approach to the study of moral

conviction's outcomes to try to demonstrate more clearly whether the relationships are, in fact, causal. Most of the studies reviewed here used correlational designs wherein moral conviction was measured and shown to predict some outcome variable. Although it can be difficult to experimentally manipulate people's moral conviction directly, research could attempt to devise interventions that manipulate its relationship with the consequences reviewed in sections 19.1.1, 19.1.2, and 19.1.3. Some research, for example, has already taken this approach and shown that moral conviction's relationship with intolerance can be mitigated by engaging in mindfulness whereas cognitive depletion can exacerbate it (Baumgartner & Morgan, 2019).

Living in a democracy demands much of people. People must encounter, tolerate, compromise, work with, and live among others who have different perspectives and opinions. The research we described in this chapter indicates that vesting one's attitudes with moral conviction makes these challenges even more difficult. Although moral conviction motivates people to stand up for their beliefs, it also motivates a variety of negative responses towards those who disagree with those beliefs. These insights suggest an ambitious agenda for future research: why does moral conviction lead to more normatively negative than normatively positive outcomes (is it something about moral conviction itself or something about the biases and choices of morality researchers)? What conditions strengthen the relations between moral conviction and different outcomes? How can we harness the prosocial power of moral conviction while diminishing its destructive potential? A glimpse at our contemporary sociopolitical landscape suggests that answering these questions is more pressing than ever.

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20 The Political Psychology of National Identity

Kumar Yogeeswaran and Maykel Verkuyten

As we write this chapter, the world is in the midst of a pandemic that has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and has wrecked the global economy. To address the crisis, national governments worldwide exercised their sovereign right to close off their borders. In the years before the pandemic, many countries had strong debates about the meaning of their national identity, especially following decades of immigration and globalisation. And there has been a global rise of populist, nationalistic politics that puts the own nation first, argues for border controls, and questions forms of international cooperation. While nation states only became a part of human society a few centuries ago (Anderson, 1983; Smith, 2001), it is difficult to imagine a more central and defining feature of human society in the 21st century. Nations are a unique type of social community because unlike religion, class, or ethnicity, they are sovereign bodies that get to determine legal rights and obligations, the use of force and violence, and who is a legal insider or outsider (Ariely, 2012). Even in European nations where the European Union (EU) has sovereignty in many domains, policies over citizenship and nationhood are ultimately determined by the individual countries (Ariely, 2012). National identities shape people's reactions towards co-nationals, newcomers, and other nations.

For understanding the importance of this topic, we must first distinguish between national attachment and the normative content of a

nation (Huddy & Khatib, 2007; Schildkraut, 2014; Theiss-Morse, 2009). While the former refers to national identification and the related feelings of pride and belonging, the latter refers to beliefs about the criteria that demarcate membership in a nation and the historical, political, cultural, and geographical features that define it. People who love their country and have a strong sense of national belonging might have different beliefs about what makes their country unique and what it means to be Australian, German, French, American, and so forth. In the current chapter, we will first discuss research on national identification before considering its implications. Subsequently, we will explore the content of nationhood and discuss its importance for societal outcomes. We will conclude by highlighting some directions we believe are valuable for future research.

20.1 National Identity and Nationhood

Nations define citizenship, rights, and duties, and organise political, economic, legal, and cultural aspects of people's lives. Nationhood is expressed and symbolised in buildings, statues, songs, products, rituals, and historical narratives, but is also intimately connected in unnoticed everyday behaviours, routines, and habits. The nation we live in is the self-evident reference point through which we perceive the world and talk about the economy, health, societal conditions, weather, and sports (see

Billig, 1995 on banal nationalism). Nations represent an ‘imagined political community’ (Anderson, 1983) because their members will never quite know all their fellow citizens, and yet provide a lens through which their members may feel a sense of pride when their fellow citizens gain success at an international stage, feel anxiety or anger when their members are attacked, and provide a venue in which people can voluntarily lay down their life (see intergroup emotions theory; Mackie et al., 2008). Collectively, nationhood is what allows people to look past ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, and ideological differences to find oneness, solidarity, and sacrifice for people they will never personally know (Kymlicka, 2001). Shared nationhood can foster in-group trust, cooperation, support and social justice and thereby holds (diverse) societies together, allowing them to function effectively (Miller & Ali, 2014). And people who identify with the nation are more likely to conform to national norms influencing behaviour in a range of domains such as voting, prosociality, tax compliance, egalitarianism, and increased support for social policies that benefit minority groups (Ariely, 2012; Huddy & Khatib, 2007; Theiss-Morse, 2009; Torgler & Schneider, 2007). However, as we will describe in the sections that follow, such effects of nationhood are nuanced as they depend on the form of attachment one has to one’s nation, or the normative content and meaning of nationhood.

20.2 National Attachment and Identification

A core focus of political psychology research has been to examine national attachment or how people identify and relate to their nation. At a psychological level, nations are important as they help fulfil multiple psychological needs (Ariely, 2012; Sapountzis, 2008) including our

need for belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), security-based needs through protection and reducing uncertainty (Hogg, 2007), positive social identity or distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and continuity and meaningfulness (Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015). For example, research shows that feelings of self-continuity, self-esteem, and belonging are important and distinctive motivational principles of national identification (Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015). Further, national identification has been found to predict lower anxiety and improved health, over time, and in different societies (Khan et al., 2020). Recent research in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic used data from 67 countries ($N = 49,968$) to demonstrate that national identification predicted engagement in public health behaviours to stop the spread of the virus, and greater support for public health policies to address the pandemic (Van Bavel et al., 2021).

However, the psychological implications of national identification may depend on the form of attachment. Scholars have typically referred to a distinction between patriotism and nationalism (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989), national pride versus hubris (e.g., Bonikowski & DiMaggio, 2016), national pride versus chauvinism (Huddy & Del Ponte, 2020), blind versus constructive patriotism (Schatz & Staub, 1997), secure versus defensive identification (Cichocka, 2016), and glorification versus attachment (Roccas et al., 2006). However, for ease of processing, we will use the terms patriotism and nationalism to describe the myriad influences of this distinction as there is much conceptual overlap across these constructs, and both patriotism and nationalism have been found to form meaningful empirical constructs across countries and over time (Davidov, 2009, 2010).

While patriotism refers to positive affect towards one’s nation or national pride, nationalism refers to perceptions of national

superiority and a belief that one's country should have more power and influence over others (Bar-Tal & Staub, 1997; Blank & Schmidt, 2003; De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Schatz & Staub, 1997). Patriotism and its related constructs typically refer to positive affect and a sense of affiliation to one's nation that is non-idealised, accepting of criticism, and neutral in its evaluations of others. By contrast, nationalism refers to a sense of perceived national superiority, intolerance of criticism, and an idealisation of the nation (Blank & Schmidt, 2003). While both patriotism and nationalism represent positive attachment to one's nation, they are often motivated by differing social goals (Blank & Schmidt, 2003). Research reveals that right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) is related to both patriotism and nationalism, while social dominance orientation (SDO) is positively related to nationalism, but negatively related to patriotism (Osborne et al., 2017).

In trying to further understand differences in patriotism and nationalism, some work has used person-centred approaches involving latent profile analyses (LPA) to identify subgroups of individuals who differ in their constellation of these two forms of national attachment. For example, Bonikowski and DiMaggio (2016) used LPA to reveal four types of individuals in the USA including: (a) ardent identifiers (approximately 25% of the sample), who express high levels of national pride (patriotism), hubris (nationalism), and strong beliefs about who counts as American and who does not; (b) disengaged identifiers (approximately 17% of the sample), who show extremely low levels of pride, hubris, and few beliefs about the content of national character; (c) restrictive identifiers (approximately 38% of the sample), who show moderate levels of national hubris, low levels of national pride, and a relatively high number of restrictive

beliefs about who counts as American; and finally, (d) creedal identifiers (approximately 22% of the sample), who show high levels of national pride, moderate levels of hubris, and endorse mostly inclusive characteristics as defining national identity. In Section 20.2.1, we will consider the implications of these distinct forms of national attachment and identification.

20.2.1 Implications of National Attachment

A range of scholars from across the social and political sciences have considered the implications of patriotism and nationalism on societal outcomes including out-group attitudes, support for war, radical right voting, in-group guilt for historical wrongdoing, and attributions of humanity to others. For example, Roccas et al. (2006) found that nationalism was related to decreased guilt for the nation's historical wrongdoings, while patriotism was related to increased guilt for such wrongdoings. Similarly, nationalism is related to greater inhumanisation or reduced attribution of secondary emotions to out-groups than the in-group, while patriotism is negatively related to inhumanisation of out-groups (Viki & Calitri, 2008).

Perhaps the most studied topic in the literature relates to the implications of patriotism and nationalism on prejudice towards ethnic and religious minorities or immigrants. For example, scholars have used LPA to better understand profiles of national attachments in different countries and how these subgroups of individuals differ in out-group sentiments (e.g., Blank & Schmidt, 2003; Satherley et al., 2019). For example, Satherley and colleagues (2019) used LPA in New Zealand to identify seven distinct profiles of national attachment. Within their analyses, 'pure patriots', or those displaying high levels of patriotism and low

levels of nationalism, showed the most pro-immigrant sentiments, and displayed greater support for multiculturalism than others. By contrast, nationalistic patriots, or those displaying high levels of patriotism and moderate to high levels of nationalism, showed the lowest levels of support for multiculturalism and pro-immigrant sentiments.

Other studies reveal that nationalism is related to increased prejudice towards immigrants, ethnic minorities, and religious minorities (Blank & Schmidt, 2003; De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Green et al., 2011; Weiss, 2003). This consistent negative consequence of nationalism may be due to its comparative nature that facilitates hostility towards others (Mummendey et al., 2001) and its defensive or idealised nature (e.g., Blank & Schmidt, 2003). An extreme form of this idealisation is called *collective narcissism* (de Zavala et al., 2009). Drawing upon psychological research on individual-level narcissism (Crocker & Park, 2004), collective narcissism stems from the frustration of individual needs and implies an idealised belief in in-group greatness and a defensive positive view of the national in-group (de Zavala et al., 2009, 2013). Similar to psychological research demonstrating that narcissists show strong levels of interpersonal anger and aggression towards people who threaten (or even fail to reinforce) their positive self-perceptions (Baumeister et al., 1996; see recent meta-analysis by Kjærviik & Bushman, 2021), data from several nations reveals that collective narcissism predicts prejudice towards out-groups perceived as threatening the idealised vision of the nation (de Zavala et al., 2009, 2013), and a range of hostile behavioural intentions towards people from other countries (de Zavala et al., 2013). It is worth noting that the negative consequences of collective narcissism were found to emerge even when controlling for other individual difference factors such as SDO, RWA, and

patriotism (de Zavala et al., 2009, 2013), suggesting that collective narcissism represents a distinctly problematic side to idealisation of the nation.

Compared to nationalism, the evidence on patriotism for intergroup relations is mixed. While several studies have shown that patriotism is related to more positive attitudes towards ethnic minorities, immigrants, and religious minorities, others find no relationship between the two (Bar-Tal & Staub, 1997; Blank & Schmidt, 2003; De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Green et al., 2011; Kimmelmeier & Winter, 2008; Weiss, 2003). However, some work has established the directionality of the relationship between patriotism and nationalism with out-group prejudice using a longitudinal design to show cross-lagged effects of nationalism on increased out-group derogation (Wagner et al., 2012). Additionally, there was also a cross-lagged effect of patriotism decreasing out-group derogation, but only when controlling for nationalism, suggesting that the unique variance of patriotism contributes to positive effects of national identity (Wagner et al., 2012). This is similar to research that has found that national identification has positive implications for out-group attitudes when the overlap with collective narcissism is statistically controlled for (Cichocka, 2016). Accounting for the overlap shows the unique positive effects of secure national identification that stems from the satisfaction of individual needs which forms the psychological basis for an open attitude towards out-groups.

The importance of secure national identification for out-group openness is also in line with theories that emphasise the importance of how individuals explore, form, and maintain their national identity. Following Marcia's (1966) adaptation of Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development, research has focused on exploration and commitment as

two processes for understanding the formation of ethnic, racial, and national identity. It is argued that strong in-group identification encourages positive out-group attitudes, when individuals actively seek and incorporate information about their group membership and show efforts to understand its meaning (Phinney et al., 1997). For example, five studies with German youth (16–25 years) revealed that strong identifiers with high national identity exploration had more positive attitudes towards immigrants than strong identifiers with low exploration, which is mediated by reduced intergroup threat and less parochial in-group beliefs. Additionally, identity exploration enabled strong identifiers to oppose negative in-group norms (Spiegler et al., 2021).

The mixed results for patriotism might also have to do with context-specific effects that moderate the association between patriotism and out-group prejudice. For example, using data from 63 nations, Ariely (2012) examined the effects of patriotism and nationalism on anti-immigrant sentiments as a function of national globalisation. Globalisation was characterised by a multidimensional construct involving economic and social exchange as well as the movement of people (e.g., immigration, tourism), social norms, and behaviours. Ariely (2012) demonstrated that patriotism was associated with *decreased* anti-immigrant sentiments specifically in countries with high levels of globalisation, while nationalism was associated with *increased* anti-immigrant sentiments among countries high in globalisation. These findings suggest that globalisation accentuated the costs and benefits of both patriotism and nationalism on out-group prejudice.

Other work has examined the role of national attachment in combination with identity content for anti-immigrant and anti-minority sentiments. High identifiers tend to more strongly follow the socially shared norms, values, and beliefs of their in-group

(Turner et al., 1987). For example, higher Flemish identification predicts stronger endorsement of the dominant ethnic national discourse in Flanders which results in greater out-group prejudice (Meeus et al., 2010). However, high national identifiers will be more accepting towards immigrants and minorities when their national identity is defined in terms of multicultural diversity (Citrin et al., 2012), openness and tolerance (Smeekes et al., 2012), or egalitarianism (Butz et al., 2007). Furthermore, high national identifiers have been found to be particularly anti-immigrant when they hold an essentialist representation of their national identity (Pehrson, Brown, & Zagefka, 2009). These findings highlight the importance of considering the normative content of national identity alongside people's national attachment in determining their reactions to others.

20.2.2 Minority National Identification

A substantial and valuable body of work has specifically focused on the nature and implications of national identification among minority and immigrant groups. Although a comprehensive review of such work is out of the scope of the current chapter, such work is critical as minority national belonging impacts minority health, well-being, political participation, and also social cohesion. Cross-national research shows that in almost all countries, immigrants have lower national identification than majority group members (Elkins & Sides, 2007; Staerklé et al., 2010), and that immigrants' identification with their ethnic group tends to be considerably stronger than their national identification. Extant research has examined factors that undermine or promote minority and immigrant national identification (for a review, see Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012). For example, having citizenship, being of a later generation, length of stay in the

country, higher national language proficiency, and more social contacts with majority members have all been found to be associated with stronger national identification (e.g., Heath & Roberts, 2006; Zimmermann et al., 2007). Further, research on the rejection-disidentification model reveals that perceived discrimination among minority groups decreases national identification (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). Similarly, other work reveals that the perceived mismatch between national norms and values with that of one's minority group undermines national identification (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012; Zagefka & Brown, 2002).

Research in this area has also examined national disidentification among minority groups or the tendency to actively distance oneself from the national group (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012). Such disidentification is different from low identification as it involves an active rejection of the wider society and empirically loads on a separate factor from identification (e.g., Maliepaard & Verkuyten, 2018; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). Such disidentification can be detrimental for social cohesion and undermine societal participation, making it important to understand how to attenuate perceived conflict and incompatibility between national and ethnic identities among minority groups. Moreover, understanding factors that undermine minority national identification are important as this can improve minority political activity and collective action among minority group members (Simon & Ruhs, 2008), while also improving social relations between not only minority and majority groups, but also inter-minority relations (Hindriks et al., 2014).

20.3 Content of Nationhood

The second important focus within political science, history, sociology, and psychology

research on national identity has been to understand the meaning and content of nationhood. Public opinion research in various countries has shown that nationhood can be defined in different ways, such as through historical events, achievements, sites, and figures, cultural artefacts and consumer goods, political and institutional constellations, landscape and territory, or values and stereotypes. For example, in a representative survey in the Netherlands (SCP, 2019), defining characteristics that were frequently mentioned were Dutch language, symbols and traditions (e.g., King's day, liberation day), territory and landscape (polders, dikes, canals), 'typical' activities (cycling, ice skating), and values such as liberty, freedom of speech, and tolerance. Importantly, there was a relatively strong consensus about these defining features among different sections of the population and these features were considered to contribute to national pride and belonging, but not necessarily to a sense of shared responsibility and solidarity.

Despite the diversity and importance of these features for people's everyday understandings, national feelings, political discourse, and the mobilisation of the public (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001), scholars have examined the content and meaning of nationhood predominantly in terms of criteria for national belonging. One reason for this is that such criteria have implications for attitudes towards minorities and newcomers. For example, Pehrson, Vignoles, and Brown (2009) used multilevel modelling with data from 31 countries to show that national identification predicted increased anti-immigrant sentiments specifically in countries which defined nationhood as one where only people of certain ancestry or shared descent (ethnic nationhood) could count as a 'true' member of the nation. National identification was unrelated to anti-immigrant sentiments in countries

where nationhood was defined by shared citizenship and commitment to certain core values and ideals (civic nationhood).

For decades, scholars have examined the content and meaning of nationhood distinguishing between ethnic and civic conceptions of nationhood (see Brubaker, 2009; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1991, 2001). Such a distinction emerged from the writings of Kohn (1944) at the end of the Second World War, who conceptualised civic nationhood as reflective of liberal-minded western nations with its emphasis on personal liberty and voluntary participation, while ethnic nationhood was characterised by more eastern nations with a focus on folk culture, language, ethnicity, and bloodlines (for an overview, see Smith, 1991; Tamir, 2019). Later scholars have criticised the east–west distinction of this early work as overly simplistic (e.g., Janmaat, 2006; Tamir, 2019), while others have criticised the ethnic-civic distinction for being conceptually unclear and failing to capture the complexity of nationhood (for reviews, see Janmaat, 2006; Larsen, 2017; Tamir, 2019). Still others have shown that cultural characteristics are additional distinct criteria that people use to determine national belonging (Kymlicka, 2001; Reijerse et al., 2013; Shulman, 2002). Moreover, there have been methodological critiques about measurement technique (Wright et al., 2012), the meaning of various features (e.g., are place of birth and language, ethnic, civic, or cultural indicators of national belonging; Janmaat, 2006; Shulman, 2002), the usefulness of the framework in societies (e.g., Mauritius) where ethnic nationhood is not an option (Van der Werf et al., 2020), and the extent to which the theoretical and abstract ethnic-civic distinction reflects the way in which ordinary people actually think and reason about national belonging and enact their nationhood (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008; Tamir, 2019).

Nevertheless, despite these important critiques and nuances, many scholars have successfully developed and used the ethnic-civic framework for understanding implications of nationhood (Brubaker, 2009; Pehrson & Green, 2010; Smith, 1991; Tamir, 2019; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). Empirical research demonstrates that this two-factor distinction is justified (e.g., Reeskens & Hooghe, 2010) and research in different national contexts has shown that ethnic-civic conceptions and criteria of national belonging emerge side by side as contrasting normative images among the public (e.g., Levanon & Lewin-Epstein, 2010; Reeskens & Hooghe, 2010). People in some countries (e.g., the USA, Scotland, Netherlands, New Zealand) even appear to possess both ethnic and civic conceptions of national identity simultaneously (e.g., Schildkraut, 2007, 2014; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2016; Yogeeswaran et al., 2019).

20.3.1 Implications of Ethnic-Civic Nationhood

Several studies have examined the impact of ethnic and civic nationhood on important outcomes. For example, in the European context, the more people value ethnicity as defining of nationhood, the more likely they are to vote for the radical right (Lubbers & Coenders, 2017). Moreover, using data from 31 countries, multilevel modelling revealed that normative civic nationhood was related to greater well-being among citizens, while normative ethnic nationhood was related to lower well-being. This effect was found to be moderated by national pride such that those endorsing civic nationhood and national pride showed the highest levels of subjective well-being, while those low on national pride, but endorsing ethnic nationhood showed the lowest levels of subjective well-being (Reeskens & Wright, 2011).

Meanwhile, other work has examined the impact of nationhood on social capital yielding nuanced results. Specifically, Reeskens and Wright (2013) used data from 27 countries to show that ethnic nationhood is related to decreased social capital in the form of reduced social trust, decreased belongingness, and decreased volunteering in various organisations (those focused on social welfare, religion, education, arts, trade unions, environment, etc.), while civic nationhood was unrelated to social capital. However, other studies show that nationhood does not serve as the glue that encourages people to sacrifice for anonymous others, but rather that certain forms of nationhood can reduce a desire to contribute towards dissimilar others. For example, using data from 29 nations, Wright and Reeskens (2013) demonstrated that ethnic nationhood predicted greater welfare chauvinism or perceptions of immigrants as a welfare burden, and this relationship was especially strengthened in contexts with higher levels of immigrant diversity. However, civic nationhood did not provide a glue that decreased welfare chauvinism either; civic nationhood was simply weakly related to welfare chauvinism, suggesting that civic character is not a cure for all challenges of living with diversity either. In fact, recent work from New Zealand (Devos et al., 2020) revealed that majority group members' endorsement of civic nationhood predicted increased opposition to policies that try to redress inequalities between the European majority and minority indigenous (Māori) population through resource-based allocations (but not when such policies involved symbolic incorporation of indigenous culture). Since civic nationhood can be construed as implying that people are equal in society, majority group members can use such beliefs about nationhood to imply that policies to redress inequality are unnecessary (Devos et al., 2020).

More broadly, a large body of work has explored the implications of ethnic and civic nationhood on intergroup outcomes such as prejudice and exclusion of minorities and immigrants. For example, Weldon (2006) found that people were more willing to be politically tolerant of ethnic minorities (i.e., grant ethnic minorities equal rights to freedom of speech, religious liberty, etc.) and socially tolerant of them (i.e., acceptance of ethnic minorities in your neighbourhood, having your child marry someone from the group, etc.) in nations with more civic nationhood than ethnic nationhood beliefs. Similarly, stronger beliefs about the importance of having a specific ancestral background to be considered a New Zealander predicted increased prejudice towards Muslims and decreased support for diversity, while beliefs about the importance of having New Zealand citizenship and respecting the nation's institutions and laws were unrelated to Muslim attitudes and support for diversity (Yogeeswaran et al., 2019). Furthermore, among Dutch national samples, it was found that the endorsement of ethnic citizenship was related to lower acceptance of immigrant rights and their political participation because of a weaker sense of common national belonging and higher adherence to primo-occupancy beliefs. In contrast, the endorsement of civic citizenship was associated with higher acceptance of immigrant rights and their political participation because of a stronger sense of common belonging and lower belief in primo-occupancy (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015).

Other research has experimentally manipulated the salience of national identity to be more ethnic or civic in nature to consider its impact on intergroup outcomes. For example, Wakefield and colleagues (2011) made salient the civic nationhood of Scotland among majority group members and found increased perceptions of similarity with a Chinese

descent co-national, thereby increasing willingness to help this person in need (relative to controls). However, making salient the ethnic nationhood of Scotland decreased perceived similarity with this Chinese descent co-national, and in turn decreased willingness to help them (Wakefield et al., 2011). Other work has similarly manipulated the salience of ethnic minorities' fit or lack thereof with these competing conceptions of nationhood to examine its impact on implicit and explicit national inclusion. Specifically, when White Americans read biographies highlighting ethnic minorities' civic engagement and contributions to the country (highlighting civic national character), participants perceived their entire minority group as more American both implicitly and explicitly. However, reading biographies highlighting ethnic minorities' connection to their ethnic heritage (highlighting lack of fit with ethnic national character) decreased the extent to which their entire ethnic group was seen as American both implicitly and explicitly (Yogeewaran et al., 2012). Interestingly, national exclusion of ethnic minorities was evident when ethnic minorities embraced their ethnic heritage in public places, but not when such expressions were in the privacy of their home (Yogeewaran et al., 2011).

More recently, research in different countries has shown that majority group members consider minorities to have divided loyalties when they identify with both their ethnic and national group (Kunst et al., 2019) or have dual or foreign citizenship (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2020). Similarly, majority group members in Switzerland rejected naturalisation applicants from immigrants who maintain their cultural heritage (Politi et al., 2020). Collectively, such studies reveal that the content of national identity made salient at a given time can impact majority group treatment of ethnic minorities and immigrants.

20.3.2 Psychological Representations of Nationhood

While the research described in Section 20.3.1 highlights the content and normative representations of nationhood, psychological research reveals a further complication in national representations of 'us' versus 'them'. Specifically, utilising self-categorisation theory and cognitive research on prototypes, research has shown that there can be a disjuncture between people's abstract notions of nationhood defined in ethnic or civic terms and people's concrete representations of specific groups within the nation. As nationhood represents a superordinate identity where various ethnic, racial, linguistic, ideological, or religious subgroups live within, it may be that some groups are seen as more defining or prototypical of the national identity than others. This means that even if people define their nation in terms of inclusive civic characteristics, they may simultaneously possess a hierarchy for the degree of representativeness among various groups within the nation.

While the in-group projection model (Wenzel et al., 2008) demonstrates that majority members can perceive their group as relatively more prototypical or defining of a superordinate category, research reveals that even minority groups can perceive their racial/ethnic group as less prototypical of the nation than the majority (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Devos et al., 2010). Such a disjuncture is found on direct measures of relative prototypicality (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2016; Wenzel et al., 2008), but is especially salient when one assesses nationhood through indirect means. A large body of research has established the distinction between implicit or automatic processes from explicit or deliberate processes (for reviews, see Devos, 2008; Gawronski & Payne, 2011; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). In the domain of national

identity, this means that while people may consciously possess beliefs about who counts as member of a nation and who does not based on, say, civic nationhood, these beliefs do not necessarily line up with their implicit beliefs about who counts as a member of the nation. For example, although Americans overwhelmingly endorse a civic conception of nationhood, and self-report that African Americans and White Americans are equally defining of American nationality, on a reaction-time task such as the implicit association task (IAT; Greenwald et al., 1998), their responses reveal that they perceive White Americans as more strongly associated with the nation than African Americans (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Over the years, studies have revealed that implicit beliefs about nationhood can sometimes converge with explicit self-reported beliefs about the same, and at other times these can diverge. For example, while the above example involving African Americans illustrate the divergence between implicit and explicit beliefs about nationality, other studies show that Americans and New Zealanders both rate co-nationals of Asian descent as being less American or Kiwi relative to White Europeans, both at an explicit *and* implicit level (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Sibley & Liu, 2007).

Why should we care about such implicit beliefs about nationhood? Research reveals that implicit beliefs that American nationality was more associated with White than Asian Americans predicted decreased willingness to hire Asian Americans for jobs in national security (but not for identical jobs in the private sector), and more negative evaluations of an op-ed critical of current public policy when written by an Asian American author relative to a White American author. Such negative evaluations were driven by beliefs that Asian Americans were less loyal to the country than White Americans, suggesting that these

implicit beliefs lead people to doubt the trustworthiness and motivations of an Asian American (Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010). Similarly, implicit beliefs associating American nationality with White relative to African Americans predicted decreased support for Barack Obama during the 2008 and 2012 elections (Devos & Ma, 2013; Ma & Devos, 2014). These effects emerged even when controlling for implicit prejudice towards African Americans, further highlighting their distinctiveness from general feelings towards minority groups (Ma & Devos, 2014; also see Zou & Cheryan, 2017). Taken together, such work highlights the importance of exploring the content of nationhood, especially considering such beliefs at both the implicit and explicit level.

20.4 Where Do We Go from Here?

We conclude this chapter by considering areas we believe are ripe for future exploration in political psychology. One obvious area for future development is for research to provide greater attention to perceived historical and sociopolitical factors that shape nationhood as national identity is historically grounded, provides a sense of collective continuity, and is moulded by geopolitical events. Relatedly, future work would benefit from exploring the emergence and development of people's conceptions of nationhood and what contributes to their representations and definitions of national identity.

Another direction for future research is to go beyond the ethnic-civic distinction and consider a broader range of characteristics that people in their everyday lives use to think about nationhood and national belonging. What it means to be national involves not only ethnic and civic criteria but also events, achievements, traditions, goods and services, sports, and the landscape and territory. For

example, recent research on collective ownership, or the perceived right to control and determine operations of the national in-group, reveals that people can use differing principles for defining collective ownership over the nation and national territory in particular (for a review, see Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2017). For example, collective ownership can be determined by principles of primo-occupancy (i.e., national sovereignty over who came first to the land), labour and investment (i.e., entitlement to the land based on investment and efforts to develop the land), or formative principles (i.e., importance of the territory in the emergence of the historical identity for one's group). Such principles of collective ownership are at the core of how many nations come to define who they are, how they see their own group's belonging, and how they treat minority and immigrant groups as well as neighbouring nations (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2017). For example, recent work from the UK revealed that collective ownership beliefs predicted anti-immigrant sentiments among right-wing people, whereas collective ownership beliefs predicted anti-EU sentiments and greater support for 'Brexit' among left-wing people in the UK (Nijs et al., 2020).

Another area for further development is the exploration of new tools to study both national attachment and the content of nationhood. Attitudes and cognitions emerge at both implicit and explicit levels, and the use of diverse tools can enrich our understanding of various phenomena. For example, cross-cultural research on self-esteem reveals that people from some countries (e.g., Asian nations) show lower average levels of explicit self-esteem than people in other countries (e.g., Western nations). However, when using implicit measures, no differences in implicit self-esteem are found because of cross-cultural differences in internalised norms

about positive self-expressions in Eastern versus Western nations (for a review, see Sedikides et al., 2015). In a similar fashion, it may be that national attachment in certain forms (e.g., nationalism or collective narcissism) is less expressed in self-report measures based on national norms, and the use of implicit measures or other indirect tools alongside self-report can provide greater insight into the impact of national attachment. Similarly, beliefs about nationhood are abstract in nature and therefore subject to varying construals based on people's motivations, so expanding the scope of how we measure endorsement of such national content can enrich our understanding of the implications of nationhood.

Finally, another avenue for future work is through advancement of the political psychology of citizenship. While citizenship has been explored within philosophy, political science, and law, less attention has been given to its study in psychology, with notable exceptions in recent special issues and edited volumes (Borgida et al., 2009; Stevenson et al., 2015). As citizenship refers to legal status and political membership within a nation, it provides a legal framework through which people within a nation can be treated equally, feel included, and engage with the wider society. Research on citizenship has examined factors facilitating civic participation and citizenship, or barriers to citizenship and civic engagement, especially among marginalised communities (see Stevenson et al., 2015). However, the legal privileges granted by citizenship also imply that non-citizens and stateless persons will be denied certain rights and status, and even those that naturalise to become citizens can be considered second-class citizens. Citizenship has major implications for all domains of life and future work would benefit from exploring the implications of boundaries around citizenship,

naturalisation processes among new citizens, and factors that increase or decrease active citizenship and participation.

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21 The Political Dynamics of Immigration Opinion Worldwide

Nicholas A. Valentino and Yunsieg P. Kim

21.1 Introduction

Research on the comparative dynamics of immigration opinion has expanded rapidly over the last two decades, no doubt due to the increasing availability of high-quality surveys in combination with the important economic and cultural concern about human labour flows from developing to more advanced industrial societies. In our initial review of this burgeoning literature, we found hundreds of empirical papers exploring trends in immigration support over time, dynamics in individual countries, and attention to a wide variety of theoretical approaches. The benefits of such an exhaustive search were many, but the scope of the task also made writing this chapter challenging. To accomplish our goal, we were forced to make difficult choices.

First, the chapter focuses on recent work, mostly published since 2010, with special attention to comparative analyses. While many foundational texts on the subject were written before that, and we do cite some of those, we assume the reader is familiar with them or, if not, is motivated to go back and read other literature reviews (see, for example, Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). While once quite rare, survey-based studies comparing attitudes about immigrants and immigration across receiving nations are growing in number. These studies provide unique insights, and reveal new puzzles, that future scholars can explore.

Second, we focus almost entirely on the psychological dynamics of public acceptance or

rejection of newcomers, rather than variation in migrant experiences, identities, attitudes, and trajectories of acculturation and assimilation across generations. That literature is fascinating and important, but we felt it deserved more space than we could reasonably afford. Green and Staerklé (2013) do an excellent job of organising research on the topic. Work on the complex dynamics of identity formation among immigrant and refugee groups around the world (e.g., Ocampo & Ocampo, 2020; Ocampo et al., 2018; Vollhardt et al., 2015) or in the drivers of political mobilisation and participation among immigrant groups (e.g., Gutierrez et al., 2019) are all areas of growing attention, and for good reason. Readers are encouraged to explore this work.

Third, whenever possible we try to discuss the challenges of specific research designs for untangling the very thorny questions about causal explanations (see also Chapter 30). If you find education is consistently correlated with tolerance for immigrants in an observational study, what would you conclude? There are good reasons to believe education actually causes tolerance for others by bringing people into healthy and constructive contact with each other under egalitarian and respectful circumstances. But educated people also tend to be wealthy, and wealth might shield individuals from economic costs associated

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with newcomers. How can we know if it was the education or family wealth that drove attitudes?

After reading this chapter, it should be obvious that this kind of question lies at the very heart of most academic debates about immigration opinion dynamics: how do we know what comes first, second, and so on in a long list of possible causes and consequences of immigration opinion? As often as possible, we sought out and included studies that afforded strong causal inferences. This means we favoured experimental designs, but also those which took creative advantage of causal instruments in the real world which allowed scholars to rule out one explanation or another. Let us begin by laying out a few basic observations about the real immigration context so that our discussion of the roots of public opinion dynamics can build on a foundation of current and (hopefully) valid statistical facts.

21.2 Facts and Figures

First, how much immigration is occurring, and are trends increasing or decreasing? According to the US Census, the foreign-born percentage of the population was in the low teens from 1900 to 1920, and then declined sharply into the single digits as a result of immigration restrictions enacted by Congress (see Jardina, 2019, ch. 6, for an excellent review). In the late 1960s, the trend shifted upward again as a result of the liberalising Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, reaching percentages again in the low

teens and then beginning to inch up ever so slowly to the present. Pew Research estimates that, as of August 2020, 13.7% of the US population was foreign born, nearly triple that in 1970.¹ When it comes specifically to unauthorised immigrants, the USA witnessed a sharp increase from 3.5 million to more than 12 million residents between 1990 and 2005. Subsequently, these numbers tailed off after the Great Recession of 2008, but stabilised through 2016.² During the Trump administration, legal immigration was sharply curtailed, but undocumented immigration continued relatively unabated (though early estimates suggest the COVID-19 pandemic slowed all immigration).³ International data similarly reveal a slow upward drift. According to the UN, 2.3% of the world's population in 1970 were migrants (i.e., people who changed their country of usual residence).⁴ By 2019, that number had increased gradually to 3.5%. Although not a massive increase, the world population grew so much over that period that the 1.2% rise in immigration represented nearly 200 million additional people on the move.

The increase in immigration – both documented and undocumented – has raised many concerns among both pundits and laypeople alike. For example, do undocumented immigrants commit more crime than natives? The answer seems to be no, and they quite possibly commit fewer felonies compared to legal immigrants and native-born US citizens, all else equal (e.g., Light et al., 2020). Further, the rate of immigrant criminality has not increased in recent years, in contradiction to the rhetoric of many populist leaders and far-right commentators.

Do immigrants take jobs or wages from natives? On balance, the answer is no here, too. Most aggregate economic analyses find rather minimal effects of immigration on local wages or employment (Friedberg & Hunt,

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>

² <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/12/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/>

³ <https://www.cato.org/blog/president-trump-reduced-legal-immigration-he-did-not-reduce-illegal-immigration>

⁴ https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020_en_ch_2.pdf

1995; Peri & Yasenov, 2019), or even a positive long-term effect (Ottaviano & Peri, 2008).

Do immigrants pay their share of taxes to offset the burden they place on social services in receiving countries? Here the evidence has been mixed, in no small part because the effect depends simultaneously on many variables. Some studies show that immigrants are a net burden on social welfare infrastructure in most places in the years immediately after they arrive, especially because they tend to have more children and are poorer on average than natives (Hanson, 2005). On the other hand, undocumented immigrants contribute to tax rolls in many ways without receiving benefits (e.g., social security payroll taxes in the USA), and naturalised citizens become net contributors in the longer term (Smith & Edmondston, 1997). Moreover, for countries with large elderly native populations including the USA, Japan, and many European nations, the net social welfare benefit for accepting younger working-age immigrants is immediately positive (Krugman & Obstfeld, 2000).

In summary, the evidence most consistently suggests immigrants do not negatively affect natives' income or exposure to crime, and natives often benefit (rather than lose) in terms of social welfare provision and taxation. Despite the potential rewards of openness, a plurality of Americans (~50%) have preferred decreasing all immigration since the American National Election Study began asking this question in 1992. Moreover, support for increasing immigration has never exceeded the high teens (Jardina, 2019).

Even if the real impact of shifting human capital across borders has rather muted or even beneficial economic and security effects on receiving nations, citizens may still *perceive* those immigrants to pose a variety of threats and those perceptions might matter politically. Note that as soon as we move from real to perceived threats, our job in testing

independent causal effects becomes much more difficult, and this is exactly where political psychologists have spent most of their energy. Thinking about the most fundamental question posed at the start, how could we causally separate the effects of perceived threats to immigration from perceived threats to culture, especially if we know real economic costs are probably small in the net and potentially positive? Many observational studies pit self-reported economic and cultural or group-based concerns against each other head-to-head, and when they do, group identities very often dominate the conversation. But some wonder whether these are really independent dimensions, or whether they are linked in more complex causal chains, from personality biases to economic insecurities to group-based identities and finally to policy opinions. These questions are at the heart of many of the studies we will review.

21.3 The Effect of Contact on Immigration Opinion

Evidence has been around for some time suggesting that majority groups identify demographic changes as an existential threat to their culture and way of life, and which must be stopped via strict immigration policies (Quillian, 1995; see also Chapter 15). Newman (2015) corroborates the cultural threat hypothesis with survey data that specifically ask respondents to recall if they had come into contact with unassimilated (non-English speaking) immigrants. He found that such self-reported contact was highly negatively correlated with restrictionist attitudes. Enos (2014) designed an ingenious experiment to test this hypothesis causally by randomly assigning Spanish-speaking confederates into spots in communities where locals routinely and repeatedly congregate (such as subway platforms). The goal was to simulate

demographic change while holding all other features of the environment constant. The result of the experiment was striking. Locals were more likely to espouse negative immigration attitudes if they had used stations where the Spanish-speaking confederates were randomly assigned. Craig and Richeson (2014) also find that cultural threats to the nation powerfully activate right-wing authoritarianism and boost opposition to immigration among natives. Increasing immigration rates have been blamed by some to increase electoral support for right-wing populist parties, and indeed there is some observational evidence in support of this concern (Arzheimer, 2009; see also Chapter 28). These results confirm how difficult it is to achieve the positive benefits of intergroup contact (Allport, 1954) when natives react with scepticism to the simple presence of newcomers.

Although individual studies may indicate actual immigration trends influence natives' sociopolitical views, the evidence obtained from a meta-analysis of 48 studies over the last 3 decades is inconclusive (Amengay & Stockemer, 2019). In some places, at some moments, increases in the number of immigrants boosts support for right-wing parties touting ethnoculturalist platforms. But in nearly just as many cases it seems there is no association at all, or the association is negative. Vasilopoulos et al. (2021) find that in France, immigration at the neighbourhood level was not associated with support for the far-right candidate, Marine Le Pen, in 2017. At the scale of the French department, however, places with more immigrations and higher unemployment were more likely to support her. This suggests, as Wong (2010) has before, that it is important to understand the precise spatial context where intergroup contact actually occurs before testing theories about its costs and benefits (see also Chapter 15).

The perceived burden that immigrants pose for social welfare provision may also affect immigration attitudes, even if the true net effect is small or even positive. Garand et al. (2017) find that attitudes about immigrants between 1992 and 2012 were tightly linked to support for social welfare recipients and general welfare spending, suggesting that American elites' efforts to characterise immigration as economically burdensome succeeded despite a lack of evidence to support the claim. Likewise, Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) find some evidence that poorer Americans are more concerned than wealthier ones about poor immigrants increasing the fiscal burden on social welfare programmes. But even this association is rather small, and ethnocentric or sociotropic economic motives are more powerfully associated with these attitudes in the USA (see also Chapter 12). However, Hanson et al. (2007) find a correlation between exposure to immigration-related fiscal pressures in a locality and opposition to immigration among US natives. Further, the strength of that relationship increases with native skill levels, presumably because wealthier natives will pay a larger share of the fiscal burden immigrants represent. However, there is also evidence on the other side of this coin. Living in areas where large foreign investments enrich the local economy can significantly boost support for immigration (Liao et al., 2020). Notably, Liao and colleagues were able to find an exogenous influx of foreign investment that was not caused by attitudes towards Chinese immigrants in the first place.

21.4 Occupational Competition

One might expect opposition to immigration to be tied to the realistic threat immigrants pose to one's own occupational stratum. However, as we mentioned in Section 21.3,

there is very little real effect of immigration on natives' wages or employment. When it comes to opinion dynamics, however, we still might expect perceived threats from immigrants to lead to opposition even if it does not actually materialise. Since most immigrants are fleeing economically challenging circumstances to countries that have greater opportunity, lower-skilled natives should oppose immigration most strongly in order to protect their jobs and wages from competition. And indeed, survey-based studies have documented this basic association across many countries (Mayda, 2006; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001). One challenge to this conclusion, however, is that natives higher in socio-economic status might also be more accepting of newcomers because they are more racially tolerant, perhaps as a specific result of higher levels of education (Citrin et al., 1997; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007).

There are cases where higher-skilled communities react to an influx of high-skilled immigrant labour with at least modest opposition. Malhotra and colleagues (2013) found that locals become nervous when immigrants with H1B visas (i.e., temporary work visas for speciality jobs) arrive in Silicon Valley and begin to compete for high-tech jobs at major technology firms. We tend to agree with Malhotra et al.'s balanced summary of the results in this large literature. While ethnocentric and symbolic concerns are generally more powerful, small but significant labour market competition effects can occasionally be found. More work that finds design-based solutions to the thorny observational entanglement of economic and non-economic forces on policy opinion will always be valued.

21.5 Sociotropic Economic Concerns

While there is little evidence to suggest individual material interests drive immigration

opinions, comparative studies have consistently found that *sociotropic economic concerns* are strongly associated with immigration opinion. Kinder and Kiewiet (1981) first noticed that voters eschewed individual observations about the state of their own pocketbooks when deciding whom to vote for at the national level, instead basing such choices on how well the national economy was performing under the incumbent. This national-level standard seems to be applied in the domain of immigration as well: high skilled, highly educated immigrants are uniformly preferred, perhaps because they are seen as more likely to contribute their fair share of taxes and labour to their new country (Citrin et al., 1997; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2015). This finding is replicated in comparable survey experimental studies in 11 countries across 4 continents: natives prefer highly skilled immigrants over those less skilled, regardless of the racial or ethnic phenotypes presented in an experimental vignette (Valentino et al., 2019). These preferences are unmoderated by natives' skill, ethnic phenotype, or education levels. Both poorer and wealthier, as well as less and more educated, natives prefer wealthy immigrants. Further, these studies uncover very little evidence that competition for social welfare among the less-educated or lower-income natives drives the preference for high-skilled immigrants since the pattern is unchanged across countries with more or less generous social welfare regimes.

Perceived cultural threats also seem to be playing an increasing role in immigration opinion dynamics in Asian countries (Ramsay & Pang, 2017). In Singapore, for example, concerns that Chinese immigrants pose a threat to the local economy or are unwilling to acculturate to local norms and customs are far better predictors of opposition to immigration compared to stereotypes about competence or warmth of members of those

groups. This pattern seems consistent with what has been found in most immigrant-receiving nations: the worry that immigrants will ‘change who we are as a people’ plays a much larger role on openness than the real or even perceived economic impact (see also Chapter 20).

The concern that newcomers will not assimilate into the traditions of their new-found home, learn the language, and follow local laws and customs is a common refrain in policy debates around the world. An often-popular view among politicians from across the ideological spectrum is that only those who have already proven they are willing to make such sacrifices should be given the privilege of citizenship. This sentiment is clearly represented in US policies that award citizenship status to immigrants who enlisted in the military during times of war. If so, what factors improve the chances that immigrants assimilate themselves into the new social fabric? Perhaps ironically, naturalisation itself seems to facilitate this process. Hainmueller et al. (2017) use an ingenious instrumental variable design to show that immigrants who receive Swiss citizenship, especially those from more marginalised groups and those who are trusted with citizenship earlier in their residency, are far more likely to plan to stay in the country, to belong to a social club, and read Swiss newspapers rather than media from their home countries. These results suggest that naturalisation may not best be seen as a crown for those who have assimilated, but as a catalyst for those who have not.

21.6 The Media’s Role

Public perceptions about immigrants are often wildly inaccurate. In fact, innumeracy with regard to estimates of all minority populations in the USA is well established. Americans often believe there are more than double the

true percentage of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians living in the country (Alba et al., 2005). Europeans also consistently and substantially overestimate immigrant population sizes, often by more than double or triple (Herda, 2010; Sides & Citrin, 2007). The fact that many, if not most, citizens in advanced democracies hold inaccurate and inflated estimates of the number of immigrants in their communities makes it easier to understand why real aggregate economic factors often have little effect on opinion. Where do these inaccurate beliefs come from, and what else do people think about immigrants and immigration that might not match the reality?

Herda (2010) speculates that innumeracy is caused in part by cues from the news media, which could trigger powerful perceptions of threat that further exacerbate anti-immigrant bias. Content analyses of negative linguistic bias in news coverage of immigration add credence to this possibility (Mastro et al., 2014). We also know that the news media in the USA began to mention Latinos more frequently than other groups in stories about immigration after about 1994, when California’s anti-immigrant ballot proposition 187 was passed (Valentino et al., 2013). While coverage of Latino immigrants tracks fairly closely with actual newcomers from Central and South America, it pays far less attention to immigrants from Asia than their numbers would predict. The increased attention to Latinos primes attitudes about this group in particular, making them more powerful predictors of immigration policy compared to attitudes about other specific groups. There is also evidence that common political campaign appeals that explicitly attack Latino immigrants as ‘destroying the United States’ are not rejected as racist (Reny et al., 2020), as has also been demonstrated for anti-black campaign appeals (Valentino et al., 2018) even

though respondents clearly recognise their racially hostile intent. Importantly, actual immigration flows and national media attention probably interact, as Hopkins (2010) demonstrates in both time-series and cross-sectional geocoded surveys. The combination of a large increase in immigration in a local community with a spike in national mainstream news attention on the issue powerfully catalyses anti-immigrant attitudes.

The media may also, unwittingly or intentionally, invoke hostile and dangerous metaphors when discussing immigration. The most obvious example is the media's long-standing, disproportionate emphasis on immigrant criminality (Chavez, 2008; Farris & Mohamed, 2018; Mohamed & Farris, 2020) compared to what we know are generally lower rates of crime among newcomers. Increasingly sensational and dehumanising portrayals are common (Abrajano & Hajnal, 2015; McIlwain & Caliendo, 2011). One study found a pattern of portrayals that could reasonably lead viewers to see immigrants as pollutants or contaminants in what had previously been orderly and serene communities (Cisneros, 2008). The gatherings of undocumented workers waiting for work in the parking lots of big box stores, or the disorganised groups of immigrants coming across the border, are featured regularly on a variety of mainstream news media channels. These depictions have only become more explicit and more hostile in recent years, with elected officials claiming that dangerous criminal, even terroristic hordes, were constantly threatening to overrun the southern border of the United States.

It is important to note that these results are probably not just a recent phenomenon. They represent a long historical contestation waged in the media, but also in nationalisation laws and institutional practices about who truly *belongs* in America (Masuoka & Junn, 2013;

see also Chapter 20). It is that contestation over racial hierarchy, which Masuoka and Junn convincingly argue has always been more complicated than a simple 'white versus non-white' binary, that shapes both the portrayal and policy treatment of newcomers. Extending these insights to other immigrant-receiving nations is an important task for future scholarship. For example, the same style of rhetoric was seen regularly in the debate over Brexit in the UK.

The consequences of biased media depictions are difficult to isolate, but the concern is obvious: images of non-white immigrants that exaggerate criminality and desperation may change how immigrants are automatically imagined (Zhirkov, 2021). As a result, attitudes about those racial groups, not the real costs and benefits of having newcomers in our communities, will come to dominate policy debates. Of course, there are examples of positive media effects in this domain as well. Hopkins (2015) uses a carefully designed video experiment to manipulate how culturally distinct an immigrant sounds, in addition to manipulating the individual's skin tone. He finds that Latino immigrants who speak accented English are actually viewed more favourably by white respondents, perhaps because the accent signals an attempt to assimilate. Additional research is needed to isolate the causal effect of social media cues in exacerbating or mitigating dangerous misinformation about immigrant population sizes and threats posed to native jobs, culture, and public safety.

21.7 Emotional Mechanisms

Researchers have made good progress in understanding the causal mechanisms through which media elites might trigger opinion change on immigration. One conjecture draws on the growing literature on the previously

misunderstood role that specific emotions play in the human brain's processing of information. In Affective Intelligence Theory (Marcus et al., 2000; see also Chapter 9), anxiety plays a counterintuitive role in orienting the brain towards new information by triggering more vigilant surveillance of the environment. Rather than leading citizens to shut down and withdraw from the threat, things that make us feel anxious make us collect more information, think harder about what we might do to solve the problems we face, and get ready to act.

In the immigration context, predictions about the role of negative emotions bear out. When Brader, Valentino, and Suhay (2008) carefully manipulated the ethnic cues in news stories about immigration, they found stories about Mexican immigrants triggered substantially more anxiety than identical stories about white immigrants from Eastern Europe. Interestingly, these large differences in anxiety were not accompanied by ethnically driven differences in perceptions of the actual size of the threat. In other words, learning that immigration carries significant risks for the economy or culture, as all the stories in their study suggested, led respondents to view immigration as more threatening, but only those stories with Latino immigrants led to substantially higher levels of anxiety. Finally, they found that anxiety strongly mediated the effect of exposure to these cues on opinion change and behaviour: those who read the news story about the Latino immigrant moved more significantly against open immigration policies, and pledged to engage in political action consistent with that opposition. This general pattern of experimental results was replicated in a real-world setting, with Iowa voters during the 2008 caucuses (Knoll et al., 2011).

Another important line of work in this area finds that emotional reactions to out-groups

can become so tightly linked to politics that simply inducing the emotion, even absent any realistic group threat, can trigger ethnocentric attitudes, leading to opposition to immigration openness (Banks, 2016). Thus, while we often think of negative emotions simply as a mediator between a threat and opinions, they can also be independent causal agents. In a political climate riven with anger, like our current moment demonstrates, realistic threats may be unnecessary to produce real political consequences.

This is similar in an important way to work by Albertson and Gadarian (2015), who show that emotions shape not only the *amount* of new information people seek, but the *kind* of information they are drawn to – independent of the actual circumstances in which they find themselves (see also Gadarian & Albertson, 2014). When made to feel anxious, people seek out more threatening information about immigration. In addition, those citizens remember and agree with the more threatening information at higher rates than those who were not anxious in the first place. This pattern suggests a mechanism by which populist elites can drive up policy opposition independent of realistic threats from immigration. It also means that far-right populist leaders may receive an electoral benefit from exaggerating fears about immigration. So far, we have not seen much evidence that these strategies carry the risk of backfiring electorally, especially since members of the targeted group are often non-voters in the first place. However, Gutierrez et al. (2019) find suggestive observational evidence that Latino voters may have been politically motivated to vote in 2016 as a result of anger triggered by Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric during the campaign. More work needs to be done on the dynamic in 2020, where it appears that support for Trump rose in key Latino communities in Florida and Texas.

21.8 Personality and Fear of the Other

Leaving contextual and media-based explanations for immigration opinion, one might consider the possibility that very deeply rooted personality factors could explain why some people are reluctant to embrace newcomers. The literature on genetic and personality predictors of political attitudes and behaviour is growing rapidly (for detailed reviews, see Chapters 3 and 5, respectively), and we have only enough space to review a few provocative studies on this topic. But these factors are well worth considering since they could represent ‘unmoved movers’ in any causal model.

One of the more provocative hypotheses in this line of work examines the role of disgust sensitivity – the tendency to react aversively to perceptions of pathogen threats – in the domain of immigration opinion (Aarøe et al., 2017; Kam & Estes, 2016). Evolution has programmed humans, to varying degrees of course, to avoid pathogens in order to survive and reproduce. Disgust is an automatic emotional reaction evolved to lead people to quickly avoid situations that might lead to illness, part of what is called the behavioural immune system. If interacting with strangers from groups very different than our own posed some risk of disease to our distant ancestors, perhaps we might still carry self-protective reactions to strangers even today. If so, variation in how sensitive a person is to pathogens might predict opposition to immigration. And indeed, this is exactly what these studies find. For example, Aarøe et al. (2017) collected self-reported disgust sensitivity scales with questions such as ‘I never let any part of my body touch the toilet seat in public restrooms’, as well as a purely physiological measure of disgust sensitivity based on skin conductance readings after exposure to images related to infection and disease on a computer screen.

They find that, in samples from both the USA and Denmark, disgust sensitivity, regardless of how it is measured, boosts opposition to immigration, controlling for social demographics and political ideology.

A related and now venerable intellectual tradition explores the possibility that basic personality differences undergird variation in the degree to which citizens are attracted to right-wing ideology (see also Chapter 5), and the occasionally terrible human suffering that sometimes results from it (Adorno et al., 1950). This topic is covered extensively in other chapters of the handbook, so we should only briefly highlight important work here. One argument in this line of research is that some people are more sensitive to threats than others and, as a result, they come to prefer strong political leaders who will control and protect their country from external risks, including immigration, and ensure social conformity even at the risk of individual freedoms or economic growth. While the measurement of authoritarian personality has been the subject of vigorous debate (for a review, see Feldman, 2003; see also Chapter 11), the central idea that some citizens are much more sensitive than others to uncertainty still receives a great deal of attention in the contemporary study of immigration opinion. Some take the argument a step further, suggesting that personality traits related to the tolerance of uncertainty undergird much of the left–right ideological spectrum in the USA and in other countries (Johnston et al., 2015; Jost et al., 2017). Seen through this lens, immigration is just another source of uncertainty in one’s world, and for those sensitive to experiencing fear in response to uncertainty, opposing immigration is the safest choice.

The engaged reader will have by now begun to realise how often these various psychological forces compete, complement, and interact with each other to boost support for

newcomers and welcoming immigration policies. The evidence is certainly growing in recent years for interactions between context and personality factors like the ones we have just reviewed. The impact of fear of uncertainty, for example, grows when ethnic change is most salient, as demonstrated by Johnston et al. (2015) in an ingenious survey experiment. Like these researchers, we see great promise in exploring the multiplicative effects of deep-rooted predispositions and contextual forces such as growing ethnic diversity due to immigration.

21.9 Symbolic Explanations

The evidence for a powerful role played by ‘symbolic’ or group-based predispositions that often seem to have little connection to individual self-interest is pervasive in the domain of immigration opinion. Across dozens of studies over the last several decades and deploying a variety of measurement techniques and research designs, studies have concluded that simple out-group hostility is a much more powerful explanation than others. Sides and Citrin (2007) found that defining the nation in ethnic terms was the most consistently powerful predictor of immigration opposition across 20 European countries. Likewise, Parker and Barreto (2013) argue that the emergence of the Tea Party immediately following Barack Obama’s inauguration in 2009 was a straightforward example of a far-right reactionary movement concerned that their country was being stolen by non-white politicians and immigrants. The observational evidence is surely consistent with their view, as support for the movement is most strongly predicted by racial animus and social dominance orientation, and not at all by economic concerns.

Ethnocentrism and concepts related to racial animus are consistently powerful

explanations of immigration opinion (see also Chapters 12 and 14). Kinder and Kam (2010) deploy a simple measure – the difference between how warmly one feels about one’s own group compared to others – to tap ethnocentrism. Though blunt, this simple scale does a great job of predicting who supports immigration openness above and beyond a person’s partisanship, education, beliefs about the proper size of government, commitment to values like egalitarianism and moral traditionalism, and so on.

Many Americans have come to automatically associate the concept ‘immigrant’ with specific a specific group – Latinos – and negative attitudes and stereotypic beliefs about that group have become powerful predictors of support for immigration policy as a whole (Burns & Gimpel, 2000; Hood & Morris, 1998; Valentino et al., 2013; Zhirkov, 2021). Even non-conscious implicit bias against Hispanics powerfully predicts anti-immigrant policy views (Pérez, 2010). Ethnocentrism also appears a far better predictor compared to economic concerns or standard ideology of immigration attitudes in Germany (Clark & Legge, 2009). Konitzer et al. (2019) find evidence consistent with these other studies that negative stereotypes about salient immigrant groups in three countries (Canada, UK, and the USA) are the best predictors of opposition to immigration among a host of alternatives including ideology, education, and sociodemographic factors.

One experimental study found that those who commit crimes, work ‘under the table’, or fail to adopt symbols of American identity are punished much more severely by white Americans when the immigrant is Hispanic rather than white (Hartman et al., 2014). Another study found that exposure to stories about immigrants depicted as darker-skinned reduced support for immigration regardless of whether the story suggested the individual was

assimilated to the local community (Ostfeld, 2017).

Even some of the evidence in favour of non-racial explanations for immigration opposition may be worth revisiting, since interpreting the causal model underlying these correlations is very tricky business. Newman and Malhotra (2019), for example, wonder if the sociotropic consensus that low-skilled newcomers are bad for the nation's economy might really be about race. They produce a convincing set of evidence suggesting that the premium placed on high-skilled immigrants may be substantially driven by the belief that high-skilled immigrants are less likely to be non-white. For example, if low-skilled Latinos are the dominant immigrant group that comes to mind in America, as the evidence reviewed here suggests, then prejudiced people would prefer high-skilled immigrants on the assumption they might not be of Latino background.

Above and beyond cumulative support found for the basic ethnocentrism hypothesis, there is growing evidence that the demographic shifts of the past 40 years may be increasing white in-group identification in the USA, and that may be producing quite powerful downstream policy shifts. Jardina (2019) finds that white in-group identity, once a rather weak and irrelevant force, has increased in strength and political consequence over the last few decades in the USA. She further documents how these group attachments are not much correlated with class, employment status, or income. Rather, highly identified whites are more likely in the current moment to believe their group is being sacrificed for the benefit of non-white groups, including immigrants. The anti-Semitic chant 'Jews will not replace us' during a march by far-right extremists that turned deadly in Charlottesville, Virginia in August of 2017 is emblematic of this trend. In line with these results, interviews with many of those involved in the 6 January

2021 attack on the US Capitol suggested concerns about demographic changes due to immigration may have been much more salient than economic anxieties (Pape, 2021).

21.10 Is It Really All about Groups?

As we have been emphasising throughout this chapter, the causal antecedents of immigration opinion are very challenging to disentangle, especially when it comes to the competition between psychological forces like group-based identities and animus compared to individual material interests. Where it gets even trickier is trying to figure out if attitudes about groups really might be standing in for more abstract commitments to norms and values that are relatively stable over time and help guide people's policy choices across a range of domains. Does opposition to immigration really stem simply from a dislike of the specific groups that are doing the immigrating? Or could that opposition be driven by general commitments to law and order, fairness, egalitarianism, and individualism? Surely the latter perspective seems at least plausible.

Levy and Wright (2020) took up the challenge of collecting evidence to examine this hypothesis during the Trump administration, a historic moment when their argument might be looked at with extreme scepticism by the discipline. They argue that, while group attitudes surely affect immigration opinion, previous research has vastly overestimated their impact. Instead, Levy and Wright suggest that variation in policy opinions springs mostly from more abstract and non-racial 'civic fairness values' such as egalitarianism, individualism, legalism, and humanitarianism.

Key to this argument, which fits into a larger disciplinary debate about the impact of racial versus non-racial forces in public opinion formation, is the causal model. In most non-racial accounts, theorists argue that basic

values are socialised at an early age and subsequently affect opinions about policies. If group stereotypes or attitudes come in, they are epiphenomenal at best, since some groups are more salient in some places and with regard to some issues than others. Recall that the group-based model argues group-based animus, ethnocentrism, and identification come first, and values and norms are mostly rationalisations of those more primal forces when it comes to policy opinions. Either way, the methodological challenges for determining which causal model is correct are daunting, and observational designs comparing correlations between these various factors are rarely satisfying even when those associations turn out to be quite different in magnitude. The field often falls back on plausibility standards about when we would guess notions like abstract political values are socialised in life compared to cognitively simpler group-based identities and animosities. Much more empirical socialisation research needs to examine the timing, crystallisation, and typical strength of these factors over the lifespan (see also Chapter 10). Researchers obviously cannot randomly assign either abstract values or ethnocentrism, so one cannot know for sure which has the largest downstream consequences. Levy and Wright's evidence, though experimental, still can only show that civic fairness cues, especially when offered by trusted elites, matter *above and beyond*, but not *rather than* or *more than*, ethnocentrism and other group-based identities. They show convincingly that there is considerable variation in the population about specific immigration policies, and that those which seem to reward individual initiative, hard work, and respect for the law do receive more support regardless of which group benefits.

Of course, none of this is to ignore how difficult it is to measure these different forces with equivalent validity and reliability in order

to make the comparison as fair as possible. The work shows that individuating cues, especially narratives suggesting an immigrant is likely to assimilate, work hard, and follow the law, can often overwhelm the effects of negative group stereotypes and attitudes in a particular case while leaving general policy views about immigration policy unchanged. This is consistent with a larger body of work on the concept of 'person positivity', where attitudes about general immigration policy openness are unaffected even when respondents are willing to give the benefit of the doubt to specific newcomers (Iyengar et al., 2013).

21.11 Conclusions

We would like to end a chapter that many readers will surely have found dispiriting with some evidence of a bright side in the discussion. Recent findings from Sirin et al. (2021) find that citizens in both the USA and Britain vary considerably in what they term 'out-group empathy': the combination of ability and motivation to put oneself in the shoes of someone from another ethnic group when they are experiencing hardship. The concept is measured quite simply, with a short battery of questions asking things like, 'How often would you say you try to better understand people of other racial or ethnic groups by imagining how things look from their perspective?' Measured in this way, it is distinct from the more common usage of the word, which refers to empathy for one's closest family and friends, and which social psychologists have studied in depth (see Davis, 1983, for a similar measure at the in-group level). Out-group empathy is rarer, but many people do seem to experience it quite often, and when they do, their politics change as well. Further, out-group empathy operates independent of the negative predispositions and personality traits we have discussed above in the way it influences immigration

policy attitudes in both the USA and Britain. It is not derivative of partisanship or ideology, and its predictive power does not disappear once ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, or in-group identification is included in standard opinion models. Across a broad number of studies, out-group empathy seems to soften hostility towards refugees at the US border, reduce support for Brexit, and increase opposition to the border wall. Sirin et al. (2021) find these strong associations even among groups who might stand to gain the most personally and materially from excluding others.

Newman et al. (2015) also find a related dimension, humanitarian concern, serves as a significant predictor of permissive positions on government immigration policy. As they conceptualise it, humanitarian concern is a generalised sense of responsibility for reducing human suffering regardless of where it occurs (see also Chapter 22). Humanitarian concern significantly decreases support for restrictive immigration policy. In information environments evoking both threat and countervailing humanitarian concern regarding immigration, the latter can – and does (at least sometimes) – override the former. These results are perhaps scant reason for optimism, but they at least suggest it might be wise to continue to explore the roots of these attitudes that might reduce conflict around the world.

And where might these more positive, cosmopolitan predispositions come from? Sirin et al. (2021) turn back to socialising experiences during youth, especially perhaps in educational settings where kids are exposed to the benefits of diversity and experience positive and equitable contact with other groups. We have mentioned already the generally powerful positive correlation between educational levels and tolerance for immigration that has been found around the world (Valentino et al., 2019), but observational studies obviously cannot make strong claims

about the direction of causation. Does education indeed boost tolerance? Or do people who get more education also tend to come from homes or communities where tolerance is valued and socialised early in life? Optimistically, one study seems to provide more conclusive evidence for the first interpretation. Cavaille and Marshall (2019) examined compulsory school reforms in several European countries that insisted students remain in secondary school for an additional year. Those who did stay in school were significantly less opposed to immigration and were more likely to reject the politics of the far right. Surely more work like this needs to be done, but this is a compelling bit of evidence about the positive impact on tolerance for newcomers of working and learning together in egalitarian environments.

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22 International and Individual Differences in Support for Human Rights

Sam McFarland

In two major sections, this chapter reviews international and individual differences in support for human rights. The first section reviews the limitations of international human rights surveys, the general results of these surveys, and the relationship between popular and government support for human rights. The second section summarises the many ways that individuals' support for human rights has been measured and then the individual differences that predict that support.

For this review, human rights are those rights embodied in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR). For brief human rights overviews, see McFarland (2015a) and McFarland and Zamora (2020).

22.1 International Differences in Human Rights Support

22.1.1 The Limitations of International Human Rights Surveys

Several authors have noted the difficulties and limitations of international human rights surveys (Carbello, 2015; McFarland, 2017a). These include:

Acquiring Comparable Samples. Polling organisations often must use different sampling methods in different countries. For example, when Gallup International polled attitudes on homosexuality in 65 countries in 2014, respondents were interviewed face to face in 31 countries, by telephone in 12, and online in 22 (Gallup International, 2015).

Also, surveying must be limited to major cities in some countries but can be nationwide in others (BBC World Service Poll, 2006). These sampling differences inject confounds of unknown size for interpreting national differences in human rights attitudes.

Omission of Culturally Sensitive Questions. Questions are occasionally omitted in some countries due to cultural sensitivities. For example, in a 2013 Gallup poll of 123 countries, a question on gay rights was omitted in 15 primarily Muslim countries, 'where the question is too sensitive to be asked' (McCarthy, 2015).

Response-Style Differences. Individuals in 'collectivist' cultures (e.g., Japan, China) often display greater acquiescent response styles (e.g., more 'strongly agree' responses) than do those in 'individualist' countries (Western European and North American). Respondents in 'power distant' (authoritarian) countries (e.g., Malaysia) often give more extreme ('strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree') responses (Johnson et al., 2005).

Translation Equivalence. International surveys must use many languages, and the same question may carry different connotations in different languages (Behling & Law, 2000). Related to human rights attitudes, data from the World Values Survey (Wave 6) reveal that 66% of US citizens either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with 'I see myself as a world citizen', whereas just 50% of Germans did so (World Values Survey, n.d.). This difference may be due to the fact that 'world citizen' in

English carries a proactive, participatory connotation of citizenship, whereas the German '*weltbürger*' connotes a cosmopolitan sense of 'wise in the ways of the world'. This difference likely explains why seeing oneself as a world citizen correlated 0.30 with US citizens' ratings of the relevance of the United Nations, whereas the correlation for German citizens was just 0.11.

Impact of Dramatic Events. Dramatic national events can affect citizens' survey responses. For example, in 2006 and 2008, in a repeated poll on torture across 16 countries, approval of governments using torture rose from 28% to 34%. However, this rise was almost entirely due to increases of 20% or more in India, Turkey, and South Korea, likely caused by the major terrorist attacks each country experienced between the two surveys (Kull et al., 2008).

Limited Number and Range of International Polls on Human Rights. International survey organisations mainly serve business (e.g., Gallup International) or US foreign policy (Pew Research Center) interests. For that reason, relatively few international polls on human rights are conducted. Further, these surveys are often guided by 'hot button' issues. Following 9/11 and revelations of US torture, several polls asked about attitudes towards torture. As the rights of homosexual persons became salient, global surveys on support for homosexual rights increased. Surveys on some human rights issues (e.g., the rights of the disabled, the rights to just wages and to safe conditions of work) are missing. Finally, although there are 195 world countries, relatively few are usually polled. While international surveys may poll all global regions, the number of countries typically sampled are in the low 20s for WorldPublicOpinion.org, in the 30s for Pew Research Center, and about 60 for World Values Survey and most Gallup polls. A 2013 Gallup poll sampled

123 countries, but that is exceptional and still omitted 72 countries.

Superficiality of Human Rights Measures. Polls on human rights generally assess simple agreement with human rights statements, not a sincere concern for advancing human rights. This issue is discussed in Section 22.2 of this chapter.

These seven concerns show that our knowledge of global human rights attitudes is imprecise and incomplete. Nevertheless, there do appear to be consistent differences between countries in support for specific human rights.

22.1.2 International Attitudes on Civil and Political Rights

International human rights poll results for civil and political attitudes (those found in Articles 3–21 of the UDHR) are presented first, followed by results on attitudes towards economic and social rights (found in Articles 22–28 of the UDHR).

International polls consistently indicate strong global support for civil rights. However, for each right, there is wide variation across countries.

Freedom of Expression. Global surveys have consistently found strong support internationally for freedom of speech and of the press. In 2019, participants in 34 countries were asked how important it is that 'people can say what they want without government censorship'. Across all countries, 64% chose 'very important'; less than 2% chose 'not important at all'. Similarly, 64% believed it 'very important' that 'the media can report the news without government censorship' (Pew Research Center, 2020a). Comparable percentages were found in earlier surveys (e.g., Pew Research Center, 2015a; WorldPublicOpinion.org, 2008a).

However, between-nation variation is huge. In the 2019 poll, 87% in Argentina, Greece, and Hungary and 86% in Germany thought

that freedom of speech was ‘very important’, but just 32% in Tunisia and India and 37% in Indonesia agreed. Similarly, 89% in Greece and 80% in Argentina and the USA rated freedom of the press as ‘very important’, contrasted with just 32% of Tunisians, 37% of Indians, and 45% of Indonesians (Pew Research Center, 2020a).

The strongest limitation on free speech appears to be on the right to criticise a religion, particularly in Muslim countries and in countries that have experienced religious violence. In a survey of 20 nations, respondents chose between ‘people should have the right to publicly criticise a religion’ and ‘the government should have a right to fine or imprison people who publicly criticise a religion’. Overall, 57% chose the right to criticise a religion, led by 89% in the USA, with strong majorities in all Western countries. However, majorities in six countries chose the latter option, led by Egypt (71%), Pakistan (62%), India (59%), and Iraq (57%; WorldPublicOpinion.org, 2009).

Freedom of Religion. The 2019 Pew poll also asked how important it is that ‘people can practice their religion freely’. While 68% overall chose ‘very important’, this response ranged from a high of 88% in Nigeria and 86% in the USA to just 18% in Japan; Russia, at 42%, was second lowest in rating freedom of religion as ‘very important’ (Pew Research Center, 2020a). A 2008 poll of 24 nations asked, ‘How important do you think it is for people of different religions to be treated equally?’ While 64% chose ‘very important’, this percentage ranged from 29% in Egypt and 34% in Russia to 90% in Argentina. Egyptian respondents, at 67%, were most likely to agree that ‘There are some religions that should not be allowed to practice.’ Also, just 41% of all respondents agreed that ‘... people of any religion should be free to try to convert members of other religions to join theirs’, with Indonesia (17%), Palestine

(18%), Russia (23%), and Egypt (30%) again lowest in their willingness to allow efforts to convert others (WorldPublicOpinion.org, 2009).

Prohibition of Torture. Across the most recent three global surveys on torture, 57% across countries reject all use of torture. But almost 40% approve of torture in some circumstances, such as to gain information to protect the public. The strongest condemnation appears in countries that earlier had experienced dictatorships that had engaged in torture, such as Greece, Argentina, and Chile (Amnesty International, 2014; International Committee of the Red Cross, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2015b).

The Pew survey of 59 countries asked whether US government interrogations ‘that many consider to be torture’ were ‘justified or not justified’. Overall, a median of 50% chose ‘not justified’, although 58% of US respondents chose ‘justified’. Majorities in Israel, India, the Philippines, and five African countries supported US interrogation methods, while the strongest opposition came from Latin-American countries (Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, and Mexico), the Palestinian territory, and from European countries (Germany, Spain, Great Britain, and France; Pew Research Center, 2015b).

Non-discrimination. International polls have investigated attitudes towards discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity, gender, and homosexuality.

Race and Ethnicity. Large majorities agree that people of different races and ethnicities should be treated equally. In a 2008 poll of 22 countries, respondents were asked how important it is for ‘people of different races and ethnicities to be treated equally’. Fully 91% rated it as ‘very important’ (69%) or ‘important’ (22%). Still, the percentages of ‘very important’ ranged from just 34% (Russia) to 94% (Mexico); in the USA, 79%

chose ‘very important’ (WorldPublicOpinion.org, 2009).

Gender. Support for equal rights for women appears just slightly lower than support for racial and ethnic group equality. A 2015 poll across 38 countries found that 87% regarded ‘women have the same rights as men’ as either ‘very important’ (65%) or ‘important’ (22%), with ‘very important’ responses ranging from 31% in Burkina Faso to 94% in Canada, with the USA at 91% (Pew Research Center, 2015b).

Homosexual Persons. In 2007 and 2013, Pew Research Center asked in the same 39 countries, ‘Should society accept homosexuality?’, with simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses. The percentage of ‘yes’ responses rose from 32% to 40% in those six years. Despite this mean-level increase, no human rights question reveals a greater cultural divide. In 2013, the willingness to accept homosexuality ranged from lows of 1% in Nigeria, 2% in Pakistan and Tunisia, and 3% in Ghana, Senegal, Indonesia, Egypt, and Jordan, to above 80% in Canada, Spain, Germany, and the Czech Republic (Pew Research Center, 2013). The correlation in acceptance of homosexuality for these countries from 2007 to 2013 was 0.98 (McFarland, 2017a), showing near-perfect consistency across these years in countries’ acceptance of homosexuality. The same question, asked in 34 countries (24 overlapping with the earlier surveys) in 2019, suggested further acceptance of homosexuality, as 52% overall said ‘yes’. This percentage had inched up even further since 2013 in the European countries and rose from 60% to 72% in the USA and from 40% to 47% in Israel (Pew Research Center, 2020b).

A 2018 review of all available surveys on LGBT attitudes from 1981 through 2014 concluded that LGBT attitudes had become more polarised across these years. In the 80 countries with initially positive attitudes towards LGBT rights, they have become even more positive.

However, in 46 mostly Muslim countries with initially negative attitudes, they have become even more negative. The authors speculated that the decline in acceptance in these 46 countries may be a backlash against increased acceptance of LGBT persons elsewhere (Flores & Park, 2018). However, in 2019, Pew found small increases in acceptance of homosexuality in those countries that had so soundly rejected it in 2013: in Nigeria, ‘yes’ responses had grown to 7%, in Tunisia and Indonesia to 9%. In all countries, the youngest generation surveyed (ages 18–29) and those with more education were more accepting of homosexuality than were others (Pew Research Center, 2020b).

22.1.3 International Attitudes on Economic and Social Rights

Only one global survey was located that asked about economic and social rights. WorldPublicOpinion.org (2008b) asked about the rights to education, healthcare, and food in 21 countries. On the right to education, the survey asked, ‘What about the basic need for education? Do you think the government should or should not be responsible for ensuring that people can meet this need?’ Across all nations, support for the right to education was overwhelming, with 91% responding that governments ‘should be responsible’. Argentina and China (98%) expressed strongest agreement. On a virtually identical question on healthcare, 92% of all respondents agreed that governments should be responsible, with Argentina (97%), China (96%), and Indonesia (97%) topping support. On the right to food, 87% agreed that ‘the government should be responsible for ensuring that its citizens can meet their basic need for food’, led by Indonesia (97%), Kenya (96%), and China (96%).

Coherence in Popular Support for Human Rights. Do national populations that support

one human right tend to support others? McFarland (2017a) found strong positive relationships across human rights questions. For example, at the national level, opposition to torture correlated 0.71 with accepting homosexuality, 0.71 with support for racial equality, and 0.40 with support for the right to a free press. Support for civil and economic rights also correlated strongly: the sum of support for civil rights (non-discrimination, freedom of speech and religion, prohibition of torture) correlated 0.53 with the sum of support for economic rights (to education, health, and food).

Despite this coherence, one's traditional culture influences which rights are more strongly supported. US citizens' support for traditional US civil and political rights (e.g., the rights to free speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, including the freedom to criticise a religion) was stronger than the global average in each case. However, regarding economic and social rights (rights that are not traditional in the USA), support for the right to education (83%) was lower in the USA than in all other countries but Egypt (77%) and India (64%), support for the right to food (74%) was also lower in the USA than in all but India (70%), and support for the right to healthcare in the USA (77%) was lowest across all countries surveyed (McFarland, 2017a).

Popular Support and Government Support for Human Rights Treaties. It appears that popular support relates substantially to governmental support for human rights. For example, the greatest legal restrictions on religious freedom are in countries where the populations most favoured such restrictions (Pew Research Center, 2012). McFarland (2017a) found, across 19 nations where data were available for computation, that the summed support for human rights correlated 0.54, $p < 0.03$, with the number of United Nations' human rights treaties that nations had ratified.

22.2 Individual Differences in Human Rights Support

In studies of individual differences in human rights support, support has been measured in several ways (for details, see McFarland, 2015b). Most commonly, studies have assessed self-rated agreement with human rights principles. In an early study, Grace and Van Velzer (1951) asked college students to rate their agreement with each of the 30 articles in the UDHR, presented in 'close to verbatim form' (p. 552). Later measures also have asked for agreement with human rights principles, such as Diaz-Veizades et al.'s (1995) Human Rights Questionnaire (HRQ). Other approaches have included measures of political tolerance for one's 'least-liked group' (Sullivan et al., 1982), the desire to restrict human rights as part of the war on terror (e.g., 'Police should not have to obtain search warrants when investigating suspected terrorists'; Crowson et al., 2006), and the number of human rights-related behaviours one has engaged in (e.g., signing petitions for human rights, donating to human rights organisations; Cohrs et al., 2007).

Evidence indicates, however, that simple agreement with human rights statements may not indicate one's true commitment to human rights: Zellman and Sears (1971) found that 60% of a US youth sample agreed that, 'I believe in free speech for all no matter what their views might be', but only 21% agreed that a communist should be allowed to speak in their city.

Given that concern, McFarland and Mathews (2005) developed two measures to try to assess a deeper 'human rights commitment'. Their 11-item Human Rights Choices Questionnaire (HRCQ) asks participants to rate the relative importance of pairs of goals, with one expressing an international human rights concern, the other, a national self-interest (e.g., 'Preventing crimes against humanity

(mass killings and genocide) around the world', versus 'Being sure that only the right people are allowed to immigrate to my country'). Their 10-item Human Rights Scenarios measure (HRScene) describes recent historical human rights crises (i.e., the 1994 Rwandan genocide) and offers respondents choices that range from doing nothing to investing national resources, including troops, to promote or defend human rights in these crises. McFarland and Mathews (2005) and later studies found that these two human rights commitment measures constantly correlate above 0.50. However, they correlate very weakly with measures of simple agreement with stated human rights principles. Further, as elaborated in later sections of this chapter, the psychological measures that predict the former often do not predict the latter.

This summary is limited to overall attitudes towards human rights. Many studies have examined individual differences in attitudes towards the rights of specific groups, including women (e.g., Heaven, 1999), children (Cherney et al., 2008), LGBTQ persons (Ellis, 2002), immigrants (Dinesen et al., 2016), persons with disabilities (Crowson et al., 2013), and Muslims (Dunwoody & McFarland, 2018). Other studies have addressed attitudes towards specific human rights such as freedom of speech (Downs & Cowan, 2012), freedom of religion (Karpov, 2002), and the prohibition of torture (Viki et al., 2013). Attitudes towards the rights of each of these groups and issues merit full review but are beyond the scope of this chapter. As a general statement, however, the personal qualities that predict general human rights support also predict support for specific rights and the rights of specific groups.

22.2.1 The Strong Predictors of Human Rights Support

This review is divided into those psychological qualities that consistently strongly predict

human rights support and those that appear to do so more weakly. The strong predictors are as follows:

Generalised Prejudice and Its Roots, Authoritarianism and Social Dominance. The general tendency to reject all out-groups, often called ethnocentrism (Adorno et al., 1950), was relabelled as 'generalized prejudice' by Allport (1954, p. 66), as this tendency includes non-ethnic prejudices (e.g., religious prejudices and anti-gay attitudes). It has been commonly measured by Altemeyer's (1998) Manitoba Ethnocentrism Scale, which measures negative attitudes towards an array of out-groups (e.g., Russians, Asians, and members of non-Christian religions), or as the factor score of several prejudices (anti-Black racism, anti-female sexism, anti-homosexuality, and blind patriotism; McFarland, 2010b).¹

Across many samples, generalised prejudice has correlated above -0.50 with the McFarland and Mathews (2005) measures of human rights commitment. Generalised prejudice also correlated -0.57 with American adults' willingness to use America's military to defend human rights in other countries, including to stop the Rwandan genocide (McFarland, 2012). McFarland and Mathews found, however, that generalised prejudice did not correlate with mere agreement with human rights principles: ethnocentric persons may see human rights as nice ideals, but only those who are low in generalised prejudice appear committed to advancing them.

According to Duckitt's (2001) dual-process model and many studies (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; McFarland, 2010b), right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1981) and social dominance orientation (SDO;

¹ In contrast to these earlier definitions, Bizumic (2019) has recently defined ethnocentrism as in-group loyalty, which he argues is distinct from out-group prejudices.

Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) are the two strongest predictors of generalised prejudice. Therefore, it is unsurprising that many studies have found that both variables are substantially negatively related to human rights support.

Negative correlations of RWA with human rights support, almost always above -0.40 , have been found in Canada (Moghaddam & Vuksanovic, 1990), Germany (Cohrs et al., 2007) and the USA (McFarland et al., 2012). However, authoritarianism, like generalised prejudice, appears unrelated to simple agreement with human rights principles. McFarland and Mathews (2005) found that RWA and the HRQ were not correlated.

The negative correlations between SDO and support for human rights are similar to those for authoritarianism in several countries tested (Cohrs et al., 2007; Crowson, 2009; McFarland & Hornsby, 2015; Stellmacher et al., 2005). Unlike for authoritarianism, however, those high in social dominance do *not* agree that human rights are desirable ideals, as McFarland and Mathews (2005) found that SDO and human rights endorsement on the HRQ correlated -0.25 , $p < 0.05$.

Identification with All Humanity. McFarland and colleagues' (McFarland, 2017b; McFarland et al., 2012) Identification With All Humanity (IWAH) Scale assesses an identification with, and concern for, all human beings. Across many US samples, the IWAH has 'usually correlated in the .40s and .50s', with human rights commitment (McFarland et al., 2019, p. 150). Comparable correlations have been found in Poland, Mexico, and Chile (Hamer et al., 2018).

For two samples, McFarland (2010a) found that the negative effects of RWA upon human rights commitment (assessed as the latent factor of HRCQ and HRScene) were fully mediated through generalised prejudice. The negative effects of SDO were partially mediated through generalised prejudice. The effects

of generalised prejudice upon human rights commitment were partially mediated through its reducing IWAH.

Globalism and Universalism. Support for international human rights is strongly related to concern for other global issues. Ratings of the importance of promoting human rights consistently correlate positively with ratings of 'combating world hunger', and 'protecting the global environment', with correlations as high as the 0.60s (Holsti, 2000). McFarland and Mathews (2005) found that a sum of concern for other global issues correlated 0.56 with human rights commitment for a large sample of students and adults.

Cohrs et al. (2007), examining Schwartz's (1992) circumplex model of 10 basic values, found that his value of 'universalism' (e.g., 'a world at peace', 'protecting the environment') correlated 0.64 with ratings of the importance of human rights and 0.45 with the number of personal human rights behaviours one had engaged in. While the IWAH and universalism correlate strongly, both contribute in regression analyses in predicting HRCQ scores (McFarland et al., 2012).

Political Ideology and Party. Cohrs et al. (2007) found that a measure of right-wing political ideology correlated 0.45 with the willingness to restrict human rights, but -0.49 and -0.36 , respectively, with the rated importance of human rights and with human rights behaviours. Holsti (2000) found that, across repeated US polls from 1974 to 1998, self-rated liberals and members of the Democratic Party were about 10% more likely than conservatives and Republicans to rate the goal of 'promoting and defending human rights in other countries' as 'very important'. However, in 2013, 64% of Democrats, but just 44% of Republicans, rated this goal as 'very important' – a 20% gap (Gallup Organization, 2013). By 2017, this difference grew to 72% of Democrats versus 34% of Republicans, a 38%

gap (Gallup Organization, personal communication, 12 March 2020). This growing difference across the decades likely reflects the increased polarisation of the two parties.

Moral Foundations. Graham et al.'s (2011) Moral Foundations Questionnaire assesses the importance of the five values of care, fairness (the *individualising* moral foundations), loyalty, authority, and sanctity (the *binding* foundations). In structural model tests for British and US samples, Stolerman and Lagnado (2018) found that political conservatism correlated negatively with individualising foundation scores, but positively with binding foundation scores. In turn, the individualising foundations predicted greater endorsement of HRQ items, while the binding foundations predicted less endorsement.

22.3 The Weaker Predictors of Human Rights Support

A number of other factors also predict support for human rights, but the strength of their associations are generally weaker.

22.3.1 Schwartz's Remaining Values: Benevolence, Self-Direction, Security, Power, and Hedonism

For the remainder of Schwartz's (1992) 10 values, concern for human rights is positively related to the self-transcendent values of benevolence and self-direction, and negatively to the conservation value of security and the self-enhancement values of power and hedonism. However, these correlations are smaller than those for universalism. Benevolence correlated 0.37 with the rated importance of human rights, 0.25 with human rights behaviours (Cohrs et al., 2007) and just 0.16 with the HRCQ (McFarland et al., 2012). Security correlated 0.37 with the willingness to restrict human rights (Cohrs et al., 2007), and -0.33

with the HRCQ (McFarland et al., 2012). Correlations between the HRCQ and the values of self-direction, power, and hedonism were all under 0.30 (Cohrs et al., 2007; McFarland et al., 2012; Spini & Doise, 1998).

22.3.2 Blind Patriotism and Nationalism

McFarland et al. (2012) found that Schatz et al.'s (1999) measure of 'blind patriotism' (e.g., 'I would support my country right or wrong') correlated -0.37 with the HRCQ and -0.30 with HRScene. Diaz-Veizades et al. (1995) found that Kosterman and Feshbach's (1989) very similar measure of nationalism (e.g., 'The first duty of every young American is to honor the national American history and tradition') correlated 0.50 with their HRQ factor of Civilian Constraint, but not with the other three HRQ subscales. However, Schatz et al.'s measure of constructive patriotism (e.g., 'If you love America, you should notice its problems and work to correct them') correlated weakly positively -19 , $p < 0.01$ – with the HRScene.

22.3.3 Dispositional Empathy

Across several studies, dispositional empathy, assessed by Davis' (1983) factors of Empathetic Concern and Perspective Taking, correlated from 0.21 to 0.34 with human rights commitment as measured by the HRCQ and HRScene (e.g., McFarland & Hornsby, 2015). Dispositional empathy also correlated 0.42 with the endorsement of human rights on the HRQ.

22.3.4 Principled Moral Reasoning

Kohlberg (1969) described a progression of moral reasoning as one passes from childhood to maturity. At the highest or 'principled' level, achieved by relatively few, individuals

see the limitations of their own culture's morality and possess an ethical reasoning based on abstract principles such as justice. Several studies have found that principled moral reasoning, measured by either Kohlberg's measure (Candee, 1976) or Rest's (1986) Defining Issue Test (DIT), correlates positively with concern for human rights. As examples, Avery (1988) found that youths with higher principled moral reasoning were more willing to extend human rights to their least-liked groups. McFarland and Mathews (2005) found that principled moral reasoning on the DIT correlated 0.29 with human rights commitment and -0.28 with the desire to restrict human rights, but was uncorrelated with human rights endorsement (see also Getz, 1985; McFarland et al., 2012).

22.3.5 Optimism for Creating a Better World

Chiu et al. (1997) found that those who believe that the world can be improved through human effort were prone to judge moral actions according to the principles of justice and human rights. In contrast, those with a fatalistic view (e.g., 'Our world has its basic and ingrained dispositions, and you really can't do much to change it') were more likely to view morality as loyalty to social conventions and duties. McFarland and Mathews (2005) found that optimism about creating a better world correlated 0.30 with human rights commitment and -0.29 with a desire to restrict human rights, but that optimism versus fatalism did not correlate with endorsing human rights statements on the HRQ. As with ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, and lack of principled moral reasoning, those who are fatalistic about improving our world may agree that human rights are nice ideals, but their fatalism appears to inhibit commitment to advancing human rights.

22.3.6 Education and Global Knowledge

Across three studies, formal education has correlated between 0.21 and 0.34 with endorsing human rights statements (Barrows, 1981; Getz, 1985, McFarland & Mathews, 2005). Although education does not predict commitment to human rights on the HRCQ or HRScene (McFarland & Mathews, 2005), specific education on human rights does appear to increase human right support: Sommer and Stellmacher (2009) found that devoting sessions to human rights education in university seminars increased human rights knowledge, the rated importance of human rights, and the willingness to support human rights.

Greater knowledge of the world also modestly predicts endorsing human rights statements (Barrows, 1981; Grace & Van Velzer, 1951). On a 31-item global knowledge quiz, adults' global knowledge correlated weakly, 0.18, $p < 0.01$, with the endorsement of human rights on the HRQ, but not with human rights commitment (McFarland & Mathews, 2005). However, Cohrs et al. (2007) found that the knowledge of human rights, measured by how many rights one could name, correlated 0.17 with ratings of importance of human rights, -0.17 with a willingness to restrict rights, and 0.32 with self-reported behaviours in support of human rights.

In summary, greater education and global knowledge correlate modestly with endorsing human rights principles, but their effects upon commitment to advancing human rights are either non-existent or weak across studies and measures. However, education specifically on human rights and knowledge of human rights appears to enhance human rights support.

22.3.7 Need for Structure and Belief That the Structure of Knowledge Is Simple

Crowson et al. (2006) found that the need for structure (e.g., 'I become uncomfortable when the rules in a situation are not clear') correlated

0.21 with the willingness to restrict human rights, although it did not predict this restriction beyond the effects of authoritarianism and social dominance. Crowson and DeBacker (2008) also found that belief that the structure of knowledge is simple (e.g., 'If professors would stick more to the facts and do less theorising, one could get more out of college') correlated 0.30 with this willingness to restrict rights and beyond the effects of authoritarianism.

22.3.8 Religious Faith

Studies have generally found no or weak relationships between religious faith and human rights support. McFarland and Mathews (2005) found that neither religious faith nor conservative religious beliefs predicted human rights commitment. In newer unreported data collected by this author, none of six measures of Christian religiosity (belief in God or in the divinity of Christ, Christian fundamentalism, the self-rated importance of religion, frequency of church attendance, and frequency of prayer) correlated significantly with the HRCQ or HRScene (see also Wuthnow & Lewis, 2008). However, Moghaddam and Vuksanovic (1990) found that Canadian students' ratings of 'how active you are in religious practice' correlated -0.30 with endorsement of human rights statements. Substantial negative correlations between religious faith and human rights measures have been obtained only when the measures include items that are specifically antithetical to conservative Christian beliefs (e.g., homosexual rights, abortion rights; Getz, 1985; Narvaez et al., 1999).

22.3.9 Big-Five Personality Factors of Openness, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness

Just one study has reported relations between the big-five and human rights support. Swami

et al. (2012) found that openness to experience correlated -0.35 and extraversion -0.29 with German-speaking adults' willingness to restrict human rights on Crowson's measure (Crowson et al., 2006). Conscientiousness correlated slightly positively, 0.19, with the willingness to restrict rights. In regression analyses, each of these contributed to the willingness to restrict human rights beyond the effect of authoritarianism.

22.4 Summary and Discussion

This chapter has presented an overview of international and individual differences in support for human rights. On international differences, several difficulties of international surveys were noted, followed by a review of surveys on attitudes towards specific rights. In general, people across the world endorse human rights substantially, although there are wide variations among countries. Countries whose populations support civil and political rights also more strongly support economic and social rights, although a nation's cultural history appears to influence which kind of rights are supported more strongly. Governments that either support or suppress human rights often have popular support for doing so.

For individual differences, human rights support has been measured in many ways, from rating simple agreement with human rights principles to measures of human rights commitment, measures that pit concern for human rights against national self-interests. Individuals' commitment to human rights is most strongly predicted positively by a sense of identification with all humanity and by other global and universalistic concerns, and negatively by generalised prejudice and its roots, RWA and SDO. An array of other values and dispositions also predict human rights support, but generally more weakly.

At this time, we have only partial mappings of the interrelationships of all these constructs, or of their joint effects upon one another and upon human rights support. In Cohrs et al.'s (2007) model, universalism, authoritarianism, the need for power, and political ideology each contributed to the rated importance of human rights, which then, together with knowledge of human rights, predicted human rights behaviours. In McFarland's (2010a) model, RWA and SDO enhanced ethnocentrism and reduced identification with all humanity, which, in turn, negatively and positively (respectively) predicted human rights commitment. However, further modelling and testing are needed to fully understand how values and dispositions affect each other and support for human rights.

Most studies on individual differences in human rights support have been conducted in the United States or Europe, leaving uncertainty about the universality of the reported relationships. Few studies have measured actual human rights behaviours, and even fewer have studied human rights activism. There is more work to be done to fully understand the roots and dynamics of support for human rights, or how that support can be enhanced.

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Part III

Contemporary Challenges to Democracy

23 The Political Psychology of Inequality

Why Rising Rates of Economic Inequality Affect Our Health and Democracy

Danny Osborne, Julia C. Becker, Joaquín Bahamondes, and Efraín García-Sánchez

... if a state is to avoid the greatest plague of all ... extreme poverty and wealth must not be allowed ...

– Plato (360 BC/1970, pp. 214–215)

The year 2020 will live in infamy. By the end of December 2020, more than 79 million cases of COVID-19 – a novel coronavirus that spread rapidly to 216 countries and territories – had been confirmed, contributing to over 1.7 million deaths globally (World Health Organization, 2020). Although these data alone are horrifying, the elderly and those from disadvantaged backgrounds have suffered disproportionately from the pandemic – even efforts to slow the transmission of the virus privilege those with the resources to physically distance (Yancy, 2020). Accordingly, the pandemic has exposed long-standing health inequities between the *haves* and the *have-nots*. For example, in the United States, Latinos are 3.9 times, whereas blacks are 4.5 times, more likely than whites to be hospitalised from COVID-19 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). People of colour are also over-represented in COVID-19-related deaths (The Guardian, 2020b). Moreover, the pandemic has *indirectly* impacted the disadvantaged, as ~40% of US households earning under \$40,000 a year experienced job loss in the first four months of the pandemic (Rushe et al., 2020). Those of the working class who retained their jobs provided essential services at great risk to their health, while the upper middle class worked mostly from the safety of their home (Mijs, 2020).

To be clear, the stark realities of inequality exposed by COVID-19 are not new. Inequality has been rising globally over the last 40 years to levels unseen since the Great Depression (Piketty, 2014, 2020). In fact, the wealthiest 10% of the United States claimed 50.6% of the country's annual income share in 2012 and 2017, marking the peaks of income inequality in a century (Saez, 2019). Examination of household wealth further reveals the profound depths of inequality: in 2013, the wealthiest 20% in the United States owned 87% of the nation's wealth, reflecting a steady, albeit consistent, 7% increase over 24 years (Killewald et al., 2017). Yet the gradual rise in economic inequality extends well beyond the United States. Indeed, the gap between the rich and the poor has increased in nearly every corner of the world including in Australia (Atkinson & Leigh, 2007), Canada (Atkinson et al., 2011), China (Xie & Zhou, 2014), and many other countries (Alvaredo et al., 2017; Atkinson et al., 2011). The scars of inequality exposed by COVID-19 run deep through the veins of history.

The current chapter highlights the implications of these scars by first reviewing some

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common indices of economic inequality. We then discuss research on public attitudes towards inequality and examine the effects of societal-level inequities on various outcomes. Within this section, we focus on how the ever-expanding disparities between the rich and the poor undermine the health and well-being of citizens, as well as core components of democracy. Next, we offer a psychological explanation for why macro-level inequality is harmful, and conclude by discussing the prospects for change. Although a comprehensive review of these literatures is impossible, we provide the reader with key starting points for further exploration into the attitudinal and societal consequences of the rising gap between the wealthy and the poor.

23.1 Measuring Economic Inequality

Despite its seemingly intuitive nature, it is surprisingly difficult to measure inequality. In addition to the challenges of obtaining high-quality data (particularly when investigating historical trends), different patterns may emerge when focusing on, say, income inequality (i.e., differences in the accumulation of money from labour (e.g., wages, salaries, and bonuses) and capital (e.g., rent, interest, and royalties) versus wealth inequality (i.e., differences in what one owns minus what one owes; see Piketty, 2014). For example, analysis of historical data spanning from 1870 to 2010 demonstrates that the poorest 50% in the United States and Europe often acquire 20%–30% of their respective region's annual income share, yet never accumulate more than 5% of its annual wealth (Piketty & Saez, 2014). Thus, focusing on income inequality *under-represents* the depth of inequality seen when assessing inequalities in wealth.

In addition to the distinction between income and wealth, *how* economic inequality is measured varies (see Table 23.1). Most inequality measures begin with the Lorenz curve – a graph plotting the cumulative share of income or

wealth as a function of the cumulative proportion of the population (see Figure 23.1; Lorenz, 1905). Perfect equality would exist if 5% of the population owned 5% of the nation's wealth, 10% of the population owned 10% of the nation's wealth, and so on. Plotting this relationship produces a line of equality whereby no one person has any more or less than anyone else in society. Inequalities are thus visualised by *departures* from the line of equality when plotting the actual cumulative proportion of the population's income or wealth (i.e., the Lorenz curve) – the closer the Lorenz curve is to the line of equality, the less inequality exists. Although the Lorenz curve provides a clear visualisation of inequality, it is difficult to compare curves across time and/or place because it does not *quantify* levels of inequality.

Corrado Gini's (1912) Gini coefficient addresses this oversight by measuring the extent to which the Lorenz curve deviates from the line of equality.

$$Gini = \frac{A}{A + B}$$

Specifically, the Gini coefficient calculates the proportion of the shaded area displayed in Figure 23.1 (i.e., area A) relative to the total area below the line of equality (i.e., areas A + B). Accordingly, perfect equality is denoted by 0 (i.e., the Lorenz curve never deviates from the line of equality), whereas complete inequality whereby one person owns *all* of the nation's wealth is reflected by 1. Although the Gini coefficient provides a useful quantitative index for comparing levels of inequality across time and/or place, a weakness of this measure is that it overlooks *where* within the cumulative proportion of the population that inequality is most felt. For example, the Gini coefficient is unable to reveal if inequality is more pronounced at the 20th percentile versus the 75th percentile.

Another method of assessing inequality is to take the income (or wealth) of different

Table 23.1. *Overview of the common measures of inequality, as well as their strengths and weaknesses*

	Definition	Range	Strength	Weakness
Lorenz curve	The actual cumulative distribution of income within society.	Not applicable	Visualises inequality.	Does not quantify inequality.
Gini coefficient	Summary of the distance between the Lorenz curve and perfect equality.	0 (equal) – 1 (unequal)	Utilises all available information from the distribution; provides a summative measure of inequality.	Insensitive to where within the distribution inequality is most felt.
Percentile (Palma) ratio	Ratio of the wealthiest X% (10%) relative to the poorest X% (40%).	Not applicable	Intuitive measure; easy to interpret.	Discards information from the rest of the distribution.
Robin Hood index	The proportion of wealth/income that would need to be taken from the wealthiest half of the population and given to the poorest half of the population to achieve perfect equality.	0 (equal) – 1 (unequal)	Informs policymakers about the amount of redistribution that must occur.	Overlooks the overall distribution of inequality.
Theil index	An entropy measure summarising the distance the population is from perfect equality.	0 (equal) – ∞ (unequal)	Can be decomposed into disparities arising both within and between groups.	Complicates cross-national comparisons because subgroups are weighted equally; no theoretical ceiling.
Atkinson index	Proportion of income redistribution needed to establish the social welfare found under equality.	0 (equal) – 1 (unequal)	Sensitive to where (i.e., the poorest or wealthiest) inequality is most felt.	Conceptually difficult to explain.

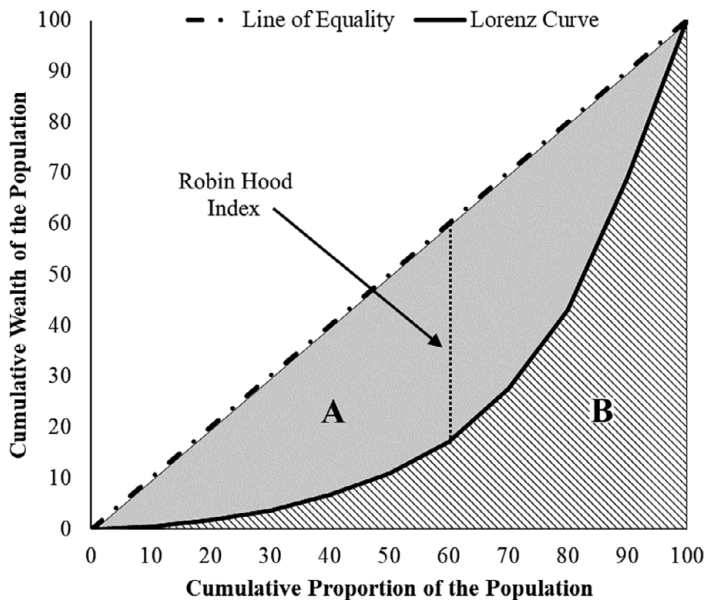


Figure 23.1 Lorenz curve and line of equality. The Gini coefficient is derived by calculating the area between the line of equality and the Lorenz curve (i.e., area A) relative to the total area underneath the line of equality (i.e., areas A + B).

percentiles within the population and compare them to another point along the distribution. Common approaches include comparing the ratio of the top and bottom 10% to determine how much more the wealthiest 10% earn relative to the poorest 10%. Within this family of measures is the Palma Ratio, which takes the gross national income of the wealthiest 10% and divides it by that of the poorest 40%. Although these methods provide an intuitive metric (e.g., a ratio of 7.4 indicates that the top 10% earn 7.4 times more than the bottom 40%), they neglect the overall distribution of inequality within a given society.

Whereas the previous measures focus on how much inequality exists, the Robin Hood index (also known as the Hoover index) denotes the amount of redistribution that must occur in order to achieve equality (see Hoover, 1936). Specifically, the Robin Hood index reflects the proportion of income or wealth

that would need to be taken from the richer half of the population and given to the poorer half of the population to achieve perfect equality. Like the previous measures, the Robin Hood index is derived from a Lorenz curve and corresponds to the largest vertical distance between the line of equality and the Lorenz curve (see Figure 23.1). Thus, the Robin Hood index ranges from 0 (complete equality) to 100 (complete inequality). Similar to percentile measures of inequality, one drawback of the Robin Hood index is that it overlooks the overall distribution of inequality.

Finally, other indices of inequality include the Theil index and the Atkinson index (Atkinson, 1970; Theil, 1967). Like the Robin Hood index, the Theil index measures how far away a given population is from perfect equality and can be decomposed to reflect disparities within and between subgroups. Because subgroups are weighted equally, inequities

between small subgroups contribute to the Theil index as much as inequities between large subgroups (which may complicate cross-national comparisons between small and large nations). Unlike the previous measures, the Theil index has no theoretical ceiling and, as such, ranges from 0 (perfect equality) to infinity (perfect inequality). Conversely, the Atkinson index ranges from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (perfect inequality), but includes a sensitivity parameter to increase its responsiveness to inequalities among the poor.

Although most of these measures correlate strongly with each other (i.e., $r > 0.86$; see Kawachi & Kennedy, 1997), each indicator highlights unique features that increase our understanding of economic inequality. For example, when we focus on wealth, economic inequality is even more extreme than when we just examine the income gap (Piketty & Saez, 2014). Similarly, when we assess the concentration of resources at the top 0.1%, 1%, or 10% (vs the bottom 50%), the shape of the distribution of inequality changes dramatically. Thus, these indicators reveal *distinct* aspects of economic inequality that must be considered when informing the public about inequality. Whereas *income* inequality focuses attention on how fair the distribution of incomes is at the top and bottom of society, *wealth* inequality emphasises how much people own, their right to accumulate more properties, the regulation of inheritances, etc. Despite these important nuances between measures, nearly all indicators reveal the increasingly high levels of inequality found within and between countries across the globe.

23.2 Attitudes towards Economic Inequality

Given the growing omnipresence of inequality, a natural question arises: what are people's attitudes towards inequality? The answer to

this question, however, is surprisingly complex and requires a distinction between people's status in the hierarchy, their *perceptions* of inequality, and the *ideologies* they use to justify the unequal distribution of resources. For instance, some view inequality as a 'necessary evil' that motivates hard work (Kluegel & Smith, 1986). By ostensibly rewarding those who 'put in the effort', inequality may reify people's belief in meritocracy and justify the ever-expanding gap between the rich and the poor (Mijs, 2021). Accordingly, derogatory views of the poor are frequently used to justify people's opposition to policies that redress inequality (Sainz et al., 2020), whereas those who benefit from class privilege tend to exaggerate the meritocratic origins of their high status (Phillips & Lowery, 2020). Given the seeming ubiquity of these familiar tropes, inequality can instil hope among the disadvantaged (Cheung, 2016) and foster a need for achievement (Sommet et al., 2019). In short, the public supports *some* inequality as a way to reward hard work and inspire others.

23.2.1 (Mis)Perceptions of Inequality

Although some see inequality as a necessary evil, people vastly underestimate the size of the income gap between the rich and the poor. For example, Norton and Ariely (2011) had participants in the United States estimate the distribution of wealth across quintiles (i.e., the wealthiest 20%, the next wealthiest 20%, and so on). At the time of the study, the top 20% actually held around 84% of the nation's wealth; however, participants underestimated this share by 25%. Norton and colleagues (2014) similarly found that Australians thought that the poorest 20% of the nation owned *seven times* more wealth than they actually did, and underestimated the wealth of the richest 20% by a fifth. Thus, people have inaccurate views about the depths of inequality

in society, and may be motivated to perceive *less* inequality than actually exists based on their preference for group-based hierarchy (Kteily et al., 2017).

Other work has examined simultaneously people's perceptions of inequality and their ideal discrepancy between the wealthy and the poor. Kiatpongsan and Norton (2014) utilised data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) in which participants from 40 countries estimated the earnings of a CEO and a factory worker in their nation of residence, as well as indicated what these two workers *should* earn. Notably, participants estimated that CEOs earned about 10 times more than a factory worker, yet felt that CEOs should only earn ~4.6 times as much as a factory worker. In actuality, CEOs in the USA earned 354 times more than factory workers, reflecting a *discrepancy nearly 77 times larger* than participants' ideal. Further analyses revealed that, although there were some demographic and sociopolitical differences in the size of the estimated and ideal pay discrepancy, there was consensus that the size of the income gap should be reduced. Indeed, citizens in each of the 40 countries studied indicated on average that the ideal pay gap should be smaller than the (vastly underestimated) actual pay gap.

That many believe that inequality should be reduced is a common theme in much of the literature (see Inglehart, 2016). Indeed, despite underestimating the extent of inequality, participants in the United States (Norton & Ariely, 2011), Australia (Norton et al., 2014), and many other countries across the globe (Kiatpongsan & Norton, 2014) prefer less inequality (but see Starmans et al., 2017). In fact, when presented with pie charts depicting (a) perfect equality (i.e., each quintile of the population owns 20% of the nation's wealth), (b) a scenario in which the wealthiest quintile owns 84% of the nation's wealth (i.e., the

actual level of inequality in the United States), and (c) a scenario in which the wealthiest quintile owns 36% of the nation's wealth (i.e., the actual level of inequality in Sweden), only 10% of Americans noted that they would prefer to live in a society with inequality as extreme as it is in the United States (Norton & Ariely, 2011). Participants did, however, express a slight preference for the levels of inequality seen in Sweden over perfect equality (i.e., 47% vs 43%, respectively). These studies collectively reveal that people want society to be more equal than they (inaccurately) perceive it to be.

23.2.2 Ideological Justifications for Inequality

Although people generally prefer society to be more (rather than less) equal, research on attitudes towards redistribution – a key process through which to achieve greater equality – reveals somewhat surprising results. Contrary to a rational choice perspective (see Chapter 8) in which inequality should correlate positively with support for the redistribution of wealth (i.e., more people stand to benefit from the redistribution of wealth than would be harmed by increasing taxes for the wealthy elite; see Meltzer & Richard, 1981), the association between inequality and support for redistribution is rather equivocal (Breznau & Hommerich, 2019). For example, research on the impact of inequality on policy support over a 50+ year period in the United States reveals that inequality has a cross-lagged effect on *decreased* support for liberal (i.e., redistributive) policies (Kelly & Enns, 2010). That inequality may ironically elicit support for policies that increase the unequal distribution of resources reveals the key role of ideologies in shaping the public discourse on inequality.

Consistent with this view, system justification theory argues that people are motivated to

justify and legitimise the status quo (see Chapter 37). Although this might make sense for the wealthy who benefit from inequality, why might the poor support economic inequality? According to system justification theory, people justify the status quo because doing so meets their needs for certainty, safety, and belonging (i.e., their epistemic, existential, and relational needs, respectively; Jost, 2020). Accordingly, when perceptions of inequality are high (i.e., inequality is the status quo), people tend to think that extreme inequality is fair (see Trump, 2018). In turn, the perception that resources are distributed unequally, albeit in a just manner, weakens support for redistribution (Starmans et al., 2017). Thus, both perceptions of, and ideologies about, inequality, as well as one's position within the economic hierarchy, affect how people understand and react to the increasingly unequal distribution of resources seen in contemporary society.

Other work similarly demonstrates the critical role of ideology in shaping people's responses to inequality. Indeed, myriad belief systems including meritocracy (Mijs, 2021), neoliberalism (Azevedo et al., 2019), and belief in a just world (see Bénabou & Tirole, 2006) correlate positively with support for inequality. Likewise, people's attributions for poverty – attributions that are shaped by people's ideological orientations – influence views on public assistance programmes. Whereas structural attributions that recognise the broader societal roots to inequality (e.g., low wages and lack of opportunity) elicit sympathy and a willingness to help the poor, individual attributions that focus on the perceived failings of the poor (e.g., low motivation or effort) foster anger and an unwillingness to support poverty reduction programmes (Weiner et al., 2011).

Recent work brings these two literatures together by highlighting the interactive effect that (mis)perceptions of inequality and ensuing

beliefs that justify the unequal distribution of resources have on attitudes towards redistribution. García-Sánchez and colleagues (2020) used data from the ISSP to examine the relationship between perceptions of inequality and support for redistribution across 41 countries. Also included in the survey were two system-justifying beliefs (i.e., beliefs in meritocracy and the equality of opportunities). Multilevel regressions revealed that the perceived size of the income gap between high-status and low-status groups correlated positively with support for economic redistribution, but *only* among those who rejected system-justifying beliefs (namely, meritocratic beliefs and the belief in the equality of opportunities). Notably, these associations held while adjusting for nation-level differences in perceived corruption, individualism, and the Human Development Index. Thus, believing that inequality occurs at least partly because some are more willing than others to work hard undermines the extent to which perceptions of inequality foster support for social change.

23.3 Impact of Economic Inequality

23.3.1 Mental and Physical Health

Although attitudes towards the income gap vary, research demonstrates unequivocally the harmful effects of inequality on psychological and physical well-being. In terms of mental health outcomes, inequality correlates negatively with self-esteem (Osborne et al., 2015), life satisfaction (Roth et al., 2017), and happiness (Oishi et al., 2011), but positively with multiple indicators of psychological distress including psychotic symptomology (Johnson et al., 2015) and rates of depression (Ribeiro et al., 2017). For example, women living in the most unequal states in the United States are 1.5 times more likely than their counterparts in the least unequal states to

develop depression (Pabayo et al., 2014). Inequality also correlates positively with rates of schizophrenia (Burns et al., 2014) and other mental health issues (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010), revealing the alarming toll disparities between the rich and the poor have on psychological well-being.

Work examining the income ratio between the top and bottom 10% (or 20%) also exposes the harmful effects of inequality on mental well-being. Burns and Esterhuizen (2008) found a positive correlation between the size of the income gap between the wealthiest and poorest 10% in seven municipalities in South Africa and the treated incidences of psychosis in the population. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) further demonstrate that income inequality correlates positively with the percentage of the population who report (a) having a mental illness and (b) using illegal drugs. Finally, a meta-analysis of 26 studies identified a small, albeit significant, positive association between inequality and depression (Patel et al., 2018). Societal-level economic inequality – irrespective of how it is defined – can adversely affect people’s mental health.

In addition to contributing to poor mental health outcomes, inequality can impair people’s physical well-being. For example, perceptions of inequality correlate positively with allostatic load – a comprehensive set of biological markers of stress exposure that increases susceptibility to poor health (Schwartz, 2017). Accordingly, objective measures of inequality correlate positively with deleterious health outcomes including self-rated health (Soobader & LeClere, 1999), heart failure (Dewan et al., 2019), and late HIV diagnosis (Ransome et al., 2016). Relatedly, Pickett and colleagues (2005) examined data from 21 countries and found that inequality correlated positively with between-nation variability in calorie intake and rates of obesity. Summarising these and other findings,

a meta-analysis of 155 papers showed that, of the 168 independent analyses, 70% obtained either full or partial support for the thesis that inequality undermines health (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2006). The increases in inequality found across the globe have grave implications for public health and well-being.

Given the negative effects of inequality on people’s mental and physical health, it is perhaps no surprise that inequality can also be fatal. Kaplan and colleagues (1996) found that the proportion of total household income earned by the poorest 50% in each state of the United States (i.e., an indicator of *less* inequality) correlated negatively with state-level mortality rates. Similar results emerge when utilising other measures of inequality, as the Robin Hood index correlates positively with age-adjusted mortality and infant mortality, as well as deaths due to coronary heart disease, malignant neoplasms, and homicide (Kennedy et al., 1996). Inequality also correlates positively with mortality rates due to diabetes (Pickett et al., 2005) and breast cancer (Figueiredo & Adami, 2018). Summarising this literature, Kondo and colleagues’ (2009) meta-analysis found that inequality had a small, albeit reliable, impact on increased risk of mortality. Collectively, these studies demonstrate the potentially fatal consequences of failing to redress inequality.

23.3.2 Social Cohesion and Democracy

In addition to negatively impacting mental and physical well-being, inequality can undermine social cohesion and elicit discontent. Specifically, inequality fosters a sense of competitive individualism and reduces cooperation (Sánchez-Rodríguez, Willis, et al., 2019), while also decreasing social connections (Becker et al., 2021) and trust (Kennedy et al., 1998; Oishi et al., 2011; Zhang & Awaworyi Churchill, 2020). Accordingly, data from the

European Social Survey spanning across 129 separate regions in 14 countries reveal that regional-level inequality correlates positively with individual-level fear of crime (Rueda & Stegmüller, 2016). Unfortunately, these concerns are well-founded: state-level inequality in the United States correlates positively with rates of violent crime (Kennedy et al., 1998). For example, Choe (2008) found that inequality across 50 states and Washington, DC correlated positively with reports of both violent crime and property crime. Other work similarly shows that between-nation variability in inequality correlates positively with – and has a lagged effect on – rates of robbery and intentional homicide (Coccia, 2018).

Given its negative effects on social cohesion, it is perhaps no surprise that economic inequality is also harmful for democracy (see Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). For one, inequality can undermine citizens' identification with the larger sociopolitical system (Petkanopoulou et al., 2018) and foster support for divisive far-right (populist) parties (Inglehart & Norris, 2017; Jay et al., 2019; see also Chapter 28). Indeed, rises in economic inequality increased the presence of reactionary movements in France between 1882 and 1980 (Varaine, 2018). Inequality also correlates negatively with voter turnout (Bartle et al., 2017) and other forms of civic engagement (Solt, 2008). For example, Lancee and van de Werfhorst (2012) analysed nationally representative data from 24 European countries and found that national-level inequality correlated negatively with rates of both social participation (e.g., interacting with friends) and civic engagement (e.g., participating in a political organisation). Although income increased the probability of participating in civic life across countries, this was particularly evident in nations with high levels of inequality. Thus, inequality can exacerbate economic-based inequities in democratic representation,

thereby creating a self-perpetuating cycle in which inequality begets inequality (see Gilens, 2005; Solt, 2010).

Additional work further highlights the deleterious effects of inequality on democracy. Sprong and colleagues (2019) conducted a set of 4 correlational and experimental studies across 28 countries on 5 continents and found that economic inequality fostered support for strong leaders who promised to restore social order *even at the expense of core democratic values*. Consistent with these findings, between-country differences in income inequality correlate positively with societal-wide authoritarianism (Solt, 2012). Accordingly, inequality correlates negatively with both trust in political institutions and satisfaction with democracy (Schäfer, 2012). In short, inequality has serious consequences for our health and well-being, as well as the democratic institutions upon which society rests.

23.4 Explaining Why Macro-level Inequality Affects Micro-level Outcomes

Although the rising rates of inequality found across the globe can negatively impact myriad outcomes ranging from mental and physical well-being to our democratic institutions, the psychological mechanisms responsible for transmitting society-wide inequality onto these crucial outcomes have only just come into focus. One framework that addresses this oversight is the Macro-micro model of Inequality and RElative Deprivation (MIREd; Osborne, García-Sánchez, & Sibley, 2019; Osborne et al., 2015). According to MIREd, inequality at the societal level affects individual-level outcomes *because* the widening gap between the wealthy and the poor increases the salience of group boundaries between the haves and the have-nots. Because people are more likely to pursue upwards than downwards social

comparisons (Boyce et al., 2010; Payne et al., 2017), the comparison process can leave even the wealthy feeling relatively deprived – an unpleasant appraisal process whereby one perceives themselves (i.e., individual-based relative deprivation), or their group (i.e., group-based relative deprivation), to be unjustly deprived relative to other individuals or groups in society, respectively (Smith et al., 2012). Consequently, feelings of relative deprivation should predict the range of micro-level outcomes noted throughout this review.

Considerable work supports the various stages of MIREd. For example, research in the social identity tradition has long-recognised the importance of the context in influencing the salience of comparison dimensions (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Accordingly, Jetten and colleagues (2017) argue that, by drawing attention to between-group differences in financial resources, inequality increases the relevance of income/wealth as a dimension of comparison. Consistent with this thesis, inequality breeds invidious social comparisons (Boyce et al., 2010), fosters status-seeking (Walasek & Brown, 2015), and increases the amount of money people believe they need to feel satisfied (Payne et al., 2017; Sánchez-Rodríguez, Jetten, et al., 2019). Moreover, macro-level inequality correlates positively with both individual- and group-based relative deprivation (Osborne et al., 2015).

That feelings of relative deprivation could bridge the link between macro-level inequality and micro-level outcomes is also consistent with the expansive literature on relative deprivation theory. For example, research reveals that individual-based relative deprivation correlates positively with a number of detrimental mental and physical health outcomes including psychological distress (Osborne & Sibley, 2013), low levels of life satisfaction (Boyce et al., 2010), and even susceptibility to the

common cold (Cohen et al., 2008). Likewise, experiences of relative deprivation increase aggressive affect and hostility towards others (Greitemeyer & Sagioglou, 2016), which helps to explain why societal-level inequality undermines social cohesion.

Osborne and colleagues (2015) provide the most comprehensive test of MIREd to date by investigating the indirect effects of neighbourhood inequality on individual-level outcomes through individual- and group-based relative deprivation in a national sample of New Zealand adults. Participants completed measures of individual- and group-based relative deprivation, well-being, and ethnic group identification. To measure neighbourhood-level inequality, participants' addresses were linked with the New Zealand census. Consistent with MIREd, Figure 23.2 reveals that neighbourhood inequality correlated positively with individual- and group-based relative deprivation. In turn, individual-based relative deprivation correlated negatively with self-esteem, whereas group-based relative deprivation correlated positively with ethnic group identification. Notably, these results held after adjusting for income, showing that the harmful effect of inequality on self-esteem emerged net of people's financial resources. These data provide the first evidence that macro-level inequality affects individual-level outcomes by fostering feelings of relative deprivation.

23.5 Prospects for Change

Given the widespread implications inequality has for the health and well-being of both people and society, social scientists have begun to investigate the potential for social change. Accordingly, historical analyses reveal that radical reductions of inequality usually only come about through extraordinary events including (often violent) collective action and pandemics (Scheidt, 2018). Thus, although

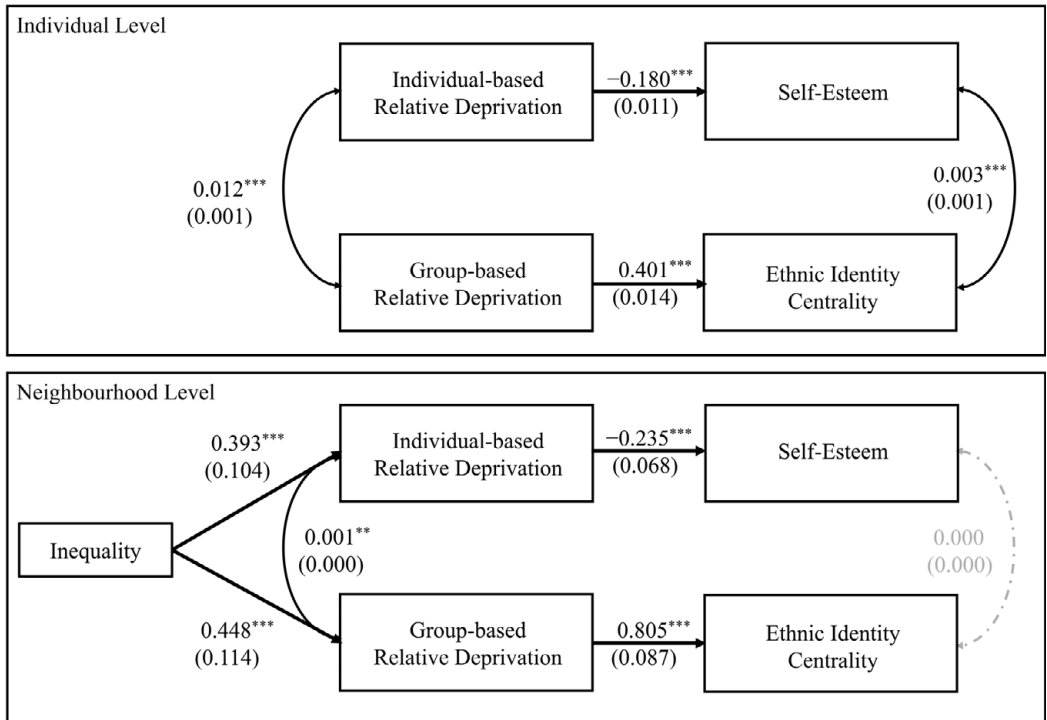


Figure 23.2 Impact of macro-level inequality on micro-level outcomes (adapted from Osborne et al., 2015). Results adjust for household income. Fit indices were as follows: $\chi^2_{(10)} = 29.680$, $p = 0.001$; CFI = 0.993; RMSEA = 0.018; SRMR_{within} = 0.010; SRMR_{between} = 0.104. ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the shocking rise of inequality seen over the last 40 years, it has also exposed the inherent risks societies take when failing to provide universal healthcare and allowing inequality to increase unabatedly. Indeed, inadequate healthcare, crowded living conditions, and substandard incomes that give employees no options but to work while sick contravene best practices for slowing the spread of COVID-19. Moreover, workers who were previously maligned for seeking a living wage were suddenly praised for providing essential services to the population at large. In this sense, COVID-19 has brought to the fore crucial questions about inequality and social justice.

Although increasing awareness of inequality is needed, progressive action must be taken if

we are to combat economic inequality. By introducing progressive tax policies that redistribute resources to the working- and middle-class families most affected by COVID-19, or by supporting the states worst-hit by the crisis (e.g., The Guardian, 2020a), countries could stop – and perhaps even reverse – the alarming trends highlighted in this chapter. Indeed, the state plays an integral role in reducing inequality, as income inequality would be markedly higher in the absence of redistributive policies (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2016). Accordingly, the precipitous rise in income inequality observed in developed countries since the 1980s corresponds closely with declining tax rates for the wealthiest in society (see Piketty, 2014). We suspect, however, that increases in progressive taxation will be difficult to achieve

and will require both sustained activism for social equality and considerable work to develop ideologies that effectively counter – and replace – the dominant narrative in society that the poor simply do not work hard enough (see Piketty, 2020).

Although the global economic shake-up brought about by COVID-19 provides some (limited) prospects for social change, there are numerous psychological and socio-structural barriers to the type of collective action needed to attenuate the gap between the wealthy and the poor. For one, ideological beliefs dampen the blow of inequality on well-being (e.g., see Bahamondes et al., 2019, 2021; Bahamondes-Correa, 2016; Osborne & Sibley, 2013), thus decreasing people's motivation to protest against inequality. Also, although perceptions of inequality correlate positively with support for redistribution (Gimpelson & Treisman, 2015), beliefs that legitimise the income gap between the wealthy and the poor (e.g., meritocracy) attenuate this association (see García-Sánchez et al., 2020). These data echo recent findings that, rather than opposing inequality in and of itself, people dislike the *unfair* distribution of resources (see Starmans et al., 2017). Yet countless findings call into question the legitimacy of contemporary inequities, including (a) declining rates of upward mobility (Chetty et al., 2017), (b) forms of institutional racism that maintain – and exacerbate – long-standing racial inequalities (Roithmayr, 2014), and (c) the sheer size of the income gap between the wealthy and the poor (Kiatpongsan & Norton, 2014). Activists will need to both correct widespread misperceptions about the depths of inequality and explain *why* the inequitable distribution of resources is unfair in order to achieve sustained support for the redistribution of wealth.

Although collective action together with the disadvantaged is one way to redress social inequities (see Chapter 31), it is critical to

recognise that not all forms of protest are created equal. An emerging literature reveals the role of ideology and, in particular, people's motivation to justify the system, in shaping the types of collective action people pursue (e.g., see Becker, 2020; Jost et al., 2017). Indeed, Osborne, Jost, and colleagues (2019) showed that people's motivation to justify the system undermines support for the very types of system-challenging collective action needed to redress inequality, but motivates others (particularly those who belong to high-status groups) to pursue collective action in order to *maintain* the status quo. Accordingly, collective efforts to increase support for economic redistribution are likely to be countered by opponents who prefer the current (unequal) state of affairs. Thus, although collective action may foster change, one must not underestimate the countervailing pressures of those who seek to reinforce the status quo and maintain inequality (see also Jost et al., 2017).

Others provide a more optimistic assessment of the prospects for change. According to Inglehart (2016; Inglehart & Norris, 2017), inequality reflects a precarious balance of power between the wealthy elite who have a grossly disproportionate influence on political institutions and the general public – a balance of power that has the potential to tip towards the redistribution of wealth in the coming years (especially in a post-COVID-19 economy). Though the working class are currently divided over cultural issues that drive low-income voters to support right-wing populist political parties (e.g., see Chapter 28), the recent global support for the Black Lives Matter movement and Fridays for Future offer hope that the 99% will eventually unite to fight for a more equitable distribution of the world's resources. Given the pervasive effects of inequality on various outcomes, we can only hope that the optimism expressed by Inglehart and others comes to fruition. Regardless,

research is needed to understand and predict which scenario is most likely to occur: a continuation (and exacerbation) of the current exorbitant inequalities, a radical redistribution of resources that brings the world closer to equality, or something in between these two extremes.

23.6 Conclusions

Although the successful containment of COVID-19 in a few nations across the globe provides a glimmer of hope that the current pandemic will subside, the inequities highlighted by the crisis will inevitably persist for some time. Indeed, the economic fallout that is likely to follow in the upcoming years foretell a bleak and difficult future. In this sense, inequality remains one of the most pressing issues facing contemporary society. As we have discussed here, inequality threatens the health and well-being of citizens (Osborne et al., 2015; Pabayo et al., 2014; Schwartz, 2017), while also undermining social cohesion by sowing distrust in others (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010; Zhang & Awaworyi Churchill, 2020), fostering violence and competition (Sánchez-Rodríguez, Willis, et al., 2019; Sommet et al., 2019), and decreasing people's identification with their broader social institutions (Petkanopoulou et al., 2018). Thus, Plato's prophetic warning that inequality is the 'greatest plague of all' (360 BC/1970, pp. 214–215) has come to fruition. By identifying the psychological mechanisms that transmit societal-level inequality into individual-level outcomes, political psychologists will be better positioned to understand both the pervasive effects of inequality and the ways to best temper its negative effects on our health, well-being, and political institutions. Given the myriad challenges that emerge from unrestrained inequality, we can only hope that such changes materialise sooner rather than later.

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24 How Social Class Influences Political Choices

Geoffrey Evans and Aleksei Opacic

24.1 Introduction

Social class can impart a sense of identity and grievance that provides a basis for the expression of dramatically different political preferences. It helps explain why some people are more opposed to immigration, more nationalist and supportive of punitive law-and-order policies, and more likely to oppose economic redistribution. In this chapter, we examine how and why someone's class position impacts on their perceptions, values, and attitudes in ways that influence their political choices. Answers to these questions require us to examine different interpretations of what class position is, the class-related vulnerabilities, motivations, and concerns that influence voters' political preferences, and the impact of the signals sent by political actors seeking their votes.

We first identify what class is, then briefly review explanations of class differences in political behaviour. Some studies have focused on demand-side explanations, on how class position influences values, attitudes, and identities, and the consequences of changes in the situations faced by, in particular, working-class voters in an age of globalisation. Others focus on the supply side, on the choices offered to voters by political parties. Both are required to understand how class position translates into differences in political behaviour.

24.2 What Is Class?

Class has been variously defined and operationalised in terms of 'objective' work-related

characteristics including income (e.g., Bartels, 2016; Leighley and Nagler, 1992, 2007), education, occupational prestige, a composite measure of these attributes, or subjective class identification (e.g., Jackman & Jackman, 1983). Occupational definitions of class position have been most influential, however, as they identify a range of advantages and disadvantages associated with labour market positions that go far beyond differences in income. They also allow researchers to examine the implications of changes in the occupational structure, such as those occurring with the transition from industrialism to post-industrialism.

Goldthorpe and colleagues (Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2019; Goldthorpe & McKnight, 2006) developed the most influential definition of class position focusing on types of occupations and the rewards accruing to them – namely, income security, earnings stability, and long-term prospects. The schema (e.g., Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992) firstly distinguishes between employers and employed, and then differentiates the latter according to their conditions of employment resulting from employers' responses to the requirements of work monitoring and human asset specificity associated with different job tasks (Goldthorpe, 2007). In practice, class position is proxied through occupational aggregations which closely map onto the schema's class categories, and have been used in the British National Statistics Socioeconomic Classification (NS-SEC; Rose et al., 2005)

and the European Socio-Economic Classification (Rose & Harrison, 2010).

The main classes identified in the Goldthorpe schema are the higher and lower professional and managerial classes (classes I & II), the 'routine nonmanual class' (typically lower-grade clerical 'white-collar workers', class III), the 'petty bourgeoisie' (small employers and self-employed, class IV), and the 'working class' (foremen and technicians, skilled, semi-, and unskilled manual workers, classes V, VI, & VII). Validation studies have shown that these classes differ significantly in terms of wages, job security, flexible working hours, pension provision, sickness benefits, autonomy, future career prospects, and life-time expected income (e.g., Evans, 1992; Evans & Mills, 1998). In recent years, however, the growing size of the middle class has led to attempts to differentiate it more extensively. This has primarily involved separating managerial and technical occupations from professionals and 'sociocultural specialists' (Güveli et al., 2007; Oesch, 2006).¹ Oesch's (2006) schema distinguishes 'technocrats' from sociocultural specialists. Like business owners, managers and technocrats are involved in running organisations and making profits, whereas sociocultural professionals are focused on the needs of clients, patients, and students.² Their political orientations differ in various ways as a consequence of these differing roles (Häusermann & Kriesi, 2015).

24.3 Understanding Class Differences in Political Behaviour

24.3.1 Social Identity

Early work on class politics emphasised the role of class identity, derived in part from Marxist-influenced assumptions about the emergence of class consciousness. Studies of

class awareness in the USA nonetheless challenged the *Marxist* assertion that class identification necessarily resulted from individuals' position in the means of production (Jackman & Jackman, 1973, 1983). Instead, it was suggested that the association between objective class position and subjective identity was mediated through 'interest-group processes', including general socio-economic prestige and income as well as patterns of social contact, that 'in turn lead to psychological identification with the relevant (socioeconomic) group' (Jackman & Jackman, 1973, p. 571). This argument mirrored earlier work in political science and social psychology that contended that interaction with class-based networks fostered class identity (e.g., Eulau, 1956a, 1956b) and hostility towards class 'out-groups' (Tajfel, 1969).

This intergroup theory of class awareness formed the basis of early empirical investigations of class-based political behaviour. Voting, so the narrative went, was simply the expression of class identification and an enduring sense of partisanship moulded by socialising institutions such as the family, trade unions, and local communities, which served as a 'perceptual screen' through which individuals adjudicated between political parties and formed party preferences (Butler & Stokes, 1974; Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 1964). These conclusions were reinforced by studies showing that individuals identifying as working class were more likely to vote for the political left than right (Prysbey, 1977).

¹ Though the recent growth and diversification of self-employment (Jansen, 2019) may serve to undermine the shared interests of members of that class, leading to more fragmented political preferences.

² These horizontal distinctions have also been applied in the working class, but the distinction between production and service workers does not translate into political divisions (Ares, 2020).

Nevertheless, more recent work into class identification has challenged a deterministic mapping of individuals' class identification onto their material circumstances, finding that the two do not necessarily coincide. In particular, Evans and Kelley (2004) discovered a strong tendency for individuals from all class groups to identify as being in the middle of the class hierarchy (Sosnaud et al., 2013). These authors attribute this to reference group processes whereby individuals have a tendency to locate themselves in a middling position within their immediate social milieu. This distorts individuals' perceptions of their objective class position (Kelley & Evans, 1995), although this could equally result from individuals' desire to distance themselves from both the working and upper classes (Lamont, 2000; Stuber, 2006).

There also appears to be significant cross-national variation in levels of class awareness. As early as the 1970s, Robinson and Kelley (1979) found that class identification was stronger in Britain than in the USA; subsequently, scholars have increasingly directed their analyses towards explaining variation in class identification across a greater number of countries (e.g., Evans & Kelley, 2004; Kikkawa, 2000; Wright, 1997). Most recently, Curtis and Andersen (2015) find the association between household income and class identity is strongest in countries with higher levels of income inequality – a finding they attribute to the fact that greater inequality between social classes makes class differences more visible and individuals more aware of their relative (dis)advantage.

The majority of work on class awareness has focused on examining its determinants. But beyond a set of studies in the UK and USA in the 1960s and 70s (Butler & Stokes, 1974; Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 1964), research has only begun to explore its connection to political attitudes and behaviours.

Rather than treating class identification as a mediator of objective class position, this line of research has examined the independent and conditional effects of subjective class position on political preferences. For instance, in Britain, identifying as working class net of one's occupational class position is generally predictive of authoritarian and anti-immigration, but *not* pro-redistribution, attitudes among occupationally middle-class respondents (Evans & Mellon, 2016). Conversely, class identity in the USA has an independent effect on individuals' left–right values and 'participatory orientations' such as interest in politics and perceived political efficacy net of objective position, though not choice of political party (Sosnaud et al., 2013).

24.3.2 Self-Interest and Redistributive Values

Appeals to identity as a primary mechanism underlying the class-vote association increasingly gave way to explanations predicated on the assumption that individuals have meaningful positions on political issues, selecting the party that best aligns with their political preferences, rather than being driven by unfettered loyalty to class-related institutions (Argyle, 1994). This position was increasingly taken by political scientists in the 1980s and 1990s, who advocated that voting is largely an expression of values or ideologies within a political space comprised of two orthogonal dimensions – a left–right economic axis concerned with issues of economic inequality and redistribution, and a libertarianism–authoritarianism dimension concerned with cultural issues such as morality, immigration, and law and order – which are themselves shaped by class positions (Heath et al., 1985; Robertson, 1984; see also Chapter 6). Indeed, recognising that class moulds more proximate values is more consistent with research showing that party

ideological convergence impacts on voting (e.g., Evans & De Graaf, 2013; Evans & Tilley, 2012b) – if party choice were purely the expression of identity, we would not expect shifts in party platforms to affect voting behaviour. Yet economic and non-economic values mostly, if not entirely, mediate the class-vote association, and these values are themselves a strong predictor of party preference (e.g., Evans & Neundorf, 2018; Langsæther, 2019; Weakliem & Heath, 1994).

Conflict over economic issues has historically formed the basis of party distinctiveness in Western party systems, and class voting has been understood to be predominantly the expression of such left–right orientations (Evans & De Graaf, 2013; Himmelweit et al., 1985). The strong association between individuals' class positions and economic preferences replicates across Western democracies, with the managerial middle class and self-employed most opposed to redistribution and supportive of the free market, whereas the lower service and working classes are the least supportive (Knutsen, 2017, ch. 3; Langsæther & Evans, 2020; Werfhorst & De Graaf, 2004). It has often been assumed that left–right values are simply expressions of '[s]elf-interest of a relatively direct kind' (Berelson et al., 1954, p. 184) – the result of individuals discriminating between party options best matched to their material circumstances (see also Chapter 8). More recently, however, studies have paid explicit attention to the mechanisms linking class position to redistributive preferences.

Such work has largely found that, across a range of contexts, class differences in redistributive preferences are mediated only in small part by current material circumstances such as income and unemployment experience (e.g., Bengtsson et al., 2013; Brooks & Svallfors, 2010). Most recently, Langsæther and Evans (2020) show that class-based

differences in economic and material interests in 18 West European countries explain only a small fraction of the differences in redistributive attitudes between routine manual workers and the service class, and near to none of the difference in right-wing orientation among the self-employed. These findings are consistent with panel studies which show that the effect of upward intragenerational class mobility on increased economic conservatism cannot be explained by the immediate resulting changes in income (Langsæther et al., 2020). Similarly, Evans (1993) finds that promotion prospects, not differences in income, account for a substantial portion of the effects of class on party preference. This rational expectation model only applies to younger respondents, for whom the prospective (rather than present) element of self-interest carries most salience for political choice; such future expected returns lose their relevance among older voters who are more likely to have attained their ultimate occupational position.

Such rational choice arguments are in general distinguished from social psychological explanations for understanding the association between class position and political behaviour (see especially Argyle, 1994). The latter are instead most often evoked to explain class differences in the cultural dimension of attitudes, where the class–liberalism correlation is reversed: white-collar employees are more likely to hold socially liberal attitudes than the working class on issues such as individual liberties, civil rights for minorities, and immigration legislation (Achterberg & Houtman, 2006; Evans et al., 1996). However, it is important to note that education level, rather than class, is most predictive of these cultural dimensions of value orientations (e.g., Heath et al., 1994; Norris & Inglehart, 2019) – a caveat that will be particularly important when we later consider the growing primacy of these values for the rise

in popular support for far-right candidates and causes (see also Chapter 28).

24.3.3 Class, Authoritarianism, and Control

A large number of studies have focused on the moulding influence of occupational task structures (such as work autonomy) on issue orientations and political values that, in turn, influence party choice. From the 1960s onwards, this body of work examined ‘working-class authoritarianism’ as a consequence of the workplace situations of people in the working class (Lipset, 1959; see also Chapter 11). The claim that individuals generalise experience from their work to other (political) arenas of life was most influentially developed by Kohn and colleagues (e.g., Kohn, 1989; Kohn & Schooler, 1983), who demonstrated that self-direction in work mediates the effect of class on authoritarian–liberalism attitudes. The basic premise is that workplaces facilitating independent thought, enabling autonomy, and involving a low degree of supervision lead to individualistic or liberal attitudes; by contrast, close workplace supervision and high task routinisation lead to low control and predispose individuals to authoritarian values (Kohn, 1989; Kohn & Schooler, 1983). While this pattern was argued to most readily account for the high levels of authoritarianism among the working class (Kohn et al., 1990), it has more recently been used to explain variation within the middle class on the liberalism–authoritarianism value axis, distinguishing sociocultural professionals from their managers who hold ‘organisational authority’ (Kitschelt & Rehm, 2014).

Does authoritarianism explain the association between social class and certain political attitudes such as intolerance and prejudice? Feldman and Stenner found that low income and education are associated with an increased

prioritisation of childrearing values indicative of authoritarianism and that authoritarianism is predictive of moral and ethnic forms of intolerance (Feldman, 2003; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005). When treating authoritarianism as a multidimensional set of psychological tendencies, Napier and Jost (2008) find that lower socio-economic status is strongly negatively associated with moral and ethnic intolerance, and mediated by two particular aspects of authoritarianism – obedience to authority and cynicism. A further implication of this and similar research is that working-class authoritarianism appears to be more an authoritarianism of the less highly educated rather than of individuals in ‘lower’ class positions (Dekker & Ester, 1987; Grabb, 1979; Napier & Jost, 2008). The observed relationship between lower socio-economic position and authoritarianism seems more likely to stem from a lack of higher education and its liberalising consequences than from the structure of workplaces per se (Bengtsson et al., 2013; Bornschieer & Kriesi, 2012; Stubager, 2008).

While Kohn and his associates focused on authoritarian tendencies driven by workplace organisation, it is also plausible that occupational experiences of autonomy and monitoring moulds a broader range of politically salient attitudes than authoritarianism alone, including those related to redistributive preferences. In particular, individuals who experience discretion at work may ‘have a more acute sense of the relationship between decisions and outcomes than employees with low levels of autonomy’ (Kitschelt & Rehm, 2014, pp. 1674–1675). In generalising these experiences, these individuals then express a belief that individuals are responsible for their own outcomes that is conducive to right-wing economic preferences (Bengtsson et al., 2013; Jansen, 2019).

Autonomy has also proven useful for explaining the voting patterns of the self-employed and the widely documented finding

that these so-called petty bourgeois groups are among the most economically right-wing citizens and have a high propensity to vote for right-wing parties (Knutson, 2017; Werfhorst & De Graaf, 2004; see also Chapter 28) despite their incomes and job security being similar to those of the working class (Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2019). In this respect, Langsaether and Evans (2020) highlight the role of job autonomy as a source of difference between the self-employed and the working class in their political orientations: enhanced job autonomy is far more strongly associated with the right-wing orientation of the self-employed, compared with the working class, than income.

24.4 Explaining Change

Although the research described above has provided insights into attitudinal differences between classes, its utilisation of primarily cross-sectional analyses leaves unexplained temporal variation in the nature and extent of class voting. It is well established, however, that traditional ‘left versus right-wing’ class voting has declined (Evans, 1999; Nieuwebeerta, 1995), although this is not universal (Brooks et al., 2006; Evans & De Graaf, 2013). And in the post-communist democracies of Eastern Europe, there is evidence of growing levels of class voting during the post-socialist transition (Evans, 2006). There are also two particularly important recent developments. The first is the tendency for the working class across Western democracies to vote for new radical right parties (Rydgren, 2012). The second is that, in some countries, the largest class division in politics is now between voting and *not* voting: compared with the similar participation levels observed historically, a far greater proportion of those in the working class than in the middle classes currently do not vote (Evans & Tilley, 2017; Heath, 2018).

Early studies of declining class voting took a ‘bottom-up’ or ‘demand-side’ perspective. The common narrative cited a number of socio-economic transformations as driving a gradual ‘blurring’ of class positions, which in turn eroded the importance of these positions as determinants of economic (dis)advantage and life chances and as a basis for political preference formation (Dalton, 2008, pp. 156–157; see also Evans, 2000). These included: a general improvement in living standards of the working class in the post-war period (Abrams & Rose, 1960), increased upward class mobility following the growth in professional and managerial employment and the expansion of higher education (Manza et al., 1995, pp. 143–144), and the growth of within-class heterogeneity in political interests deriving from cross-cutting social and attitudinal bases of political choice (Franklin, 1992; Rose & McAllister, 1986), especially those resulting from a shift from materialist to post-materialist values (Inglehart & Rabier, 1986). However, evidence for these explanations has been largely unconvincing. As Evans and Tilley (2012a) note, in many cases these interpretations were usually ‘inferred retrospectively from an observed decline in class voting, rather than measured independently and then used to account for such declines’ (p. 964).

The obvious problem here is that aggregate correlations cannot say whether the changing class–vote association is accounted for by a decline in the preference–choice association, or a declining effect of class on preference orientations. This is shown in Figure 24.1, which represents the relationship between class, mediators of the class–vote association (ideology, values, and attitudes), and vote, over time. On the one hand, social transformations might weaken the relationship between class and values and ideologies (arrow a). This was essentially the position implicitly taken by the ‘bottom-up’ approaches described above,

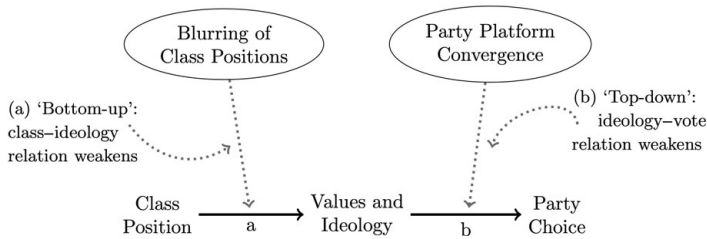


Figure 24.1 Differing ways of understanding how the class–vote association may change over time

appealing to the waning distinctiveness of class-based life chances and resources. On the other hand, a weakening of the attitude–vote relationship may have driven the decline of class politics (arrow b), while the association between class position and these orientations has remained intact.

Indeed, an increasing body of research has argued party policy convergence has attenuated this second arrow – the effect of class-based value orientations on political behaviour. This ‘supply-side approach’ challenges the claim that class positions simply have less salience today for individuals’ political values and ideologies, instead arguing that the changing nature of class voting is best understood in response to party signals and that the ‘agent of change [is] political rather than social’ (Evans & Tilley, 2012b, p. 139). This is so even if shifts in party platforms are themselves seen as strategic party decisions in response to social structural transformations, such as the shrinking size of left parties’ traditionally core electoral base of the manual working class.

The basic premise of this approach is that since voters actively respond to parties’ signals in their political decision-making, the extent of differentiation in the signals that parties send to the electorate determines the salience of class in influencing how an individual votes (Evans & Tilley, 2012b). Where parties adopt distinctive positions on class-based issues, the

association between class and voting is likely to be strongest since classes’ different preferences can find political expression; by contrast, party programmatic convergence weakens the motivation for party choice on the basis of class-based interests, and instead amplifies motivations based on other considerations such as ‘valence’ issues concerning competence in the attainment of generally agreed up on goals (Converse, 1958; Evans, 2000).

The impact of party convergence on class voting has strong empirical support in Britain. An extensive documentation of left- and right-wing party manifestos over time has shown a distinctive shift of the political left towards centre-ground positions on economic and social issues since the 1960s, and the extent of left–right polarisation in parties’ manifestos has been shown to correlate strongly with the predictive strength of class, and values, on voting behaviour in Britain (Evans & Tilley, 2012a, 2012b). A similar pattern of convergence in the economic platforms of the political left and right and a weakening strength of class voting finds support elsewhere across a range of European countries (Arndt, 2013; Elff, 2009; Oskarson, 2005), and is found even after controlling for other aspects of social change (Jansen et al., 2013).

Despite showing the potential relevance of party programmes for class-based behaviour, these studies do not demonstrate at the individual level that the decline of the class–vote

association is induced by the declining political relevance of left–right values for voting. Later work integrates supply-side correlates of voting with the individual-level mechanisms through which the ‘effects of policy convergence class vote can be understood’ (Evans & Tilley, 2012a, p. 965). Thus, in the British case, Evans and Tilley (2017) have consistently argued that dealignment cannot result from the decreasing political relevance of class-based demand because of the continued importance of class in shaping life chances, identities, and preferences for left- versus right-wing policies. Addressing the declining class–vote association in Britain across over 30 years, the authors find that while the association between class and these values appears unaffected by party convergence, supply-side dynamics simply make persisting class differences in redistributive preferences less relevant to party choice (Evans & Tilley, 2012a, 2017). Evidence that a decline in class voting is more generally attributable to the waning effect of distinct class-based values on voting rather than to a weakening in class differences in values is also found in the Netherlands and Germany (Evans & De Graaf, 2013). Recently, Evans and Hall (2019) provide indirect support for this thesis across eight countries between 1990 and 2009, where a voter–party platform representation gap on economic issues is most pronounced for manual and low-skilled service workers whose economic preferences put them in a markedly more leftist electoral space than other occupational groups.

A further implication of mainstream party convergence is its influence on the likelihood of voting *per se*, and therefore the extent to which class position is associated with participation in the democratic process. In the UK, class gaps in electoral participation grew immediately after 1997 – that is, precisely when the Labour party moved to the centre under Tony Blair (Evans & Tilley, 2017) – and that, more

generally since the 1980s, ideological convergence of mainstream parties particularly depresses the probability of voting in the working class (Azzolini & Evans, 2020). US political scientists in particular have focused on bottom-up mechanisms – that is, differential civic orientations such as political interest, civic duty, and political efficacy – to explain differences in political participation (e.g., Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Verba & Nie, 1972). But it is likely that social differences in political efficacy also reflect choice and lack of it: when party appeals are less clearly differentiated along class lines, parties simply become less appealing to certain groups which then stop participating. Azzolini and Evans (2020) provide evidence in support of this position: in Britain, respondents’ value orientations are a significant mediator of the impact of party platform convergence on class differences in turnout.

Where distinct class-based economic preferences are not given political outlet, it is clear this can lead to declining class voting. Yet political choice is not based solely on left–right differentiation but also on cultural, ‘second order’ issues, such as opposition to immigration, Euroscepticism, and an emphasis on authoritative law and order (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Indeed, a number of studies suggest that a convergence in mainstream economic platforms, and resulting representation deficit for the working class, has led to the increased importance of cultural issues as a basis for partisan conflict, expressed by support for radical right or so-called challenger parties across Western democracies (Rydgren, 2012). At a time when mainstream parties have converged on economic issues, new radical right parties (RRPs) across Europe have given cultural dimensions of political values – such as ethnonationalism, nativism, and authoritarianism – a new salience (Kitschelt & McGann, 1997; Mudde, 2007; see also

Chapter 20). These dual processes of mainstream party convergence and challenger party differentiation have increasingly given working-class voters a new opportunity to politically express their preferences, even if only those on non-economic issues, by turning to these alternative political platforms (McGann & Kitschelt, 2005; Rennwald & Evans, 2014; Rydgren, 2012). Spies (2013), for example, finds that across 13 West European societies in which salience and party polarisation of economic issues has decreased, support for RRP among the working class is considerably higher than in countries without such a trend.

24.5 Status Concerns and the Decline of the Working Class?

Status-based explanations for radical right voting examine why the working class might have found these parties particularly appealing in recent years. Gidron and Hall (2017, 2020) argue that long-term economic and cultural shifts, such as the decline of low-skilled 'decent jobs' and increasing multiculturalism and celebration of diversity in mainstream discourse, have induced a general decline in the subjective social status of the white working class. This subjective status anxiety induces support for populist causes such as ethno-nationalism and anti-immigration and, in turn, parties.

How can this diminishing subjective sense of social status be linked to support for populist platforms? While populist support among groups with lower status may be broadly instrumental, such as voting for the party that promises to improve an individual's subjective status (De Botton, 2008; Ridgeway, 2014), the mechanisms linking status decline to radical party support may be more psychological in nature. For instance, Gidron and Hall (2017, 2020) suggest that status anxiety leads individuals to erect symbolic boundaries between themselves and 'out-groups' in a bid

to maintain a sense of social standing. This is particularly true of out-groups such as immigrants, who are seen to be linked to the status threat (see Chapter 21): individuals in lower socio-economic positions who have traditionally relied on racial hierarchies as a source of their social value (see, e.g., Lamont, 2000; Lamont & Molnár, 2002) are likely to see the recent development of new cultural frameworks celebrating diversity and racial equality as a particularly pernicious threat (Gest, 2016).

This hypothesis is based on a long-standing observation in psychology that perceived group status anxiety can activate authoritarian predispositions on attitudes such as intolerance and prejudice towards racial minorities, increased attachment to in-groups, and a corollary derogation of out-groups (Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005; Tajfel, 1978). Given that criticism of immigrants and ethnic minorities features prominently in radical parties' discursive appeals, the platforms of the radical right have increasingly enabled defensive reactions to group threat to find political expression.

How convincing are status-based explanations of radical right support? Drawing on data from over 20 European countries, Gidron and Hall (2017, 2020) find that lower levels of subjective social status are associated with support for right populist parties as well as various attitudinal positions associated with right populism, including negative outlooks on the economic and cultural aspects of immigration. Not only has this pattern been broadly found across Western countries, it also emerges in attempts to make sense of the shock outcome of the 2016 US presidential, where Mutz (2018) argues that the educational gap in Trump versus Clinton support is almost wholly explained away by perceived status threat. However, this work is not without criticism (Morgan, 2018).

For Gidron and Hall (2017), subjective social status is ‘the level of social respect or esteem people believe is accorded them within the social order’ (p. S61). Status thus differs from empirically related indicators of social stratification, such as power or socio-economic resources. However, this notion is measured by asking people to rank themselves on an 11-point scale: ‘In our society, some groups are more on top and others are more at the bottom. Thinking about yourself, where would you place yourself in this scale?’ Because the scale has no substantive reference it is not clear whether it refers to income, education, social standing, class, or other attributes, and of course whether these ideas differ across the population. Smith’s (1986) validation work of this instrument described it as a measure of ‘class identification’ without referring to Weberian notions of esteem, honour, and deference as identified by Ridgeway (2014) and adopted by Gidron and Hall (2017). Kelley and Evans (1995) likewise refer to the scale as a measure of class identity in their work in the 1990s, only referring to a rather vaguely specified notion of ‘subjective social location’ later (Evans & Kelley, 2004). It has also been argued that reclassifying responses to survey questions about immigration as indicators of concern about material interests rather than status threat can drastically change conclusions about the motivational basis of support for Trump (Morgan, 2018).

Moreover, an important feature of the rise in support for the radical right is that its basis of support comes not from the working class – understood purely in occupational terms – but, rather, from among native-born, white, middle-income individuals who, crucially, lack tertiary education (Arzheimer, 2016; Kurer, 2020). This was most dramatically seen in Trump’s 2016 electoral victory, where the lack of absence of a college degree, rather than an occupational gradient, was the starkest

predictor of support for Trump versus Clinton (Mutz, 2018; Sides et al., 2019, pp. 178–179).

This observation is important for at least two reasons. First, it adds indirect support to non-economic explanations of radical right voting since the cultural and economic processes evoked as the causes of, for example, status anxiety appear to be those pertaining to a lack of tertiary education – rather than to a lower occupational class and its associated material (dis)advantages. Indeed, Gidron and Hall (2017) find that it is the relative self-rated social position of white men without tertiary education that has declined most markedly in the past 30 years. By contrast, it is not clear that the self-rated social position of different classes has changed over time. For instance, Oesch and Vigna (2020) find no downward trends in workers’ subjective social status or life satisfaction, nor a widening class gap over time. Neither does self-rated social position appear to explain class differences in the UK’s Brexit vote (Richards et al., 2020).

Moreover, it is consistent with research demonstrating that individuals in the most economically disadvantaged situations do not support RRPs. Drawing on panel surveys from several European countries, Gidron and Mijs (2019) and Kurer (2020) find that individuals who experience a decline in their economic situation such as income loss or a transition into unemployment instead gravitate towards the radical left and party platforms that promise to offer more immediate economic relief. These findings are taken to suggest that the greatest support for RRPs comes from low educational groups whose ‘concerns about psychological well-being and social status ... produce reactions that transcend economic or welfare demands’ (Kurer, 2020, p. 1805), rather than from groups who are the most impoverished per se.

The growing importance of cultural factors associated with lower educational attainment

is also manifest in the increasing tendency for ‘cross-pressured’ voters with more conservative attitudes and progressive economic attitudes to resolve this conflict in favour of the radical right (Gidron, 2020). Indeed, electoral support for RRP cross-nationally typically constitutes a cross-class coalition between production workers and the ‘petty bourgeoisie’, such as the self-employed and small employers (Evans & Mellon, 2016; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Oesch & Rennwald, 2018). The uniting factor here is that both groups have lower levels of education, indicating that education rather than social class is most consistently predictive of RRP support, further confirming the significance of cultural over economic factors in explaining this support (e.g., Manza & Crowley, 2018).

24.6 Conclusion

In the study of electoral behaviour, social class, typically understood as an aspect of individuals’ social relations in labour markets and operationalised through validated instruments, has enabled researchers to disentangle the complex and multifaceted relationships between stratification systems and political behaviour. Research undertaken by political sociologists and psychologists alike has made traction in explicating the micro-level mechanisms underpinning class effects, with particular attention put on attitudinal, ideological, and issue mediators. Class-based political interests are in particular polarised along both economic and cultural axes, and both psychological and instrumental mechanisms relating these interests to class positions have received some empirical support. While an exacting adjudication between them is as yet lacking, the rise of the cultural dimensions of political orientations is arguably reconfiguring electoral behaviour from a class-based into an education-based divide, where the most

proximate factor for partisan choice is not material interest, but rather a cultural-psychological disposition.

More recent research in this vein has attested to heterogeneity in mechanisms such as the salience of autonomy for the right-wing preferences of the self-employed, and this work in particular points to a burgeoning need to test whether mechanism heterogeneity is a more generalised phenomenon in mediating the class-party association. With respect to trends in class voting over time, supply-side models of political choice have revealed a great deal about how political parties shape trends in class-based political behaviour by appealing (or not) to the concerns and motives of people in different class positions. Responses on measures of psychological constructs such as political efficacy, rather than being a fixed characteristic of individuals, can instead be seen as responses to actual choices, or lack thereof.

The renewed interest in the motives and political behaviour of the working class reflects a recent tendency for them to support radical right parties rather than the parties of the left. The significance of status threat remains unclear, mainly because of measurement issues, which leave unresolved the historic debate between status conflict and realistic group conflict. One potential way to better examine a sense of relative decline could be through the use of robust indicators of social comparison to assess the degree to which a sense of relative deprivation has emerged among working-class respondents during a period in which parties and other institutions have been directing more attention towards minorities’ interests (Pettigrew, 2017; see also Chapter 23), which also returns us to a focus on a supply-side deficit in the representation of (in particular) working-class political interests.

In conclusion, we need further exploration of the conditionality of the relationships

between both class and values and values and voting on supply-side choice options (e.g., party platforms) in order to more fully understand why class voting patterns change over time. This is particularly relevant for understanding the increasing prominence of cultural rather than purely economic aspects of political competition and their impact on class partisan choices. How do mainstream and challenger parties' choice sets interact to make cultural preferences more important for political behaviour than economic issues? Do outsider party political framings merely activate and render politically salient cultural preferences which are themselves stable over time, or do they themselves help to shift public opinion over time? More generally, greater interrogation of the interrelation of supply-side politics and the nature of demand-side voter preferences should provide important insights into the evolving connection between class and political representation.

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25 Fear and Loathing in American Politics

A Review of Affective Polarisation

Shanto Iyengar

The impeachment trial of US President Donald Trump illustrates vividly the phenomenon of party polarisation: intense conflict and ill will across the party divide, and intransigent political preferences that are unresponsive to strong evidence. In this chapter, I will review the political psychology literature documenting the intensified state of party polarisation in America and identify the possible psychological underpinnings of this phenomenon. In closing, I offer some speculative thoughts on how extreme polarisation may threaten fundamental democratic norms and institutions.

25.1 Defining Polarisation

In political psychology, research into the extent of party polarisation has focused mainly on the question of ideological divergence. Do major political parties take positions close to the ideological extremes on the major issues of the day (see also Chapter 26)? By this standard, there is clear evidence that American party leaders have polarised over the past five decades (McCarty et al., 2006). However, does this trend also apply to partisan voters? Here the evidence is far from clear. Some scholars present data showing that the median citizen has remained centrist on most issues despite the gravitation of party elites to the ideological extremes (Fiorina et al., 2008). Others contest this description of the masses, citing a gradual decline in the number of ideological moderates and a near doubling of the average distance between the ideological self-placement of non-activist

Democrats and Republicans between 1972 and 2004 (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008).

Ideological disagreement is but one way of defining partisan polarisation. An alternative definition considers mass polarisation as the extent to which partisans view each other as a disliked out-group. In the USA, partisanship is about identifying with the ‘Democrat’ group or the ‘Republican’ group (Green et al., 2002; Huddy et al., 2015). When people identify with a political party, they instinctively categorise the world into an in-group (their own party), and an out-group (the opposing party; see Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A vast literature in social psychology demonstrates that any such in-group versus out-group distinction, even one based on the most trivial of shared characteristics, triggers both positive feelings for the in-group, and negative evaluations of the out-group (see, for instance, Billig & Tajfel, 1973). The more salient the group to the sense of personal identity, the stronger these inter-group divisions (Gaertner et al., 1993).

For Americans, partisanship is a particularly salient and powerful identity for several reasons. First, it develops at a young age, and rarely changes over the life cycle, notwithstanding significant shifts in personal circumstances (Sears, 1975). Second, political campaigns – the formal occasions for expressing citizens’ partisan identity – recur frequently, and last for many months (or even years). The frequency and duration of campaigns means that individuals constantly receive partisan cues from elites. It is not surprising, therefore, that

ordinary Americans view themselves in terms of their partisan affiliation. As described in Section 25.2, in recent decades this sense of group identity has elicited strong feelings of hostility towards political opponents, a phenomenon political scientists refer to as affective polarisation (for a review of this literature, see Iyengar et al., 2019).

25.2 Affective Polarisation: The Evidence

There is now an extensive literature documenting the extent to which partisans treat each other as a disliked out-group. The evidence of out-party animus derives primarily from survey data, but also includes behavioural indicators of discrimination and implicit or subconscious markers of partisan prejudice (e.g., see Chapter 4).

25.2.1 Self-Reported Partisan Affect

Survey data on respondents' feelings towards the parties and their followers are the most widely used measure of affective polarisation.

The one item with the greatest longevity – dating back to the 1970s – is the ‘feeling thermometer’ question. Introduced into the American National Election Studies (ANES; Weisberg & Rusk, 1970), the measure has since been widely adopted by other survey organisations. The question asks respondents to rate the two parties, or ‘Democrats’ and ‘Republicans’, on a scale ranging from 0 indicating coldness to 100 indicating warmth. Since the measure targets attitude objects representing both parties, it is possible to track the difference between in-group and out-group affect over the past 40 years.¹

As widely reported in the scholarly literature and popular press, the trends in the feeling thermometer scores reveal substantially increased affective polarisation over time. As shown in Figure 25.1, which plots the in-party and out-party thermometer scores in the ANES time series, the gap between the in- and out-party thermometer scores steadily increased from around 23 degrees in 1978 to 41 in 2016 (see Iyengar et al., 2012). As Figure 25.1 makes clear, virtually all the increase in affective polarisation has occurred because of increased animus towards the opposing party. Warm feelings for one's own party have remained stable across the entire period.

Stronger hostility for the out-party is a recent, but rapidly escalating, trend that began at the turn of the century. Figure 25.2 shows that while the percentage of partisans who rated the out-party between 1 and 49 on the thermometer has increased steadily since the 1980s, the share of partisans expressing intense negativity for the out-party (ratings of 0) remained quite small until 2000. Post-2000, the size of this group has surged dramatically – from 8% in 2000 to 21% in 2016. Thus, the first two decades of the 21st century represent an acute era of polarisation, in which what was only mild dislike for political opponents now appears to be a deeper form of animus.²

¹ Following conventional practice, scholars of affective polarisation measure party identification using the standard ANES seven-point question ranging from strongly Republican to strongly Democratic. Most scholars classify independent ‘leaners’ as partisans and exclude pure independents from consideration (this group represents less than 15% of the electorate in the 2016 ANES). Democratic and Republican evaluations of their own side constitute the measure of in-group affect, while partisans' evaluations of their opponents provide the measure of out-group affect.

² The ANES survey is administered through in-person interviews and online questionnaires. The level of expressed hostility towards the opposing party tends to be greater in the anonymous setting of the online survey. When faced with an interviewer in their home, respondents assign less extreme thermometer scores to their opponents (see Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018).

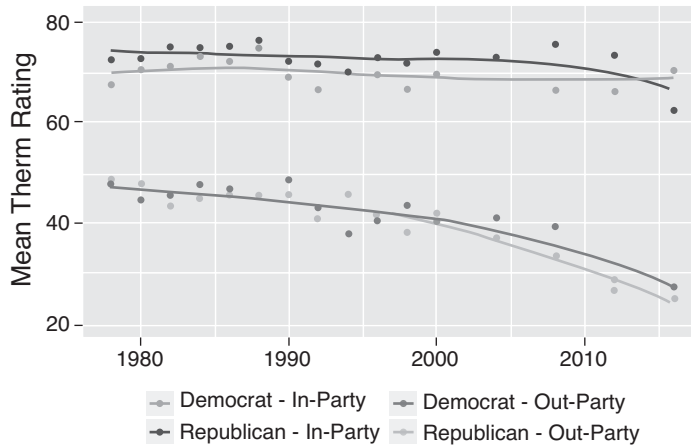


Figure 25.1 ANES party feeling thermometers (1976–2016).

Source: ANES Surveys

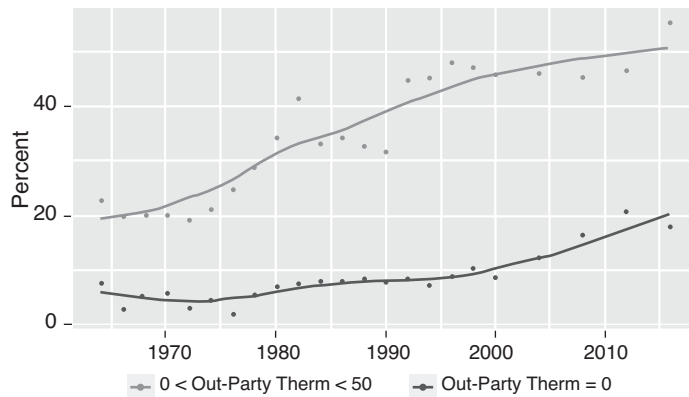


Figure 25.2 Out-party animus in feeling thermometer scores.

Source: ANES Surveys

A parallel pattern reappears when we track respondents' feelings towards the presidential candidates. Until about 2000, partisans reported only ambivalent feelings towards the opposing party's nominee (feeling thermometer scores of around 40).³ However, beginning in 2004, feelings towards the out-party candidate turn colder, with average thermometer scores dropping to around 15 in 2016. As in the case of the party thermometers, partisans' feelings towards their own party nominee are unchanged; the strengthened polarisation

occurs because of increased hostility towards the opposing party nominee.

The feeling thermometer data show clearly that the party divide elicits affective

³ The fact that the thermometer scores for the individual candidates are more positive than the scores given the parties may represent a 'person positivity' bias (Sears, 1983). Psychologists have demonstrated that attitudes towards specific individuals are typically more positive than attitudes towards the group represented by those individuals.

polarisation. It is important, however, to place the findings on partisan affect in some context. How does partisanship compare with other salient cleavages as a source of group polarisation? Fortunately, the feeling thermometers have been applied to multiple groups making it possible to compare in-group versus out-group evaluations based on party with evaluations based on race, religion, region, and other relevant groupings. The comparisons reveal that party is easily the most affectively laden group divide in the USA. Social out-groups including Muslims, Hindus, atheists, Latinos, African Americans, gays, and poor people all elicit much warmer thermometer scores than the out-party (see Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018).

This contrast between the party divide and sociocultural divides should alert us to a major limitation of self-reported indicators of group affect. Survey responses are highly reactive and susceptible to intentional exaggeration/suppression based on normative pressures. In the case of race, religion, gender, and other social divides, the expression of animus towards out-groups is tempered by strong social norms (Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954). Unlike President Trump, most individuals are prone to comply with applicable norms when asked sensitive questions. In the case of the

party divide, however, there are no corresponding pressures to moderate disapproval of political opponents. If anything, the rhetoric and actions of political leaders convey to their followers that hostility directed at the opposition is not only acceptable, but also appropriate.

25.2.2 Implicit Measures

The normative pressures facing survey respondents make it difficult to establish a fair comparison of social with political divides as a basis for out-group animus. Fortunately, psychologists have developed an array of implicit or subconscious measures of group prejudice. These implicit measures provide a more valid comparison of the bases for prejudice because they are much harder to manipulate than explicit self-reports and less susceptible to impression management or political correctness (Boysen et al., 2006).

Iyengar and Westwood (2015) developed a party implicit association test (IAT; based on the brief version of the race IAT) to document unconscious partisan bias.⁴ Their results showed ingrained implicit bias with approximately 70% of Democrats and Republicans showing a bias in favour of their party. Interestingly, implicit bias proved less extensive than explicit bias as measured through survey questions; 91% of Republicans and 75% of Democrats in the same study explicitly evaluated their party more favourably. This is an important reversal from the case of race or religion where social norms restrain the expression of conscious hostility towards out-groups resulting in higher levels of implicit over explicit prejudice.

To place the results from their party IAT in context, Iyengar and Westwood also administered the race IAT. Notably, relative to implicit racial bias, implicit partisan bias proved more widespread. The difference in the D-score – the operational indicator of

⁴ The party IAT measures the speed with which partisans associate positive and negative terms with images associated with the in- and out-party. When the target stimulus is the donkey, the Democratic mascot, the expectation is that Democratic respondents will more quickly categorise the mascot as 'good' since they have come to associate 'good' with Democrats. Conversely, Republican respondents should take more time to associate the Democratic mascot with 'good'. Iyengar and Westwood constructed the partisan IAT using the standard set of good stimuli (Wonderful, Best, Superb, Excellent) as well as the standard set of bad stimuli (Terrible, Awful, Worst, Horrible) used in other IATs.

implicit bias – amounted to 0.50 for the party divide, while the corresponding difference in implicit racial bias across the racial divide was only 0.18 (see also Theodoridis, 2017 for an application of implicit measures to the study of partisanship). Thus, prejudice towards the out-party exceeded comparable bias directed at the racial out-group by more than 150%!

25.2.3 Indicators of Social Distance

A more unobtrusive measure of partisan affect is social distance – the extent to which individuals feel comfortable interacting with out-group members in a variety of different settings. In recent months, the media have highlighted several high-profile instances of social ‘shunning’ directed at political opponents. Opponents of Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh heckled Senator Ted Cruz and his wife at a posh Washington restaurant. Harvard Professor Alan Dershowitz, a prominent supporter of President Trump, complained to the *New York Times* that ‘my liberal friends have stopped inviting me for dinner’. More generally, the argument is that if partisans take their political affiliation seriously, they should be averse to entering into close interpersonal relations with their opponents. The most vivid evidence of increased social distance across the party divide concerns interparty marriage. In the early 1960s, the percentage of partisans expressing concern over the prospect of their son or daughter marrying someone from the opposition party was in the single digits. Some 45 years later, concern had risen to more than 25% (Iyengar et al., 2012). Among Republicans, one-half expressed dismay at the prospect of their offspring marrying a Democrat. Today, the party divisions and resulting out-party animus are sufficiently strong to motivate partisans to associate with like-minded others.

Of course, survey data on social distance is limited to questions of hypothetical social interactions across the party divide. More compelling evidence of increased social distance based on party affiliation comes from online dating sites and other available sources of ‘big data’ including national voter files indicating that the party cue does in fact influence the decision to enter into interpersonal relations (Chen & Rohla, 2018). The level of spousal partisan agreement has increased significantly over the period marked by heightened polarisation.

In a longitudinal analysis spanning 1965–2015, Iyengar et al. (2018) find that spousal agreement moved from 73% to 82%, while disagreement fell from 13% to 6%. Since the 1965 sample of spouses had been married for decades, they had many opportunities to persuade their partner, thus inflating the observed level of agreement. When the researchers limited the focus to younger couples, they found a more impressive shift in spousal agreement; among recently married couples in 1973, spousal agreement registered at 54.3%. For the comparable group of recently married couples in the 2014 national voter file, spousal partisan agreement reached 73.9%. This is an increase of 36% in partisan agreement among couples who have had little opportunity to persuade each other.

Online dating sites are a rich source of data on the politics underlying interpersonal attraction. Huber and Malhotra (2017) leverage data from a major dating website where they gained access to both the daters’ personal profiles and their messaging behaviour. They found that partisan agreement increases the likelihood of a dyad exchanging messages by 10%. To put that difference in perspective, the comparable difference for couples matched on socio-economic status (using education as the indicator) was 11%. Thus, partisanship appears to be just as relevant as social standing in the

process of selecting a romantic partner. The authors replicated this result in the context of a survey experiment where they demonstrated that after exposure to a dating profile that includes the target individual's political ideology, ideological agreement significantly enhanced the participant's interest in dating the target individual.

The fact that individuals date and marry co-partisans does not necessarily mean that politics was the basis for their choice. Agreement on partisanship may be a by-product of spousal selection on some other attribute (perhaps economic status) correlated with partisan identity. While some researchers argue that partisan agreement among couples is in fact 'induced' or accidental (see, for instance, Klofstad et al., 2013), others provide evidence in favour of an active selection model in which the political affiliation of the prospective partner is the point of attraction. Huber and Malhotra (2017), for instance, show that ideology and partisanship both predict reciprocal online messaging on dating sites even after controlling for alternative bases of spousal attraction. Iyengar et al. (2018) present similar results showing that spousal agreement in the current era is more attributable to selection based on politics than alternative mechanisms including induced selection, the homogeneity of marriage markets, and agreement due to one spouse gradually persuading the other.

Dating and marriage both entail long-term and more intimate relationships. Does politics also impede the initiation of more casual friendships? Surveys by the Pew Research Center (2017) suggest that it does. About 64% of Democrats and 55% of Republicans say they have 'just a few' or 'no' close friends who are from the other political party. Thus, partisanship appears to act as a litmus test even at the level of casual social encounters.

25.2.4 Behavioural Evidence of Partisan Bias

Given the inherent limits of the attitudinal approach, scholars have turned to behavioural manifestations of partisan animus in both lab and naturalistic settings. Iyengar and Westwood (2015) and Carlin and Love (2018) have used economic games (see Forsythe et al., 1994) as a platform for documenting the extent to which partisans are willing to endow or withhold financial rewards from players who either share or do not share their partisan affiliation. In the trust game, the researcher gives Player 1 an initial endowment (\$10) and instructs them that they are free to give all, some, or none to Player 2 (said to be a member of a designated group). Player 1 is further informed that any amount they donate to Player 2 will be tripled by the researcher, and that Player 2 is free (although under no obligation to do so) to transfer an amount back to Player 1. The dictator game is an abbreviated version of the trust game in which there is no opportunity for Player 2 to return funds to Player 1 and where the researcher does not add to the funds transferred. Since there is no opportunity for Player 1 to observe the strategy of Player 2, variation in the amount Player 1 allocates to the different categories represented by Player 2 in the dictator game is attributable only to group dislike and prejudice.

The trust and dictator games provide a consequential test of out-group bias, for they assess the extent to which participants are willing to transfer money they would otherwise receive themselves to co-partisans while simultaneously withholding money from opposing partisans. For both the trust game and the dictator game, partisan bias emerges as the difference between the amount allocated to co-partisans and opposing partisans. Iyengar and Westwood (2015) show the expected

pattern; co-partisans consistently receive a bonus while opposing partisans are subject to a financial penalty. As in the case of implicit bias, the effects of party affiliation on donations exceeded the effects of ethnicity. In fact, the effects of racial similarity were negligible and not significant – co-ethnics were treated more generously (by eight cents) in the dictator game, but incurred a loss (seven cents) in the trust game. As in the case of survey data, social norms appear to suppress racial discrimination in the trust and dictator games.

Iyengar and Westwood (2015) shed further light on the extent of affective polarisation by comparing the effects of partisan and racial cues on non-political judgements. In one study, they asked participants to select one of two candidates for a college scholarship. The candidates (both high school students) had similar academic credentials, but differed in their ethnicity (White or African American) or partisanship (Democrat or Republican). The results indicated little racial bias; Whites, in fact, preferred the African American applicant (55.8%). In contrast, partisan favouritism was widespread; 79.2% of Democrats picked the Democratic applicant and 80% of Republicans picked the Republican applicant. These results held even when the out-partisan candidate had a significantly higher grade point average.

In addition to the allocation of educational resources, partisanship can distort labour markets. Using an audit design, Gift and Gift (2015) mailed out resumes signalling job applicants' partisan affiliation in a heavily Democratic area and a heavily Republican area. They found that in the Democratic county, Democratic résumés were 2.4 percentage points more likely to receive a callback than Republican résumés; the corresponding partisan preference for Republican résumés in the Republican county was 5.6 percentage points. Whereas Gift and Gift (2015) examine

employer preferences, McConnell et al. (2018) examine the other side of the labour market and study how partisanship affects employee behaviour. The researchers hired workers to complete an online editing task and subtly signalled the partisan identification of the employer. Unlike Gift and Gift (2015), McConnell and colleagues mainly find evidence of in-group favouritism as opposed to out-group prejudice. The only significant differences occurred between the co-partisan condition and the control group. People were willing to accept lower compensation (by 6.5%) from a partisan-congruent employer.

In summary, evidence from self-reported feelings towards the parties, subconscious partisan prejudice, increased social distance based on political affiliation, and multiple instances of behavioural discrimination against opposing partisans all converge to show intensified party polarisation in the USA. I turn next to consider the psychological factors underlying this phenomenon.

25.3 Possible Mechanisms

Given the abundance of evidence documenting the prevalence of affective polarisation, it is surprising that scholars are only just beginning to consider the psychological mechanisms that underpin partisan animus. The dominant explanation, stemming from social identity theory, is that out-party animus is an inevitable consequence of partisanship as a social identity. The corollary is that increasing the salience of partisanship is, in and of itself, sufficient to heighten polarisation (see, for instance, Huddy et al., 2015; Iyengar et al., 2012).

The identity–affect connection is well established in social psychology and applies to a variety of groups (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, there is surprisingly little direct evidence demonstrating that

partisan affect is similarly contingent on partisan identity salience. In fact, in a recent test of the identity salience hypothesis, West and Iyengar (2020) capitalised on naturally occurring variation in the salience of party politics. They initially surveyed respondents at the height of the 2018 Congressional campaign (October) and then resurveyed respondents in late December, a period associated with minimal political activity.⁵ As expected, partisan identity became significantly less salient over time. Despite their weakened level of social identity, partisans were no less likely to express out-party animus in December than in October. The authors interpreted this surprising result as a failure of the identity salience hypothesis: 'Yet, we could not demonstrate that a weakened sense of partisan social identity contributes consistently to reduced affective polarization. Detaching partisans from their social identity does not make them any less likely to elevate the in group or denigrate their opponents' (p. 18).

It is possible that the results from the West and Iyengar (2020) study are not entirely at odds with the standard social identity explanation because the salience threshold for eliciting group polarisation may be fairly low. The sense of partisan identity in this study weakened during the Christmas holidays, but even in that lowered state triggered group polarisation. Future work will need to implement manipulations with stronger effects on identity salience to clarify the question of salience thresholds.

The rival explanation for affective polarisation focuses not on factors related to partisan identity, but on shifts in partisans' policy

preferences. In effect, the claim is that ideological polarisation has caused affective polarisation and that as the ideological distance between parties grows, so too does out-party animus (Orr & Huber, 2020; Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016).

While more extreme policy preferences may independently spawn hostility towards those on the opposing side of the issues (see Chapters 26 and 41), partisans' perceptions of their opponents' political preferences are the more plausible mediators of the ideology–affect linkage. Partisans on one side of an issue may in fact express centrist preferences, but are viewed by their opponents as extremists (see Sood & Iyengar, 2018). The key question, therefore, is the degree to which partisans' perceptions of their opponents' views are accurate or distorted (for evidence of bias, see Rogowski, 2014; Sniderman & Stiglitz, 2012). Based on decades of research in social psychology showing that group members exaggerate differences of opinion across the group divide, we can anticipate the classic 'assimilate and contrast' pattern – the position of the favoured party is moved closer to the perceiver, while the position of the opposing party is moved further away, thus magnifying the ideological distance in question (Hovland et al., 1957).

At present, the jury is still out on the question of ideological disagreement as the driver of partisan affect. A handful of studies demonstrate the causal connection (for instance, Orr & Huber, 2020), while a similar number find no relationship, or even the opposite effect, that is, that partisan identity determines policy preferences and perceptions of ideological extremity (for instance, Dias & Lelkes, 2021). Given the mixed state of the evidence, we must await additional studies.

There is a third potential mechanism that can explain why partisans have increasingly become sworn enemies. This is the 'opinion leadership' explanation, rooted in the standard

⁵ In fact, West and Iyengar (2020) provide evidence that their respondents were less attentive to the political domain in December than in October. Nielsen ratings for the major news broadcasts, for instance, drop significantly from October to December.

persuasion paradigm (McGuire, 1985; Zaller, 1992). It is abundantly clear that elite rhetoric and campaign messaging in America have become more shrill and hostile over time (see Berry & Sobieraj, 2013; Geer, 2012). During campaigns, attack ads have outnumbered promotional ads by at least 4:1 in recent elections (Fowler et al., 2018). Even in non-election contexts, political elites engage in name-calling and taunting of their opponents (Grimmer & King, 2011).

The conventional persuasion paradigm posits that exposure to, and acceptance of, persuasive communication are the key ingredients of 'persuadability'. Given the extreme negativity of elite discourse, we can expect that relatively attentive partisans will be both exposed to, and accepting of, the sentiment expressed by their party leaders, thereby increasing their level of affective polarisation. There is only one direct test of this explanation – Sood and Iyengar (2016) documented that out-party animus increases over the course of recent presidential campaigns and that this change is attributable specifically to exposure to negative campaign advertising.

Overall, we do not presently know enough about the psychological underpinnings of affective polarisation to offer any firm generalisations. Given the power of the party cue and its widespread applicability in any number of non-political domains, one suspects that partisan social identity must somehow be implicated as a causal force. Possibly, the sense of identity is sufficient to engender out-party animus. Alternatively, their sense of identity may lead partisans to perceive their opponents as holding extreme preferences and this 'illusory' state of ideological polarisation may fan the flames of partisan animus. Finally, there is the possibility that elites bear the responsibility for the widespread partisan rancour; their hostile rhetoric and behaviour instils animus in the minds of their supporters.

25.4 Societal Conditions That Encourage Polarisation

The period over which mass polarisation has intensified (1980–today) coincides with several major changes in American society and politics including changes in the media environment (see also Chapter 32), increased social homophily, and partisan sorting or greater differentiation between Democrats and Republicans. In addition to independently inducing hostility towards opponents, each of these factors reinforces the others, further contributing to the rise of affective polarisation.

First, in the last 50 years, the percentage of 'sorted' partisans, that is, partisans who identify with the party most closely reflecting their ideology, has steadily increased (Levendusky, 2009). When most Democrats [Republicans] are also liberals [conservatives], they are less likely to encounter conflicting political ideas and identities (Roccas & Brewer, 2002), and are more likely see non-identifiers as socially distant. Sorting likely leads people to perceive both opposing partisans and co-partisans as more extreme than they really are, with misperceptions being more acute for opposing partisans (Levendusky & Malhotra, 2016).

As partisan and ideological identities have come into alignment, other salient social identities, including race and religion, also converged with partisanship. Democrats are increasingly the party of women, non-whites, professionals, and residents of urban areas, while Republican voters are disproportionately older white men, evangelical Christians, and residents of rural areas. This decline of cross-cutting identities is at the root of affective polarisation according to Mason (2015, 2018). She has shown that those with consistent partisan and ideological identities became more hostile towards the out-party without necessarily changing their ideological positions, and those who have aligned religious, racial, and partisan

identities react more emotionally to information that threatens their partisan identities or issue stances. In essence, sorting has made it much easier for partisans to make generalised inferences about the opposing side, even if those inferences are inaccurate.

A second potential cause of strengthened polarisation is social homophily. We have described studies documenting strengthened processes of socialisation by which families come to agree on their partisan loyalties. Family agreement creates an interpersonal echo chamber that facilitates polarisation. When family members identify with the same party, they also express more extreme positions on the issues and harbour hostile views towards their opponents. In the case of a 2015 national survey of married couples, respondents evaluated the presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump (using the ANES 100-point feeling thermometer). Among spouses who agreed on their party identification, the average difference between the in- and out-party candidate thermometer score was 59 points (70 vs 11 degrees). Among the few pairs consisting of spouses with divergent loyalties (Democrat-Republican pairings), this margin of difference fell by more than 30 degrees. Partisan agreement within the family strengthens polarisation (see Iyengar et al., 2018).

Given the importance of family socialisation to the development of partisan attitudes, the rate at which any given society undergoes polarisation will be conditional on the extent to which partisans grow up in homogeneous environments. Recent simulations by Klobstad et al. (2013) suggest that spousal agreement rapidly induces ideological polarisation, reaching a stable equilibrium by the 11th generation, but with most of the increased polarisation occurring as early as the 5th generation (Klobstad et al., 2013, pp. 530–531). We would similarly expect generations to

move increasingly apart on their feelings towards the opposing party to the extent family members share these sentiments.

Finally, a third potential contributor to affective polarisation is technology. The revolution in information technology has empowered consumers to encounter news on their own terms (see also Chapter 32). The availability of 24-hour cable news channels provided partisans with their first real opportunity to obtain news from like-minded sources (Fox News first for Republicans, and MSNBC later for Democrats). The development of the Internet provided a much wider range of media choices, which greatly facilitated partisans' ability to obtain political information and commentary consistent with their leanings. In a break with the dominant paradigm of non-partisan journalism, a growing number of outlets, motivated in part by the commercial success of the Fox News network, offered reporting in varying guises of partisan commentary. Many of these partisan outlets depict the opposing party in harsh terms (Berry & Sobieraj, 2013), and focus disproportionately on out-party scandals (real or imagined). The political blogosphere, with hundreds of players providing news and analysis – often vitriolic – developed rapidly as a partisan platform, with very little cross-party exposure (Adamic & Glance, 2005). The creation of vast online social networks permitted extensive recirculation of news reports, even to those not particularly motivated to seek out news. Several scholars have thus singled out the technologically enhanced media environment and partisans' ability to encounter 'friendly' information providers as an especially influential agent of polarisation (see, for instance, Sunstein, 2017).

While there are good reasons to believe that the new media environment has contributed to the growth in partisan animus, it is possible that enhanced consumer choice also sets in

motion processes that weaken polarisation by facilitating access to providers of non-political news and commentary. As media platforms have multiplied, consumers gain access not only to more news providers, but also to entertainment providers. The availability of entertainment programming on demand enables some to drop out of the political arena entirely (Prior, 2007). Thus, the net impact of the increased empowerment of consumers is unclear.

In fact, despite the myriad changes in the media environment, the evidence to date demonstrating that news consumption exacerbates polarisation is less than unequivocal. While experimental studies of online browsing behaviour confirm the tendency of partisans to self-select into distinct audiences (see, for instance, Iyengar & Hahn, 2009), more generalisable real-world studies find few traces of audience segregation.

In their pioneering analysis of Americans' web browsing behaviour, Gentzkow and Shapiro (2011) found that online audiences in 2008 were only slightly more segregated than audiences for network or cable news. They concluded, 'Internet news consumers with homogeneous news diets are rare. These findings may mitigate concerns ... that the Internet will increase ideological polarization and threaten democracy' (p. 1831). However, more recent work – also based on large-scale tracking of online browsing behaviour – suggests that the segregation of news audiences is increasing. A 2013 study showed that, although most people relied on ideologically diverse online sources such as web aggregators (Flaxman et al., 2016; also see Peterson et al., 2021), audience segregation tended to increase among individuals who used search engines to locate news stories and among social media users who encountered links in their newsfeed. Both these pathways to news exposure feature personalised algorithms, making it more likely

that individuals encounter information consistent with their political loyalties. In the case of Facebook, now a major source of news, most individuals find themselves in politically homogeneous networks, increasing the likelihood of exposure to polarising messages (Bakshy et al., 2015).

To the extent that partisans gravitate to like-minded news providers, has the diffusion of high-speed internet facilitated this behaviour? Here, too, the evidence is mixed. In those parts of the country where broadband is more available, traffic to partisan news sites is greater (Lelkes et al., 2017). Moreover, Lelkes et al. go on to show that broadband diffusion has strengthened partisan affect. Moving from a county with the fewest number of broadband providers to a county with the highest number increased affective polarisation by roughly 0.07 (an effect roughly half as large as the effect of partisans' political interest). On the other hand, Boxell et al. (2017) demonstrate that affective polarisation has increased the most among those least likely to use social media and the Internet. Given these inconsistent results, it is too early to conclude that internet usage (and the availability of a wider array of information) plays a causal role in the growth of affective polarisation.

25.5 Conclusion

The phenomenon of affective polarisation – the tendency of Democrats and Republicans to treat each other as a stigmatised out-group – has far-reaching consequences for the behaviour of politicians. For one thing, it creates incentives for politicians to use inflammatory rhetoric and demonise their opponents. The most frequent and enthusiastic chant at Republican rallies in 2016 was 'lock her up'. Illegal immigrants, in Trump's words, were 'rapists and drug dealers'. More recently, in response to the news that President Trump

had ignored reports of Russian cash bounties for the deaths of American soldiers in Afghanistan, Mary Trump described her uncle as ‘nothing but an anti-American, anti-military traitor’. Symptomatic of the current pressures facing politicians to demonstrate their party colours, a study found that taunting of the opposition party is the most frequent theme in congressional press releases (Grimmer & King, 2011).

At the level of electoral politics, heightened polarisation has made it almost impossible for partisans to abandon their party’s candidates, no matter their limitations. The release of the Access Hollywood tape where Trump admits to sexually assaulting women would surely have ended the candidacy of any presidential candidate in any election cycle from the 1980s or 1990s. Yet the impact on Donald Trump’s poll numbers was minuscule. And in Alabama, in the 2017 Senate election, evidence of Republican candidate Roy Moore’s inappropriate relations with under-age women hardly caused concern among Republican voters, a mere 7% of whom defected.

Partisans have become so committed to their party that scholars have had to update the standard finding of public opinion research – voter ignorance of current events. Today, partisans are not only uninformed, but also misinformed, and deliberately misinformed (Berinsky, 2017; Flynn et al., 2017). Partisan voters have become reliable team players whose loyalty provides politicians considerable leeway to guide and lead public opinion. As a result, when candidates make claims that are false, there is the very real possibility of voter manipulation. Well before he became a presidential candidate, Donald Trump was the principal sponsor of the conspiracy-oriented ‘birther’ theory concerning former president Barack Obama’s place of birth and citizenship. Since taking office, Trump has continued to show little respect for facts and

evidence. He claimed that extensive voter fraud was responsible for his loss in the popular vote and that charges of possible collusion between his campaign and the Russian government amount to a ‘hoax’. What’s more, he frequently attacks the credibility of the American press by referring to stories critical of his leadership as ‘fake news’. Trump’s rhetoric has persuaded Republicans, many of whom believe Trump’s false claims.

All told, intensified affective polarisation portends serious repercussions, especially during times of political turmoil. There are multiple parallels between Watergate and the current era, yet polarisation has fundamentally altered the political dynamics of scandal. Investigative news reports that brought to light the cover-up in the Nixon White House became widely accepted as credible evidence of official wrongdoing. The media spotlight resulted in a significant erosion of President Nixon’s approval among both Democrats and Republicans. In contrast, the multiple investigations swirling around the Trump administration have, to date, done little to undermine his standing among Republicans.

The results of the 2020 presidential election further highlight partisans’ willingness to ignore events and information that challenges their sense of political identity and the real threat to democratic institutions posed by affective polarisation. Joe Biden’s margin in key battleground states surpassed Donald Trump’s margin from 2016, and his margin in the national vote exceeded five million, yet President Trump refused to concede and made unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud. Most Republican officials deferred to Trump, and refused to acknowledge Biden as president-elect. Unsurprisingly, large numbers of Republicans came to believe the election was illegitimate. It remains to be seen whether the Biden presidency can restore public faith in the electoral process.

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26 Political Extremism

Jan-Willem van Prooijen and André P. M. Krouwel

Political ideology is an important part of people's values and identity. It involves people's beliefs of how society should be governed, their moral sense of right and wrong, and it provides an interpretational framework to understand past and present societal events. Political ideology hence informs people how to cope with the challenges of our time, including climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, immigration, globalisation, terrorism, international conflict, and so on. While people may have specific ideological beliefs on any of these issues, quite commonly they also have a more general political orientation that can be classified somewhere on a dimension ranging from the political 'left' to the political 'right'. Several other salient dimensions of the political mindset have been identified, most crucially a moral, non-economic dimension juxtaposing progressive attitudes versus conservative attitudes (Krouwel, 2012). These different orientations are associated not only with specific policy preferences but also with a different underlying psychology. For instance, a core focus of political psychologists has been to examine how people on the left and right may differ in their cognitive style, revealing relationships of political orientation with, for instance, authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, dogmatism, and xenophobia (e.g., Jost, 2017).

Political orientation is just one aspect of political ideology, however, as it specifically

addresses ideological *content*; we propose that ideological *strength* also matters for a range of important variables (Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Hoffer, 1951; Van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2019). Some people may be relatively centrist, or lean slightly towards the left or right, both generally and in relation to specific policy issues. For instance, some people may doubt how to best address the problem of climate change, and such political moderates, for instance, struggle with the question how to balance efforts to reduce climate change with other, potentially conflicting concerns (e.g., perceived threats to the economy). Other people may be more outspoken about these issues, however, and take either a passionate position in favour of combating climate change at any cost, or a passionate denial that climate change is even real (see Chapter 34). Put differently, people differ in how politically extreme they are, both in general (i.e., the extreme left versus the extreme right) as well as in their ideological beliefs about specific societal or political issues.

A working definition of political extremism is the extent to which citizens polarise into, and strongly identify with, generic left- or right-wing (or other) ideological outlooks on society, or in their position regarding more specific policy issues (Van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2019). This definition conceptualises political extremism in broader terms than underground radical groups that regularly break the law, and even commit violence in

service of their political goals – instead, it predominantly focuses on regular citizens that ideologically are at the fringes of the political spectrum. We hence conceptualise political extremism in a relative sense, as compared with the general political culture in a given community. For instance, according to this definition, both left-wing socialist parties in the EU (e.g., ‘Podemos’ in Spain, ‘Syriza’ in Greece, the ‘Socialist Party’ in the Netherlands, and ‘die Linke’ in Germany) and anti-immigration parties on the right (e.g., ‘Front Nationale’ in France, ‘Vlaams Belang’ in Belgium, ‘PVV’ in the Netherlands, and ‘AfD’ in Germany) are more extreme and radical than moderate left-wing parties (e.g., Social Democrats) or moderate right-wing parties (e.g., Christian Democrats).

While the extreme left and right may endorse different societal and economic goals, it is likely that they do share a range of psychological similarities. We propose that while valuing order and tradition (on the political right), or valuing inclusiveness and diversity (on the political left) certainly may satisfy a unique set of psychological needs (cf. Jost, 2017), so does having a strong ideological conviction independent of its content (see also Skitka, 2010). Hence, while we do not deny psychological differences between people at the political left versus right (or the left versus right extreme), the political extremes at both sides of the spectrum also share a number of important similarities that distinguish them from political moderates. The current chapter is designed to illuminate some of these similarities. We first clarify how extreme political beliefs enable people to cope with feelings of distress by providing them with epistemic clarity. We then argue that political extremism, although sometimes a driver of important social change, often is a problem for societies. We specifically examine its

relationship with overconfidence, unfounded beliefs, and intolerance.

26.1 The Role of Distress

The basis of our argument is that feelings of distress contribute to a mindset that prefers a straightforward and unambiguous understanding of the social and political world. Embracing extreme political attitudes contributes to such epistemic clarity, as strong and passionate beliefs about political issues offer a clear demarcation between right and wrong, and leave relatively little room for ambiguity (e.g., Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Kruglanski et al., 2006; Van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2019). For instance, once experiencing distress citizens may become more susceptible to the (often) clear yet arguably simplistic one-liners of extreme leaders.

This line of reasoning is consistent with prominent theoretical perspectives on the psychology of political extremism. Significance quest theory proposes that extremist ideologies are rooted in people’s *need for significance*, that is, a desire to matter and be respected towards oneself or important others (Kruglanski et al., 2014). This relationship becomes apparent particularly when people experience distress, in the form of significance loss through humiliation, injustice, feelings of relative deprivation, or other negative life experiences. In such situations, people try to regain a sense of significance through focal goal commitment, which involves a passionate pursuit of ideological goals that they perceive as meaningful. While originally designed as a theory to explain violent extremism, empirical findings suggest that significance quest theory is also relevant to understand political extremism among regular citizens (Van Prooijen & Kuijper, 2020; Webber et al., 2018).

Other theoretical perspectives have examined subjective uncertainty as a predictor of political extremism. Paradoxically, uncertainty about one life domain increases people's certainty in other domains, usually their ideological beliefs – a process referred to as compensatory conviction (McGregor et al., 2013; see also Van den Bos, 2018). While the exact assumed underlying processes may differ across these various theoretical perspectives, the broader overarching assumption that they all share is that feelings of distress (in the form of significance loss, or subjective uncertainty) increases extreme ideological beliefs.

The key to this process is *subjective* feelings of distress, and not necessarily objective life circumstances. Challenging the common truism that 'harsh times produce harsh attitudes', radical political parties can do well not only during economic recessions but also during times of prosperity; moreover, voters of right-wing populist parties are not necessarily poorer – and depending on the specific country investigated, are sometimes even richer – than average in a given population (Mols & Jetten, 2017). While this 'wealth paradox' at first blush appears inconsistent with our argument, a closer look reveals that also these findings are grounded in subjective feelings of distress. Sometimes, economic prosperity can instil anxiety particularly among affluent people that their status and wealth might deteriorate in the future, which inspires relatively radical beliefs about perceived threats to their well-being (e.g., immigrants) (cf. Currie & Krouwel, 2020). Political extremism is not exclusive to people who need to cope with detrimental life circumstances, as also wealthy people may experience their own specific forms of distress.

In sum, our theoretical argument consists of two parts: (1) feelings of distress predict political extremism, and (2) extreme ideologies are more likely than moderate ideologies to satisfy

a need for epistemic clarity. We will now discuss empirical evidence for both of these propositions. As to the first proposition, one large-scale study in the Netherlands (over 5,000 respondents) measured participants' socio-economic fear, defined as fear that the well-being of oneself or one's group will be compromised by ongoing political and societal developments (example items are 'I frequently worry about the future of the Netherlands' and 'I am afraid that there will be major food shortages in the near future, which may threaten our existence'). The data showed a clear U-shaped relationship with political ideology: both the left and the right extreme experienced stronger socio-economic fear than political moderates (Van Prooijen, Krouwel, Boiten, & Eendebak, 2015). Also, other negative emotions appear more common among the political extremes: both the left and right extremes use more angry language, as evidenced in analyses of online tweets, published materials of radical organisations, speeches of politicians, and media news articles (Frimer et al., 2018).

While these findings are correlational, accumulating research underscores that feelings of distress can causally contribute to more extreme political attitudes. An important source of distress in daily life is feeling excluded from social relationships, as social exclusion thwarts the basic need for belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). One experiment manipulated whether participants (university students) did or did not have an online exclusion experience ('Cyberball'). Subsequently, participants read a description of an activist group on campus that sought to reduce tuition fees. The group clearly was prepared to take extreme action in service of their ideological goals, as it proclaimed it was ready to 'blockade campus with loud rallies, organise lecture walkouts, and even disrupt classes in protests'. As compared with their included

peers, participants who previously had an exclusion experience were more willing to attend a meeting of this group, and also rated this group as less extreme (Hales & Williams, 2018).

Another source of distress that psychologists frequently operationalise in experimental research is mortality salience, where participants are reminded of the fact that, sooner or later, their death will be inevitable. A meta-analysis has examined the effects of mortality salience on people's political ideology to contrast two possible hypotheses (Burke et al., 2013). The first hypothesis is that mortality salience necessarily produces ideological shifts to the political right, in line with the idea that threatening experiences promote conservative ideologies ('conservative shift hypothesis'); the second hypothesis is that mortality salience promotes more extreme responses towards both the left and the right ('world-view defence hypothesis'). Interestingly, the data supported both hypotheses. It has been noted, however, that the conservative shifts in this research domain are subject to alternative explanations: for instance, many of the studies supporting the conservative shift hypothesis were conducted shortly after 9/11 (and often were explicitly connected to this event), and may represent 'rally around the flag effects' such that death reminders increase support for national leaders and symbols (e.g., former President Bush; for a more detailed argument, see Crawford, 2017).

The second proposition entails that politically extreme ideologies satisfy a need for epistemic clarity. If this is true, political extremism should be associated with a relatively straightforward and unambiguous understanding of the social and political world. Various studies support this proposition. For instance, a content-analysis of speeches by 19th-century US politicians found that relatively extreme politicians displayed

lower integrative complexity in their argumentation as compared with relatively moderate politicians (Tetlock et al., 1994). Likewise, present-day citizens who are at the edges of the political spectrum are more likely to believe that simple solutions for complex problems exist (Van Prooijen, Krouwel, & Pollet, 2015). One study examined how the political left and right in the Netherlands perceived the EU refugee crisis in 2016. While the political left and right (unsurprisingly) differed in the type of solutions that they endorsed – with the left supporting more inclusionary solutions (i.e., provide shelter to refugees) and the right more exclusionary ones (i.e., reject refugees at the border) – both extremes converged in a belief that the solution to this crisis was simple (Van Prooijen et al., 2018).

Additionally, other evidence suggests that the political extremes perceive the social and political world in simpler terms, which may satisfy their need for epistemic clarity. One study asked participants to spatially group similar stimuli (e.g., politicians) together, and separate dissimilar stimuli, on a computer screen (Lammers et al., 2017). Results revealed that as compared with moderates, the left and right extremes grouped 'similar' stimuli closer together and 'different' stimuli further apart. Other findings indicated that as compared with moderates, the political extremes perceived members of specific social categories as more homogeneous: for instance, they considered it more likely that people with the same political ideology also share other preferences (for books, movies, and so on). In sum, the political extremes perceive the social and political world in more clear-cut and sharply defined categories than moderates do.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that extreme political beliefs may serve an important psychological need, notably epistemic clarity. When people experience distress, they are drawn to the clear-cut answers that

politically extreme movements provide for the pressing problems of our time. Even beyond the political domain, political extremism appears associated with a preference for simplicity (Lammers et al., 2017).

26.2 Is Political Extremism a Problem?

Following our definition, many citizens are currently extreme in their political attitudes. Indeed, societies appear to be polarising: throughout the EU electoral support for left- and right-extreme parties has increased over the past few decades at the expense of moderate parties (Krouwel, 2012). Should this be considered problematic? In answering this question, we first acknowledge that historically, not all forms of political extremism have been harmful to societies. Many political movements that were once considered ‘extreme’ in a particular time or culture have stimulated positive social change (Tetlock et al., 1994). For instance, human rights movements in the USA during the 1960s, or the South African African National Congress under Nelson Mandela when it struggled against apartheid in the 20th century, were considered politically extreme in their time by many citizens of these respective countries. Yet nowadays few people would dispute that these movements changed the societies in which they were active for the better. The conclusion of Section 26.1 – that political extremism is associated with a relatively simplistic perception of societal problems – hence does not have to be problematic in all cases: some moral truths are not particularly complex to articulate (e.g., ‘oppression is wrong’). But putting examples of these constructive forms of political extremism aside, in this section we argue that quite often political extremism is associated with a range of psychological phenomena that are unlikely to have a constructive impact on

society. We specifically propose that political extremism is associated with impoverished decision-making due to overconfidence, unfounded beliefs, and intolerance of competing views.

26.2.1 Overconfidence

One general insight from attitude research is that people endorse strong attitudes with high conviction (Howe & Krosnick, 2017). This insight certainly seems to generalise to the political domain. Political extremism is associated with a coherent set of moralised political attitudes, and it stands to reason that people endorse these attitudes with high confidence. Indeed, both extreme liberals and conservatives in the USA evaluate their beliefs on a range of contentious issues (e.g., healthcare, abortion, and illegal immigration) as superior – that is, as more likely to be factually correct – than moderates (Toner et al., 2013). Even on non-political numeric estimation tasks political extremists are more confident than moderates (Brandt et al., 2015). Consistent with these insights, a recent longitudinal study revealed that, over the course of an election campaign – with measurement points six weeks before the election, four weeks before the election, and three days after the election – political ideology changed less over time among extremists than moderates. This effect was most pronounced among left-wing extremists (see Figure 26.1), although the effect emerged more symmetrically at both extremes in additional cross-sectional data measuring ideological stability. This suggests that as compared with moderates, citizens at the political extremes were less susceptible to social influence during an election campaign, suggesting higher levels of conviction (Zwicker et al., 2020).

Showing that people at the political extremes are more confident does not prove that they are *overconfident*, however. After

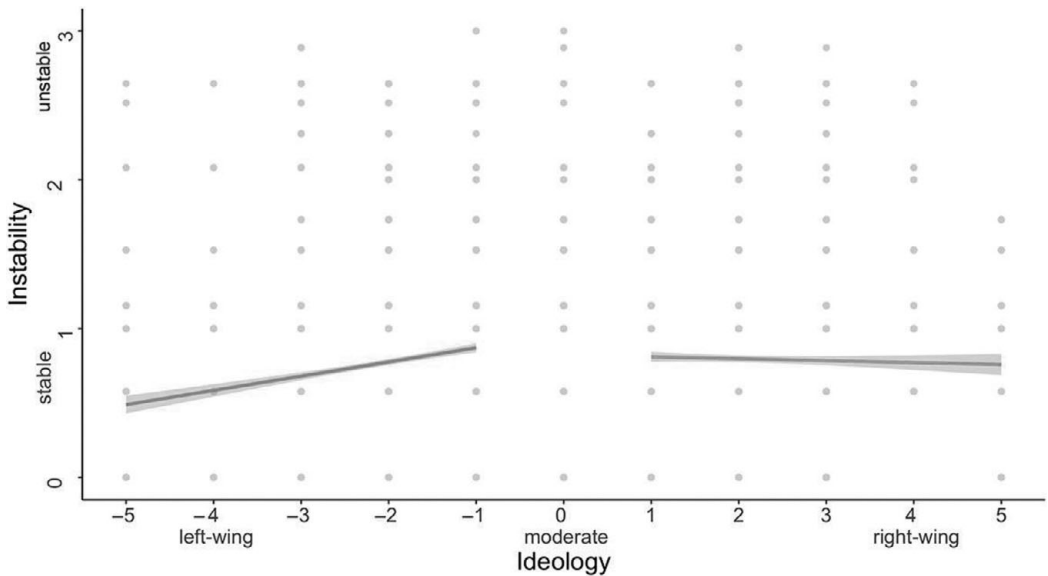


Figure 26.1 The relationship between ideological instability – that is, the extent to which ideology changed over time – and political ideology. Instability is the standard deviation of ideology at three measurement points; ideology is participants’ self-placement on a left–right dimension at T1. Published previously in Zwicker et al. (2020)

all, confidence may be warranted, in the sense that it is rooted in actual knowledge or expertise. As an analogy, compare two people giving medical advice to a sick patient. One of them is a certified medical doctor with years of medical training, and happens to be specialised in the illness that the patient is suffering from; the other has no formal medical training, and relies on a set of evidence-free interventions including herbal treatment and homeopathy. While both of these people may be confident in their advice, only the confidence of the first person is warranted as it is based on an actual understanding of the disease. The confidence of the second person is unwarranted (i.e., overconfidence), as it is based on a set of unfounded hunches. Also, in the political domain, judgemental confidence can be warranted and unwarranted. Well-informed party-elites (‘ideologues’) tend to be confident about their political beliefs (Converse, 1964) – and while ideologues from different political

parties may fundamentally disagree with one another, it may be expected that most party elites can provide a coherent line of reasoning to justify their political views.

But how warranted or unwarranted is the high levels of confidence observed among citizens who endorse relatively extreme political beliefs? Our line of reasoning would suggest that such confidence often actually is overconfidence. In particular, political extremism satisfies a need for epistemic clarity by providing simple and straightforward answers to important problems. This also yields high levels of confidence, as societal problems appear easy to understand when portrayed in simple terms (Van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2019, 2020). Most societal problems are in fact not simple, however, and emerged through a complex mix of macroeconomic, political, cultural, and psychological factors. Perceived ‘easy fixes’ for societal problems often are an illusion, as most policy decisions involve trade-offs such as

competing interests between various societal groups, budget restraints, and risks of unforeseen side effects.

To show overconfidence among political extremists, research would have to establish high levels of judgemental confidence that is not rooted in actual knowledge or expertise. Various recent studies have tested this idea. In the previously discussed study on people's perceptions of the 2016 EU refugee crisis (Van Prooijen et al., 2018), participants were asked a range of factual knowledge questions about the EU refugee crisis, with a 'true/false' response format. After each knowledge question, participants rated how confident they were of their answer. Results revealed no relationship between political ideology and factual knowledge about this crisis: neither the left versus the right, nor the extremes versus moderates, differed in their performance on the knowledge test. The results did indicate differences between the political extremes and moderates (but not between the political left and right) on judgemental confidence, however: despite not having higher levels of factual knowledge, the political extremes reported higher levels of confidence in their knowledge than moderates did. Moreover, their overconfidence was mediated by their belief that the solution to the refugee crisis is simple. Oversimplifying complex societal problems predicts overconfidence in one's understanding of those problems.

Such overconfidence among extremists was even more pronounced in a different study that took place in the context of a Dutch referendum about an EU treaty with Ukraine (Van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2020). This setting provided a clash between pro- versus anti-establishment sentiments among the Dutch public. Specifically, anti-establishment political parties at both the extreme left and right in the Netherlands campaigned to vote against the treaty (which was widely regarded as an

EU-sceptic vote) while all the relatively moderate parties in parliament – from the moderate left to the moderate right – campaigned to vote in favour of the treaty. The study took place in two waves. Six weeks before the referendum, a questionnaire first asked participants for their self-perceived understanding of the treaty (e.g., 'I consider myself sufficiently qualified to judge the association treaty between Ukraine and the EU'), followed by questions testing their actual knowledge of the treaty. The questionnaire also contained a general, non-political measure of overclaiming, asking participants how familiar they were with a range of persons, objects, ideas, or places that did not actually exist (Paulhus et al., 2003). Then, a few days after the referendum, a second questionnaire asked participants what they had voted.

Results revealed that *increased* self-perceived understanding of the treaty, yet *decreased* actual knowledge of the treaty, and a general tendency to overclaim knowledge, predicted anti-establishment voting. Additional analyses also tested the role of political extremism more directly. Consistent with our line of reasoning, overconfidence was associated with both left- and right-wing extremism, although in this setting it was more pronounced at the right than at the left extreme. Specifically, at the left extreme respondents reported higher self-perceived understanding of the treaty than moderates, yet showed no difference with moderates on actual knowledge or general overclaiming. At the right extreme, respondents also showed higher self-perceived understanding of treaty than moderates, but unlike the left extreme, they performed *worse* on the knowledge test, and reported higher familiarity with non-existing stimuli (i.e., general overclaiming) than moderates.

These findings suggest one way in which political extremism often can be problematic for societies. Political extremism is associated

with high levels of confidence in the accuracy of one's beliefs. Such confidence often actually is overconfidence, however, which may lead to poor judgement and impoverished decision-making.

26.2.2 Unfounded Beliefs

Some of the most pressing problems of our time – including the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change – require solutions that are based on rational, evidence-based reasoning, and scientific evidence. Sometimes evidence-based reasoning, or scientific research, suggest policy recommendations that do not align with a perceiver's pre-existing values or beliefs, however. For instance, recommendations to restrict the freedom of citizens and businesses to decrease the spread of the coronavirus (e.g., prohibitions of public gatherings, closing down bars and restaurants) may be particularly difficult to accept for citizens who believe that COVID-19 is comparable with seasonal flu. What determines if people accept or reject the conclusions of logic, reason, and scientific research, even when that would require them to update their initial beliefs?

As political extremism implies a strong conviction in the correctness of one's beliefs (Toner et al., 2013), and politically extreme beliefs are relatively central to a perceiver's identity (Van Prooijen & Kuijper, 2020), it follows that politically extreme beliefs are relatively resistant to change (Zwicker et al., 2020). Furthermore, evidence suggests increased mental rigidity at both the left and right extremes, as political extremism is associated with reduced cognitive flexibility on a range of psychological tests (e.g., the Wisconsin Card Sorting Test; Zmigrod et al., 2019). The political extremes hence may be less likely than moderates to update their ideological beliefs when confronted with novel and conflicting information.

An important mental process through which extremists may uphold their beliefs is motivated reasoning. The current digital era provides unprecedented opportunity for people to selectively embrace information that calls unwanted conclusions into question. It is nowadays quite easy to find discussion groups or professionally designed websites in support of almost any proposition, including the view that COVID-19 is harmless, that vaccines cause autism, that anthropogenic climate change is not really happening, or even that the Earth is flat. People have lower evidentiary standards for preferred as opposed to non-preferred conclusions; furthermore, they can easily find support for the values and beliefs that are central to their identity (Epley & Gilovich, 2016).

Accumulating research indeed suggests that people often dismiss ideologically inconvenient scientific findings (e.g., Rutjens et al., 2018). One study found that both liberals and conservatives endorse motivated interpretations of scientific results, and deny a correct interpretation of those results, when it conflicts with their values. Moreover, this effect was equally strong among liberals and conservatives (Washburn & Skitka, 2018). Also, other studies confirm that ideologically inconvenient science messages produce negative responses, and decrease trust in the scientific community, among both liberals and conservatives (Nisbet et al., 2015). People have various mental strategies at their disposal to maintain their ideological beliefs while dismissing incompatible scientific findings. For instance, extreme conservatives who are convinced that anthropogenic climate change is not real may deny the evidence, believe that the scientists conducting the research are incompetent and/or untrustworthy, or perceive the scientific evidence about this issue as more controversial than it really is. Indeed, people's cultural values shape their perception of consensus

(or the lack thereof) among experts (Kahan et al., 2011).

Another strategy for people to dismiss inconvenient facts or scientific conclusions is to endorse conspiracy theories that support their values, stipulating for instance that climate change is a hoax, that COVID-19 is a military bioweapon, or that pharmaceutical companies suppress evidence that vaccines cause autism. Conspiracy theories are beliefs that assume secret and hostile plots among enemy groups, and are therefore particularly relevant in settings with multiple ideologically conflicting groups (Van Prooijen, 2016, 2020; for a cross-cultural illustration, see Van Prooijen & Song, 2020). Evidence indeed suggests that political values drive the conspiracy theories that people believe in. Extreme Republicans are more likely to believe Democratic conspiracy theories (e.g., beliefs that Obama was not born in the USA) and extreme Democrats are more likely to believe Republican conspiracy theories (e.g., beliefs that the 9/11 terrorist strikes were an inside job committed by the Republican administration of George W. Bush; Miller et al., 2016; Uscinski et al., 2016). Furthermore, conspiracy theories are stronger at both political extremes than in the political center (Krouwel et al., 2017; Van Prooijen, Krouwel, Boiten, & Eendebak, 2015; Van Prooijen, Krouwel, & Pollet, 2015). Apparently, the strong convictions that are associated with political extremism predispose people to a range of unfounded beliefs, including unscientific beliefs and conspiracy theories.

26.2.3 Intolerance of Competing Views

People endorse extreme political beliefs with high moral conviction, making it relatively difficult to accept competing views. It has been noted that people experience strong moral convictions as objective and universal truths

that should apply to everyone (Skitka, 2010). As a consequence, people easily perceive alternative beliefs as immoral when they have strong moral convictions about a particular political or societal issue. This reduces people's willingness to cooperate with others that do not share their beliefs. For instance, people with strong moral convictions socially distance themselves from attitudinally dissimilar others, both in their personal relationships (e.g., a preference to not form friendships with them) as well as in distant relationships (e.g., a preference not to visit a shop owned by an attitudinally dissimilar other; Skitka et al., 2005).

The term 'intolerance' admittedly has a negative ring to it, and we should qualify that not all intolerance necessarily is detrimental to society. It is well accepted that criminal behaviours such as murder, rape, and theft should not be tolerated. Also, one may wonder how constructive it is to be overly tolerant of some forms of intolerance (e.g., racism). Various forms of intolerance exist, which have different societal implications (Verkuyten et al., 2020). Politically extreme beliefs often pertain to contentious and difficult political and societal issues, however, including immigration, income distribution, healthcare, and so on (e.g., Toner et al., 2013). These are topics that require an open debate in order to establish sensible policy. Hence, the intolerance associated with political extremism may imply an unwillingness to accept disagreement for these topics, which may silence important debates and reduce opportunities for compromise.

One study tested the relationship between political extremism and dogmatic intolerance, defined as a tendency to reject, and consider as inferior, any ideological belief that differs from one's own (Van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2017). Example items to measure dogmatic intolerance were 'I believe that everyone should think like me about political issues' and 'People who think differently than me about political issues

are of lesser value than I am.’ In two studies the results revealed a U-curve, such that both the left and right extreme expressed stronger dogmatic intolerance than political moderates. A third study, then, manipulated strength of people’s political beliefs. Specifically, participants were asked to either describe a political opinion that they felt strongly about, or a political opinion that they did not feel particularly strongly about. People expressed more dogmatic intolerance about strongly held political beliefs than weakly held political beliefs. Moreover, dogmatic intolerance mediated relationships of political belief strength with participants’ willingness to protest in favour of their political belief, their willingness to deny free speech to people who disagree with them (e.g., by punishing them), and their support for antisocial behaviour (an example item being ‘I can imagine feeling sympathy for people who use violence in support of the issue I described’). These findings were not moderated by political orientation. Moreover, the U-shaped relationship between political ideology and dogmatic intolerance has been replicated in various other studies (Rollwage et al., 2018; Van Prooijen & Kuijper, 2020).

Extremists’ dogmatic intolerance may also have implications for their tendency to reject dissimilar out-groups. Contrary to the truism that only the political right is intolerant of out-groups (e.g., Jost, 2017), research on the ideological conflict hypothesis suggests that both the political left and right reject out-groups that they perceive as ideologically dissimilar (Brandt et al., 2014). Put differently, politically right-wing people often are intolerant of groups such as ethnic and sexual minorities, environmentalists, and feminists, because they expect the members of these groups to be largely left wing; likewise, however, politically left-wing people often are intolerant of groups such as Christian fundamentalists, the military, and business people, because they expect

the members of these groups to be largely right wing.

But while this suggests that the relationship of out-group intolerance with political orientation is more complicated than often assumed (see also Chapter 11), its relationship with political extremism may be quite straightforward. One study presented participants with 12 societal groups (e.g., politicians, police officers, Muslims, lawyers, and soldiers) and asked them to rate dichotomously whether they believed each group made a positive or negative contribution to society (Van Prooijen, Krouwel, Boiten, & Eendebak, 2015). Results revealed that both the left and right extremes evaluated a larger number of groups negatively than moderates. In sum, as compared with moderates the political extremes are less tolerant of competing beliefs, and are more likely to reject out-groups that they expect to be attitudinally dissimilar.

26.3 Limitations and Conclusions

Before drawing conclusions, here we first articulate various conceptual limitations, and hence future research challenges, of this research domain. A first limitation is that empirical measurements of political orientation and political extremism are generally based on a crude and generalised set of items assessing how left- or right-wing people feel, which does not capture many of the underlying complexities of people’s political orientation. As a case in point, the Dutch PVV is widely regarded to be an extremely right-wing party for its anti-immigration and anti-Islam stance, and its supporters indeed tend to self-identify as right wing. Yet, this party’s positions on (for instance) healthcare for the elderly aligns more with Dutch left-wing parties than with centrist or moderate right-wing parties. Relatedly, Italy’s Five Star Movement takes a number of extreme positions at specific policy issues,

yet some of them are widely seen as extremely left wing (e.g., a universal basic income for all citizens) and others as extremely right wing (e.g., relatively harsh policies on immigration).

More generally, while the radical left and right are often treated as diametrically opposed ideological strands, throughout Western Europe many voters actually combine left-wing positions on economic issues with conservative, nativist, and authoritarian stances on cultural issues. Voters that are driven particularly by economic considerations are more inclined to shift to the left extreme, while those that are concerned with immigration and law and order are more inclined to shift to the right extreme; yet these voters may find both the radical left and right appealing due to a number of converging themes such as economic protectionism, EU scepticism, and maintaining non-redistributive welfare arrangements (e.g., state pensions and unemployment benefits; see Krouwel, 2012). In sum, while empirical research typically tries to capture political orientation and political extremism in a single score, in reality people's political beliefs are far more complex as they may feel left wing on some issues yet right wing on others, and likewise, moderate on some issues yet extreme on others.

While this first limitation suggests conceptual challenges when studying political extremism

within a single culture, the second limitation suggests additional challenges when making cross-cultural comparisons. Important differences in political cultures exist across nations, arguably leading to different understandings of what people refer to as 'left wing' versus 'right wing', or 'moderate' versus 'extreme'. Somewhat universally, the political left has been associated with issues such as a preference for relatively egalitarian and redistributive economic policies, equal rights for minorities, a relatively big role of the government in the economy, and so on. The political right, in turn, has been commonly associated with issues such as a preference for order and tradition, protection of private property, and respect for authority.

But how that manifests itself can differ substantially across societies. Some political topics may be contentious – and form the basis of a person's political identity – in one society, yet these same issues may not be a defining part of a person's political identity in other societies. As an example, the strength of political orientation of many US citizens may be shaped substantially by how they feel about gun control laws, the death penalty, abortion, and gay marriage. Yet in our own country, the Netherlands, these same issues are much less of a divisive or polarised issue in the political debate, and also do not clearly define a person's ideological position as left wing or right wing. Most political parties that have seats in the Dutch parliament – from the far left to the far right – agree that owning guns should be illegal for private citizens and that there should be no death penalty. Two small Christian parties (Christian Union and SGP) are outspoken in their opposition of abortion and gay marriage; yet, in a Dutch political landscape these parties are considered centre-left and centre-right, respectively, given their positions on a range of other issues such as health-care, immigration, and income distribution.¹

¹ This is not to imply that there is no discussion at all about these issues in the Dutch parliament, of course. The Dutch far-right PVV did argue for legalising pepper spray as a self-defence weapon in 2016, which did not reach a majority, and currently is still illegal. The small fundamentalist Christian party SGP explicitly supported reintroduction of the death penalty up until 2017. For the latter two topics, there has been debate about questions such as whether a five-day reflection time should be mandatory before women can get an abortion, and whether individual public officials can refuse to personally perform the wedding ceremony of a gay or lesbian couple for religious reasons.

Put differently, what people see as left wing or right wing differs across cultures. Accordingly, what people consider to be 'extreme' or 'moderate' is also likely to differ across cultures. Imagine a Dutch person who votes for the currently biggest centre-right party in the Netherlands (the VVD). Consistent with their party's positions, they are against private gun ownership and the death penalty, and in favour of women's right to choose and gay marriage. Now imagine that they moved to the USA. Their opinions about these issues would not define their position on a left–right political dimension in the Netherlands, yet in the USA they would place them squarely in a left-wing liberal category, and possibly extremely so. Likewise, support for private gun ownership is relatively mainstream in the USA (particularly within the Republican Party), and indeed, it is a basic constitutional right (the Second Amendment); yet, in the Netherlands owning a gun is highly illegal for regular citizens (punishable with a prison sentence), and accordingly, many Dutch citizens would consider a person arguing for a right to privately own guns to be an extremist. These issues are important for political psychologists to keep in mind when trying to generalise findings obtained in one country to other countries.

These limitations notwithstanding, the current state of the literature suggests that holding extreme political beliefs can have important implications for a range of variables, independent from the specific content of those beliefs. We reiterate that we do not deny the effects of political orientation on a range of variables, also in light of the overwhelming evidence suggesting that the political left and right differ in their cognitive style (Jost, 2017). We do argue, however, that in the past few decades the field of political psychology has excessively focused on political orientation (i.e., ideological content) and has placed much

less emphasis on political extremism (i.e., ideological strength). The present chapter was designed to illuminate how feelings of distress increase the appeal of political extremism, because straightforward beliefs that one can hold with high conviction satisfy the human need for epistemic clarity. Furthermore, we also sought to clarify that political extremism – in either direction – can pose a problem for societies. Accumulating evidence suggests that the political extremes are more likely than moderates to be overconfident, to embrace unfounded beliefs, and to be intolerant of competing viewpoints. These conclusions suggest that political extremism should be high on the agenda of political psychologists and policymakers.

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27 The Politics of Hate

Derogatory Language in Politics and Intergroup Relations

Michał Bilewicz and Wiktor Soral

In 2020, several global social networking services (including Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and Twitch) introduced regulations and bans that constrain hate speech, some banning the accounts related to the president of the United States of America, Donald Trump (Timberg & Dvoskin, 2020). This variety of actions and regulations is a direct consequence of the proliferation of hate speech among populist politicians who use social media to transmit discriminatory statements about minorities and immigrants. In this chapter, we discuss the role of hate speech in current politics and examine the psychological consequences of such language for political processes and intergroup relations. A deeper understanding of this processes is needed to better address the contemporary populist politics (see also Chapter 28), as well as historical successes of extremist movements.

27.1 Definition of Hate Speech

Most definitions describe hate speech as communications that target disadvantaged social groups in a harmful way (Jacobs & Potter, 1998; Walker, 1994). Therefore, many definitions of hate speech enumerate specific minority groups that are targeted by such language. The most common legal definition of hate speech proposed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 1997) reads that ‘hate speech covers all forms of expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based

on intolerance’ (p. 107). The Encyclopedia of American Constitution (Nockleby, 2000) similarly defines hate speech as ‘speech that attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity’ (p. 1277).

Similar definitions are provided by social media platforms that aim to eradicate derogatory language among their users. For example, Facebook postulates that hate speech is a ‘direct attack on people based on what we call protected characteristics – race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, caste, sex, gender, gender identity, and serious disease or disability’. Such an attack is further defined ‘as violent or dehumanizing speech, statements of inferiority, or calls for exclusion or segregation’ (Facebook, 2021). Twitter does not apply the term ‘hate speech’, but focuses on forms of verbal attack on minority members: ‘You may not promote violence against or directly attack or threaten other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, caste, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or serious disease. We also do not allow accounts whose primary purpose is inciting harm towards others on the basis of these categories’ (Twitter, 2021).

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The biggest problem with defining hate speech is differentiating between verbal attacks on minorities and other forms of intergroup criticism. This problem is highly visible when demarcating between anti-Semitic hate speech and legitimate criticism of Israel. Some authors differentiate between ‘new anti-Semitism’ (i.e., criticism of Israel based on a legitimate concern for peace and human rights) and criticism from far-right prejudiced attitudes, which they consider as hate speech (Kempf, 2012). This is problematic both in legal (e.g., problems with proving the intention of the speaker) and methodological (e.g., studying hate speech would be highly difficult without extensive context information) terms. Moreover, there are studies that reveal that criticism of Israel might be a form of socially accepted expression of anti-Semitic views (Bulska & Winiewski, 2018; Cohen et al., 2009). Bulska and Winiewski (2018) observed that people who believe in the Jewish conspiracy express more uncritical pro-Palestinian attitudes and less rational approaches to the conflict in the Middle East. This suggests that endorsing more extreme positions on the conflict in the Middle East could serve as an expression of underlying anti-Jewish prejudice. This would allow treating many critical statements about Israel as potential instances of hate speech.

Such broadening of the term ‘hate speech’ is often considered problematic when freedom of speech as a value is taken into account. For example, historian Timothy Ash (2017) opposes hate speech and Holocaust-denial laws in Western jurisdictions, suggesting that, by constraining freedom of speech, governments could interfere with democratic processes in their countries. Instead, he proposes that hate speech should be confronted with the social norm of respect. Many of these debates refer to historical situations in which both hate speech and censorship posed serious threats to democracy.

27.2 The Role of Hate Speech in Political Mobilisation and Violence

Hate speech is a powerful means of political mobilisation, particularly in the case of violent and illegal forms of collective action. The use of derogatory language about minorities can mobilise majorities not only to elect certain leaders, but also to support discriminatory policies or war efforts. For example, President Trump’s frequent use of words including ‘invasion’, ‘animal’, ‘predator’, ‘criminal’ and ‘killer’ when referring to immigrants (Fritze, 2019) was aimed not only to justify his anti-immigration politics, but also to gain voters’ support by presenting himself as a defender of the United States against threat. Spreading dehumanising messages about immigrant groups can be particularly effective when the leaders are proposing harsh treatment of such groups. Research performed during the 2016 election found that dehumanisation led to support for aggressive policies proposed by Republican nominees (Kteily & Bruneau, 2017). Dehumanisation was also highly associated with supporting Republican candidates (especially Donald Trump).

Dehumanising hate speech has been also used in many historical genocides (see also Chapter 36). During the German occupation of Eastern Europe in 1939–1945, the German occupiers often used dehumanising images of Jews in order to legitimise their power and gain support for anti-Jewish genocidal policies (Grabowski, 2009; Herf, 2006). Images portraying Jews as vermin, rats, and lice were frequently disseminated in posters, movies, and propaganda leaflets. Similarly, during the genocide in Rwanda, Tutsis were often referred to as ‘*inyenzi*’ (cockroaches) and sometimes also as rats or snakes (Straus, 2006). According to the stereotype content model, such contemptuous depictions (i.e., groups

being portrayed as both cold and incompetent) elicit disgust and contempt (Cuddy et al., 2007), which is further amplified by dehumanising images of animals that are associated with filth and known as transmitters of infectious diseases. Disgust motivates distancing, rejecting, and expelling reactions (Roseman et al., 1994) and reduces the potential for helping and empathising (Piliavin et al., 1969).

Hate speech is also used to describe the process of anti-minority aggression as a form of cleaning and hygiene. Metaphors related to cleansing accompanied many mass atrocities and genocides (the concept of '*Judenrein*' and '*Rassenhygiene*' in Nazi Germany during the Holocaust; phrases such 'cutting trees' used in the Rwandan genocide propaganda, etc.; Bilewicz, 2019). Sanitising language, involving such terms as 'wasting people', 'surgical strikes', 'servicing the target' are also often used as means of moral disengagement by the perpetrators of mass violence (Bandura, 1999). Bandura (2012) notes that 'people behave more cruelly when detrimental practices are sanitized than when they are called aggression' (p. 2).

Another form of hate speech that is used commonly in political mobilisation relies on conspiracy theories that portray certain minority groups as cunning, clever, and well-organised (see also Chapter 33). Turkish propaganda during the Armenian genocide often used a motive of a 'fifth column' – accusing Armenians of collaborating with the Russian army during the Second World War (Levene, 1998). Similar motives emerged in the Rwandan propaganda that portrayed the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front as a 'fifth column' and blamed Tutsi leadership for President Habyarimana's plane crash in 1994 – an event that became a direct trigger of genocide (Lemarchand, 2002). In Poland, the fifth column idea was used by the

communist party leader, Władysław Gomułka, to justify the anti-Jewish purge that ultimately led to forced migration of thousands of Jews from Poland in 1968 (Stola, 2006). This image dominated also the visual propaganda of Nazi Germany – presenting Jews as secretly ruling the world (Winiewski et al., 2015). In all these cases, popular support for intergroup violence or discrimination was fuelled by hate speech used in propaganda materials: leaflets, newspaper articles, and radio broadcasts portrayed specific minority groups (Armenians in Ottoman Turkey, Tutsi in Hutu-dominated Rwanda, Jews in Poland and Germany) as strong, cunning, and conspiring.

Studies conducted in Germany and in the USA (Imhoff et al., 2020) also show that conspiracy theories can have mobilising effects on political participation. Specifically, people who believe in conspiracy theories are more willing to engage in non-normative forms of collective action (physical attacks, destroying objects, illegal blockades, etc.). Currently, the most common means to spread both conspiracy theories about minorities and dehumanising images of minority groups is the Internet, and particularly social media.

27.3 Hate Speech and Social Media

In 2019, the estimated number of social media users reached almost 3 billion, and was projected to reach 3.5 billion in 2023 (Clement, 2020). Thus, for over one-third of the world population, social media have become one of the main providers of information about the social world. The importance of this new medium in modern day politics cannot be overestimated (see also Chapter 32). Social media can be used to communicate and propagate one's ideas, to unite and mobilise one's supporters, but also to spread misinformation and conspiracy theories, and to slander

political opponents. Algorithms used by contemporary social media providers can also be used to find and target messages to specific social groups and categories, and to adjust the content of these messages just as commercial advertisements are adjusted to potential buyers. The case of Cambridge Analytica and its involvement in the 2016 American presidential election and 2016 Brexit referendum is well known globally (Rosenberg et al., 2018). To be clear, this is not an isolated incident of politicians using social media to attain their goals. Gorwa (2017) reports that almost one-third of political discourse on the Polish Twitter may be generated by automated political bots, mostly right-wing oriented. Still, social media are not only about computational propaganda used by the state or political parties. They can also be used to support grassroot and other bottom-up movements, as was evident during the Arab Spring in Egypt (Vargas, 2012) or the Polish 2016 protests against the proposed total abortion ban (Berendt, 2016).

With social media becoming an increasingly essential medium of the political life, it is perhaps not surprising that they have also become the main circulator of hate speech. Hawdon et al. (2017) revealed that almost 31% of Germans, 39% of Brits, 48% of Finns, and 53% of Americans encountered hate speech online during 2013–2014. Studies of Polish population (Winiewski et al., 2017) similarly revealed that 54% of adults encountered hate speech online, while among youths (16–17 years old), almost 96% reported seeing online hate speech. Oksanen et al. (2014) also reported the prevalence of exposure to online hate speech among youths (i.e., a Finnish sample between the ages of 15 and 18). Perhaps unsurprisingly, their analyses revealed exposure to hate material correlated positively with online activity, but also with poor attachment to family, and experiences with

physical online victimisation. The risk of exposure to online hate speech can also depend on external factors including the societal climate of fear and polarisation, as was evident after the November 2015 Paris attacks (see Kaakinen et al., 2018) or during the so-called refugee crisis (see, e.g., Winiewski et al., 2017). Importantly, exposure to hate speech may further amplify feelings of societal fear during times of societal unrest (see Oksanen et al., 2020).

It is important to understand why hate speech is so prevalent in social media. Social media providers only recently implemented policies that explicitly prohibit harassment of the use of offensive language (BBC, 2018). Accordingly, the task of moderating the content posted was earlier ceded to individual users or group moderators. Such conditions might, however, accelerate the spread of hate speech through the social media sites. Recent investigation (Soral et al., 2018) revealed that frequent exposure to hate speech may change the perception of similar statements and make them seem less offensive. Thus, a mechanism similar to desensitisation to violence (e.g., Bartholow et al., 2006) might be responsible for epidemics of online hate speech. Social media users or group moderators might become less effective in monitoring the content of their groups, and thus permit hateful language used by other users. Frequent exposure to online hate speech may also affect the perceived normativity of such statements. That is, not only their perceived offensiveness to minorities, but their compliance or non-compliance to community standards – and thus opinions about their ban. For example, in a recent study, Soral et al. (2020) surveyed various profiles of media consumption. They identified three broad clusters of media consumers: (1) traditional users who get information from TV, radio, or newspapers, but not

from social media or citizen blogs; (2) digital users who get information from social media, but not from traditional media; and (3) highly engaged users who get information from all available sources. Their analyses revealed traditional users tend to accept anti-Muslim hate speech credibly less than digital or highly engaged users. Use of social media may shape perceptions of social norms and make some behaviours common and, thus, accepted.

In light of the above, one may dispute whether a common ban of hate speech might be considered an efficient way of dealing with this issue. Opponents of such a solution often argue that this would drastically limit the freedom of speech and that hate speech is subject to self-correcting mechanisms (e.g., see Chapter 41). For example, they argue that increase of hate speech may motivate equality-oriented individuals to engage in counter-speech and actions against haters. However, there is evidence that such an ideal does not always work. Analyses of Gab (Mathew et al., 2019) – a social media site that promotes freedom of speech and refuses to moderate its content – suggest that the content generated by hate speech users tends to have significantly higher impact than the content of users of no hate speech. Hate speech tends to spread faster, farther, and to a much wider audience than non-hateful content. The rivalry between hate speech and counter speech is thus uneven. Furthermore, as suggested by Bilewicz and Soral (2020), mechanisms that may constrain the spread of hate speech – empathy or social norms – are destroyed by frequent exposure to hateful language. All this suggests that self-correcting mechanisms may be ineffective at preventing the spread of hate speech, while simply banning hateful utterances may also be ineffective.

Recent analysis by Johnson et al. (2019) suggests that hate speech follows network-of-network dynamics. Hate speech users form

interconnected clusters that cross social media sites, countries, continents, and languages. Therefore, a ban of hate speech on one site may simply result in its transfer to another online place, or to the same site via ‘back doors’ (see Johnson et al., 2019). To break down this hidden resilience of hate speech networks, Johnson et al. (2019) suggest a matrix of interventions that involve a slightly more intelligent solution than a simple ban of hate speech and removal of hateful accounts. For example, these interventions may involve randomly banning only a small fraction of users or removing small clusters. Other strategies may, for example, involve setting clusters against each other and encouraging anti-hate users to confront hate clusters.

27.4 Hate Speech and Intergroup Relations

The definition of hate speech explicitly states that it spreads, incites, promotes, or justifies racial hatred and prejudice. Yet, direct evidence for a causal relationship between being exposed to hate speech and one’s level of prejudice is scarce (yet growing). Is it really possible that, through racial and xenophobic propaganda, one can turn neutral citizens into racist bigots? Moreover, the mechanism(s) responsible for increasing prejudice among hate speech witnesses is poorly understood. Is it related to the activation of racial stereotypes, instigation of negative intergroup emotions, dehumanisation of verbal violence victims, or perhaps system-justifying processes? Another important question pertains to the consequences of exposure to hate speech among its victims. How much does being targeted by hate speech harm the psychological health of minority members? What other consequences might it have? In this section, we try to answer these questions and discuss how hate speech affects intergroup relations.

The idea that verbal expressions of prejudice – hate speech or anti-locutions – might constitute a first step on a pathway to more severe prejudice-based transgressions (e.g., lynchings, pogroms, ethnic cleansing, or genocide) was expressed already by Gordon Allport (1954) in his seminal work on prejudice. Allport saw increased anti-locutions as a prelude to other hate crimes, yet he argued that mere expressions of prejudice are not sufficient to instigate racial violence. He famously wrote: ‘Although most barking does not lead to biting, yet there is never a bite without previous barking’ (p. 56). While Allport approached the idea that hate speech can cause prejudice with a great caution, more and more studies support this hypothesis.

In their seminal studies, Greenberg and Pyszczynski (1985) found that overheard racial slurs can negatively impact evaluations of minority members. Kirkland et al. (1987) similarly showed that this effect may emerge in the courtroom where evaluations of minority attorneys may be affected by overheard ethnic slurs such as ‘shyster’ or ‘nigger’. Such ethnic slurs affect evaluations because they tend to activate pre-existing racial schemata and stereotypes (see also Simon & Greenberg, 1996) that are used by an individual to interpret behaviours of minority members. Thus, hate speech can bring to the surface those parts of knowledge that offer simple and quick explanations of reality. A similar idea of how hate speech can impact prejudice and evaluations of minority group members was offered by Fasoli et al. (2016). These authors argue that, for some minority groups (e.g., gay men), hate speech can act as a deviance marker which activates negative out-group stereotypes and may contribute to physical distancing and dehumanisation.

The idea that ethnic slurs or homophobic epithets can activate negative stereotypes among some members of society is often used

in politics. For example, while it is common to destroy posters of political opponents, sometimes vandals decide to decorate them with hateful tags such as ‘kike’ or ‘fag’. While the effects of such labelling may seem subtle, in the large scale, they can mobilise political electorates and influence support for minority or migration policies. For example, Fasoli et al. (2015) found that exposure to homophobic epithets (e.g., faggot) versus simple category labels (e.g., gay) led heterosexual individuals to choose more in-group-favouring strategies when allocating monetary resources between programmes relevant to heterosexuals versus homosexuals. In one of our previous studies (Soral et al., 2018), we found that individuals frequently exposed to anti-Muslim and/or anti-refugee hate speech were more prone to support anti-immigration policies (e.g., use of coercion and physical violence against refugees or isolating refugees from the rest of the society). However, one should notice that this study was conducted in the middle of the so-called refugee crisis in 2016. During that time, the Polish media were full of extremely offensive anti-Muslim and anti-refugee hate speech and the use of ethnic slurs (e.g., goatfuckers) constituted a norm among some groups in Poland.

There is, however, likely more than the mere activation of negative out-group stereotypes behind the effects of hate speech. For example, one may wonder why, in studies by Fasoli et al. (2015; also, Fasoli et al., 2016), only exposure to homophobic epithets (but not category labels) increased in-group favouritism, dehumanisation, and physical distancing. Both homophobic epithets and category labels can activate negative stereotypes. It seems plausible that, while in the latter case the activated mental representation of a social category may be complex and ambivalent, in the former case such mental representation is simple and clearly negative. In line with this

reasoning, Leader et al. (2009) found that the low complexity of ethnic slurs, rather than their negative valence, fosters the exclusion of ethnic out-groups. Therefore, one may argue that hate speech can lead to increased prejudice especially when it is unequivocally derogatory and humiliating, and when it offers a potential to evoke among majority members contempt directed towards minorities (for further discussion, see Bilewicz, Kamińska, et al., 2017; Bilewicz & Soral, 2020).

Contempt is a strictly social emotion (or sentiment) evoked by other individuals or groups perceived as inferior and unworthy of cooperation (Gervais & Fessler, 2017). It may motivate the desire to distance oneself from its target and may mute empathy and compassion for the victims of hate speech. In one of our previous studies, we found that contempt motivates the use of hate speech more than emotions such as envy, disgust, or even hatred (Winiewski et al., 2016). In another study, we found evidence that repeated exposure to hate speech fosters a gradual increase in facial expressions of contempt (see Bilewicz & Soral, 2020). Thus, contempt may act both as an antecedent to, and as a consequence of, hate speech and lead to its spread through society. Contempt may also make it possible to introduce new derogatory themes into the discourse on minorities and migration.

Although hate speech – frequently used by politicians to achieve their particular goals – may impact majority group members, it particularly affects the well-being of minorities. Previous studies report higher suicide rates among minority groups targeted by hate speech (Mullen & Smyth, 2004). Being a victim of hate speech is also associated with psychological disorders such as depression (e.g., Soral et al., 2020) and PTSD (Wypych et al., 2020). Exposure to hate speech may also elicit specific symptoms such as internalised

homophobia and body concerns among gay men (Bianchi et al., 2017).

Despite the importance of the topic, examining how minority members cope with the omnipresence of hate is understudied. Leets (2002) argues that being a victim of hate speech resembles other traumatic experiences. Individuals harassed by hate speech may suffer short-term emotional crises and may avoid certain places where they previously encountered hate speech. Importantly, they may form negative attitudes towards groups perceived as the source of hate speech. This may create a vicious cycle that disrupts efforts aimed at the integration of minorities and reduction of inequalities, or at least maintaining a peaceful coexistence (see Mullen & Rice, 2003, for evidence).

27.5 Political Ideology and Hate Speech

When considering the politics of hate, it is hard not to discuss associations of hate speech with political ideology. Numerous studies suggest that stereotyping, prejudice, and intolerance are mostly a domain of right-wing politicians and their voters (for a review see, e.g., Jost et al., 2009; but see Chapter 41). Thus, one would predict that a conservative ideology would lead to increased use, promotion, and justification of hate speech. Our analyses (see Winiewski et al., 2017) of Polish survey data suggest that, among right-wing voters, 55% admitted to using hate speech at least once against one of several Polish minorities (e.g., Jews, Roma, gays, Muslims). However, among left-wing or center voters, the percentage of hate-speech use, while significantly lower than conservatives, was higher than we would expect (namely, 47% and 43%, respectively). It seems likely that the ideological antecedents of the use of hate speech may exceed simple division into left- and right-wing world view (see also Chapter 41).

Duckitt's (2001; see also Chapter 11) dual-process model illuminates two ideological variables that form the basis of a conservative ideology. First, it states that conservative ideology is motivated by beliefs about the competitiveness of the social world. Hence, conservatives justify existing inequalities and strive to attain in-group dominance over out-groups perceived as inferior. The second motivation behind a conservative ideology is the perception of the world as dangerous, which promotes strivings for social order and traditionalism, and which may lead to a favouring of strong authoritarian regimes. While the first motivation is linked to social dominance orientation (SDO), the second is associated with right-wing authoritarianism (RWA). Although SDO should foster the promotion and justification of hate speech, RWA presents a dilemma for individuals when confronted with hate speech. Both high RWA and high SDO are linked to high prejudice towards minority groups (see, e.g., Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). However, individuals high in RWA may find hate speech utterances as incompatible with existing social norms and conventions. Thus, while still being prejudiced, individuals high on RWA may prefer more subtle ways of expressing prejudice and will be more inclined to support hate speech prohibition. This reasoning was corroborated in one of our previous studies (Bilewicz, Soral, et al., 2017), where we found that, while SDO is negatively linked to support of hate speech prohibition, RWA is positively linked to supporting such a ban.

While the conservative ideology may be linked to higher stereotyping and prejudice, it cannot unequivocally explain attitudes towards verbal aggression against minorities. Perhaps, then, hate speech can be better explained by populism rather than the conservative ideology? Populism defines the social world through vertical or horizontal

oppositions (Brubaker, 2017; see also Chapter 28). The vertical dimension juxtaposes 'the good people' against 'the corrupt and evil elites' (*the top*) or the deviants (e.g., addicts, homeless, and welfare recipients) represented as parasites or spongers (*the bottom*), whereas the horizontal dimension contrasts 'the good people' against those from the *outside* who threaten the collective. Therefore, populism not only identifies enemies everywhere *outside*, but also accentuates one's moral licence to defend one's own collective. Such goals can be attained through various measures, but hate speech seems to be a direct expression of such views.

Both populism and hate speech can be also characterised by their reliance on moral outrage. Analyses of the groups who are the most frequently targeted by hate speech, as well as content analyses of such hateful utterances, may provide a direct link between moral foundations (see, e.g., Graham et al., 2009) and hate speech. For example, in one of our projects (Bilewicz et al., 2014; also, Winiewski et al., 2017), we analysed the content of hate speech towards various minorities. A content map analysis suggested that the reasons for using hate speech are closely linked to perceived violations of moral codes of conduct. For example, the content of anti-gay hate speech referred most often to disgust and the moral code of purity. In the case of anti-Ukrainian utterances, their content referred often to historical issues and perceptions of disloyalty. Anti-Roma hate speech seemed to have its basis in breaking the moral foundation of fairness and anti-Muslim hate speech – through links to terrorism – may be motivated by values related to the foundations of harm. Overall, while a systematic analysis of the relationship between the content of hate speech and moral foundations is yet to be done, it may provide a promising avenue for future work. Indeed, it may explain why not only

conservatives, but also liberals, sometimes decide to use hate speech.

27.6 Concluding Remarks

Hate speech is one of the most pressing issues of current politics. Both its definition and the scope of the term, as well as remedies offered by hate speech regulators, are the subject of heated debate between conservatives and liberals (Timberg & Dwoskin, 2020). Debate also exists between the supporters of unconstrained freedom of speech and those who value minorities' well-being above such freedoms (Ash, 2017). In this chapter, we argued that these divisions are much more blurry when it comes to everyday confrontations with hate speech. Indeed, authoritarian conservatives are (ironically) sometimes the most vigorously opposed to hate speech in social media. On the other hand, much of the opposition against regulations in social media comes from the liberal and libertarian milieus.

What is absolutely certain is the impact of hate speech on both its victims and the bystanders. Those who are targeted with hate speech suffer from depression, PTSD, and report lower well-being and mood. Those who witness hate speech become desensitised to discrimination, react more often with contempt to minorities, and eventually often become users of derogatory language. There is vast empirical evidence of these destructive consequences of hate speech.

The proliferation of hate speech is clearly a consequence of new forms of communication. The dominance of social media and online journalism in political communication made hate speech a common way of political expression. This is partly due to the fact that emotionally loaded messages disperse through social media more rapidly than rational and calm narratives (Brady et al., 2017). This has been cynically used by politicians, campaigners

and other fearmongers who employ hate speech to mobilise the public. Our greater understanding of hate speech is a prerequisite for improving the political culture and maintaining democracy as a principle in contemporary politics.

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28 Populism

Elisabeth Gidengil and Dietlind Stolle

28.1 Introduction

The antecedents and consequences of different variants of populism have been the focus of considerable scholarly attention, with over 278,000 entries on Google Scholar alone as of April 2021. The academic interest is easy to understand: populist parties are on the rise again. Over the last 20 years, the vote share of populist parties has increased from 7% to 25% worldwide and 17 populists are in power globally (Meyer, 2021). Scholars generally agree that the scene was set for the recent rise by the convergence of party positions in the West and the resulting elite consensus around the benefits of globalisation, liberalisation, and economic integration (Mair, 2005). The 2008 financial crisis, the ensuing austerity policies, and the resulting socio-economic inequality opened the door for populist movements to challenge this consensus (Berman, 2017). Thus, populist movements and the resulting parties have expanded by playing on the economic difficulties of those who feel that they are ‘losing out’ from globalisation and by appealing to feelings that ‘elites’ do not understand the concerns of ‘common people’ and that the political system is ‘rigged’. While these macro developments create the backdrop to the renewed populist rise in the West and around the globe, political scientists are still

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¹ This set of references is from Wuttke et al. (2020).

trying to explain who is drawn to these populist messages. What are the characteristics of the people who fuel the populist vote and whose mindset is susceptible to populist rhetoric?

To identify the people who are enamoured with populism, this chapter focuses on two related measures of support for populism at the individual level: populist attitudes and the vote for populist parties. The chapter proceeds in five sections that follow. First, we detail the problems with definitions of populism and then discuss resulting measures of populist attitudes with a special focus on anti-elitism, popular sovereignty, and a Manichean world view. The next sections shift to the populist vote and discuss the lack of a coherent set of socio-demographic predictors as well as the psychological determinants of populist party support with an emphasis on emotions and personality traits.

28.2 A Journey from Definition to Measurement

Political-psychological measures of populism are as diverse as its definitions. In fact, there has been a lot of confusion, vagueness, and disagreement in defining populism. Populism has been viewed as a mass movement or a distinct form of mobilisation (Jansen, 2011); a discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985); a thin ideology (Mudde, 2004); a strategy or organisation (Weyland, 2001); a conception of democracy (Pappas, 2016; Urbinati, 2019) and many more.¹ This disagreement about what

constitutes populism renders its empirical study extremely challenging.

An important aspect of the debate about defining populism has to do with how broadly or narrowly the concept should be construed. While some definitions are clearly focused on the populism of the radical right (Norris & Inglehart, 2019), others are broad enough to include both the Populist Party founded in 1891 in the USA as an anti-elite rural movement and present-day Trump Republicans, as well as parties as diverse as the Spanish Podemos and the Jobbik Movement for a better Hungary (see Mansbridge & Macedo, 2019; Zulianello, 2019). For the purposes of this chapter, we focus on the broad inclusive definition to highlight those characteristics of populism that apply to all its variants. We look at populism as a thin ideology that simultaneously shapes and defines the views of citizens as well as the mobilisation strategies and discourse of political parties and movements.

The minimal definition of populism identifies four core elements: (1) the people (2) in a morally charged (3) battle against (4) the elites (Mansbridge & Macedo, 2019). This broad view of populism is not that different from the notion of a thin ideology that can be moulded to various political goals of both the left and the right (Hawkins et al., 2019; Mudde, 2017). The idea is to encompass the many variants of populism by focusing on the conflict between the people and elites as the core of the concept. All populists, no matter their background, argue that certain groups among the elites are corrupt, uninterested in the well-being of the people, and seek power for their own ends. Thus, we find a strong anti-elite sentiment in populist discourse that includes anti-establishment sentiments directed at prior or current power-holders and anti-expert opinions. Populists use moral language to condemn mainstream political power.

Mansbridge and Macedo argue forcefully that not all variants of populism emphasise that the people should be sovereign actors and rule directly through plebiscites and other popular means. Similarly, not all populist movements view the people as homogeneous, nor do they all vilify vulnerable outsiders. Moreover, only some forms of populism share a strong focus on nationalism or are outright undemocratic, though they certainly exhibit impatience with democratic deliberation (Bødker & Anderson, 2019). Many accounts of populism also highlight differences in its characteristics depending on whether populists are in power or in opposition. The strong implication of populism when in opposition, 'is that the people are the majority, yet unfairly marginalized and ignored, when their interests ought to be central in a democracy' (Mansbridge & Macedo, 2019, p. 61). Once in government, however, some populists seem to expand their rule by attacking democratic norms and broadening their executive power by dismantling checks and balances (Pappas, 2019).

There is a lively discussion about whether populism as a movement automatically entails authoritarianism or the cherishing of one leader above all other offices and free of institutional checks (Urbinati, 2019). Some have highlighted the fact that populists can uncover problems with how democracy works and illuminate where democracy falls short with respect to representation, responsiveness, and connection with common people (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012). While populists come up with easy solutions to these shortcomings that often entail stronger leaders subject to fewer checks and balances, undemocratic solutions are not a priori part of every single populist movement (Mansbridge & Macedo, 2019).

Finally, cultural or right-wing populist movements of the kind that occur in Europe and North America are often hostile to minority groups and have targeted them – and the

cosmopolitan political elites who protect them – as the main enemies of the people. Indeed, they have attempted to redirect people's anxiety and anger onto others who receive what is perceived to be special treatment, such as immigrants, asylum seekers, welfare recipients, and people of colour, as well as cosmopolitan elites who are seen as supporting those groups. While the focus is still on those elites who seemingly do not care about people like them, this form of populism is linked to a hatred of various out-groups who are not recognised as part of 'the people' (see also Chapter 21). However, this undemocratic variant, which emphasises the in-group–out-group cleavage and threatens minority rights, is only one kind of populism and does not encompass all its forms. Left-wing, or socio-economic, populists, meanwhile, lament the growing power of banks, big business, and international financial institutions, and, to some degree, America and the Westernisation of societies.

In sum, populism comes in many variants, but the core ideas, true of all of them, centre around the conflict between elites and the people, the counterposing of elites as corrupt and the people as pure, and the Manichean world view of dividing groups into good and evil or insiders and outsiders. Moreover, there is a strong focus on the *people* who should decide and be more in charge of political decisions unimpeded by distracting forces who do not have their best interests in mind. However, we leave the sovereignty of the people, the non-democratic ambitions, the blaming of vulnerable groups, the belief in the homogeneity of the people and exclusivity, as well as the use of nationalism and the focus on banks and international financial organisations, outside of the current definition of populism and the measurement of populist attitudes, although we will briefly discuss the added value of including such measures in specific country contexts.

28.3 Dimensions of Core Populist Attitudes

Overall, a relatively unambiguous individual-level measure of populism is, of course, voting for a populist party or leader, although that vote might not always be motivated by populist sentiment alone. The key to using the populist vote as an indicator of populism is classifying populist parties based on clear criteria (Norris, 2019). However, whether a populist party emerges or enters parliament depends on a host of reasons including the historical evolution of political cleavages, electoral systems, the number of parties in parliament, the political space occupied by existing parties, and several more. Accordingly, any comparative research using the populist vote should include institutional and party system influences that shape the strength of the populist vote.

Since a vote for a populist party might not reflect the degree of populist sentiment in the population, survey researchers have developed items to capture populist attitudes across different countries (see Castanho Silva et al., 2020). Before examining the most important measures of populist attitudes, we discuss the criteria that should be used to determine the best measures.

Good measures of populist attitudes should distinguish populist attitudes from other constructs, such as political distrust, cynicism, and political efficacy (Wuttke et al., 2020, see also Geurkink et al., 2020). They should not only tap into the main aspects of the definition of populism and achieve high convergent validity by hanging together, but they should also successfully distinguish populists from non-populists, as verified by voting for populist parties (if they exist), and work in a variety of cross-national contexts (Castanho Silva et al., 2020). These are very high expectations, so it is not surprising that Castanho Silva et al.'s

review and test of seven scales of populist attitudes revealed that none of the scales currently employed in academic research satisfy all these criteria. In the end, they were unable to recommend any one of the existing scales over the others. However, they determined that populist attitudes as measured by Akkerman et al. (2014), Castanho Silva et al. (2018), and Schulz et al. (2018) have the fewest problems. The challenge seems to be that the scales that are internally consistent and tap important dimensions of populism are often unable to capture the wide variety of populisms around the globe.²

From our reading of the literature on measuring populist attitudes, we conclude that the best approach may be to utilise a broad populism scale that captures the main dimensions of the minimal core definition. Such a scale ought to work better across a wider variety of national contexts. Additional scales tapping non-essential attributes of populism, such as popular sovereignty, attitudes towards vulnerable groups, and attitudes towards experts, can be used depending on the national context.

The minimal definition invites us to limit the core measures of populist attitudes to (1) anti-elitism, (2) the idea that people are central to decision-making and have some sort of higher standing vis-à-vis elites (but stopping short of measuring support for the sovereignty of the people over other institutions), and (3) the Manichean world view.³ We review these in turn.

28.3.1 Anti-elitism

Anti-elitism is related to the Manichean world view of populism, in which the elites are viewed as the corrupt counterpart to the honourable and hard-working people (Schulz et al., 2018). Thus, the political elite have really nothing in common with the people, and most importantly do not share the

people's values and interests (see also Mudde, 2004; Taggart, 2000). Populists counterpose the hard-working and law-abiding citizens and the corrupt, self-indulgent politicians and elites (Mudde, 2004). Measures of anti-elitism are plagued by general statements that fail to distinguish between political distrust and the perceived conflict between the people and the elites. Statements such as 'Politicians [elected officials] talk too much and take too little action' (Akkerman et al., 2014) elicit notoriously high levels of agreement. Other items that were derived directly from the discussions around populism, such as 'The political differences between the people and the elite are larger than the differences among the people' (Hauwaert et al., 2019), seem to capture populist thinking but they do not capture the core definition of populism, and are perhaps too clumsy and complex for an online survey. Instead, items should juxtapose the notions of the corrupt elite and the honourable, hard-working people. Finally, measures of anti-elitism should focus on politicians or political elites, not on governments, as some governments could be populist at the time of the survey.

28.3.2 People Centricism

The people are considered central to populism (e.g., Taggart, 2000). Indeed, all definitions of populism refer to the people as the main reference group. After all, the mobilisational power of populism hinges on getting people to think that their influence and importance have

² Some measures of populist attitudes consist of several scales (one for each dimension of populism) while others produce an overall measure of populist attitudes (Castanho Silva et al., 2020).

³ On the selection of these three dimensions, see also Castanho Silva et al. (2018). However, they include some problematic measures, as we detail in the text.

somehow been compromised and that others are reaping the benefit. Thus, populists emphasise that the people are virtuous and inherently good (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2015). Taggart (2000) developed the idea of the heartland, an imaginary way for populists to connect with people by looking backward to allegedly better times when people were not as betrayed. Wirth et al. (2016, p. 10) describe how the reference to the heartland can differ across contexts, referring, for example, to ‘Middle America’ or ‘La France Profonde’ or to popular icons such as the Boston Tea Party in the USA, Guy Fawkes in the UK, and Wilhelm Tell in Switzerland.

In emphasising the centrality of the people, we do not go as far as Schulz et al. (2018) and others who include a belief in unrestricted popular sovereignty as part of this dimension of populism (see also Mohrenberg et al., 2019; Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017). Although there is some talk about replacing the ‘corrupt elite’ with direct rule by ‘the honest people’ (Huber & Schimpf, 2017), this is not promoted by all populist movements. Rather, we highlight here the idea that people should be more involved in making important decisions. The danger with this dimension is that most items have either been too broad and generate wide support in surveys or they go too far by mentioning referenda and other aspects of direct democracy that are not embraced by all types of populism. Thus, we are sceptical of indicators such as ‘The politicians in the [National] Parliament need to follow the will of the people’ (Schulz et al., 2018), as they elicit widespread agreement as a matter of course. Instead, we suggest items such as ‘Politicians don’t have to spend time among ordinary people to do a good job’ (reverse-coded; Castanho Silva et al., 2020), ‘The people should be asked whenever important decisions are taken’ (Schulz et al., 2018), and ‘The people, not the politicians, should make our most important policy decisions’

(Akkerman et al., 2014). Note that it is important to include items that have different directions to avoid acquiescence bias (Castanho Silva et al., 2020).

28.3.3 Manichean World View

Finally, a Manichean view of society underscores the stark contrast between the people and the elite. The Manichean world view juxtaposes the good and the knowingly evil (Hawkins & Kaltwasser, 2017). This view entails a level of absolutism that looks at the world in black-and-white terms and dramatises the differences between, for example, in- and out-groups, friends and enemies (Wirth et al., 2016). For example, in the context of an election, the people supporting the competing party or the party leaders themselves are often depicted as evil, untrustworthy, immoral, and even ‘the Devil himself’. Hawkins describes how Chavez talks about Venezuela becoming either ‘a truly strong and free country, independent and prosperous’ or instead ‘a country reduced once more to slavery and darkness’ (Hawkins, 2009, p. 1043). Measures here should tap the more general tendency to see the world in two strictly opposite ways and the depiction of political enemies as evil. Items such as ‘You can tell if a person is good or bad if you know their politics’ or ‘The people I disagree with politically are not evil’ seem to tap into this notion very well (Castanho Silva et al., 2018). These items should also tap into the willingness to compromise across the aisles, as a clear Manichean world view would not readily allow for that (Akkerman et al., 2014). It is interesting that many of the populist attitude scales do not include measures of the Manichean world view (Castanho Silva et al., 2020).

Finally, to fully capture populist attitudes at the individual level, people who score high on any one dimension of populism should score

high on all three dimensions. For example, if they score high on the dimensions of anti-elitism and people centrism, they should not score low on the Manichean world view. The point is that respondents need to score high on all three dimensions of populism for the construct to be successfully measured. Only then would the concept of populist attitudes 'represent more than the sum of its parts' (Wuttke et al., 2020, p. 358).

28.4 Socio-demographic Determinants of Populism

Measuring populist attitudes is challenging, but it is even more difficult to summarise their socio-demographic determinants. The challenge is compounded by the absence of an agreed-upon definition of populism and the lack of common measures. Some studies will necessarily pick up more right-wing or cultural populism, while others will be more focused on the left-wing or socio-economic variants, depending on where the study is conducted and which measures are used. The two common trends we found across cross-national studies of populist attitudes using elements of the core definition were that people with higher-status jobs and higher incomes and education tend not to display populist attitudes. No other social background characteristics were consistently associated with populist attitudes across studies.

Interestingly, the lack of a clear pattern of socio-demographic determinants is also apparent when examining the populist vote. The problem here is similar; many studies base their theorising and analysis on explaining the right-wing populist vote rather than the overall populist vote. This leads to results that speak much more to radical right parties than to the phenomenon of populism overall. Political psychology has yet to create the cross-national data sets and studies that

capture the encompassing nature of populism as a phenomenon to be explained.

Nevertheless, using a handful of studies that explicitly included various types of populist parties, we found some interesting results. Gender is a good example. While scholars of the populist radical right have found relatively strong and consistent evidence that men are much more in support of these parties than women (Spierings & Zaslove, 2015), this is not the case when including parties of the populist left (Rooduijn, 2018; Santana & Rama, 2018). Age does not show a clear effect, either. If anything, there is a slight negative relationship whereby older people are generally less inclined to vote for populists, but not all studies confirm this or find significant results (Rooduijn, 2018; Spierings & Zasloff, 2015). One study that only looked at populist left parties found that younger people are more inclined than older people to vote for populists (Santana & Rama, 2018). Finally, we see mixed results for education. Again, voting for the populist right is associated with a lack of education, but the same effect does not hold for the populist left (Rooduijn, 2018). However, other studies do not find consistent relationships with education (Pauwels, 2014). This little excursion shows that support for populism is not strongly determined by social background characteristics. The populist parties of the left and right are too diverse to be able to identify specific characteristics that might help us explain the phenomenon of populism as identified here. What holds populists together may simply be a way of thinking about the world. Accordingly, we turn to key psychological determinants of the populist vote.

28.5 Psychological Determinants of Support for Populist Parties

Research on the psychological determinants of support for populist parties has mostly, but not

exclusively, focused on the role of emotions and the Big Five personality traits. Studies have either looked at a single country or at a small number of countries. This necessarily limits the extent to which the findings to date can be generalised. Nonetheless, an important beginning has been made in understanding the deeper roots of the appeal of populist parties. Our review below focuses on Europe, as most studies of the core concepts have been conducted there.

28.5.1 Emotions and Support for Populist Parties

The role of emotions in driving support for populist parties has only very recently attracted scholarly attention. It has engendered a lively debate about which emotion is key: fear or anger. Marcus and his colleagues (Marcus et al., 2019; Vasilopoulos et al., 2019a, 2019b) come down firmly on the side of anger. They challenge the assumption that fear is key in generating support for the far right and instead argue that people who are fearful will be less likely to support such parties. They draw on affective intelligence theory (AIT), which holds that affective systems manage how we react emotionally and that different emotions can be experienced simultaneously (Marcus et al., 2000; see also Chapter 9). This is in sharp contrast with the assumption of cognitive appraisal theories that a sequence of cognitive processes determines the particular emotion that we experience in response to a stimulus (Smith & Kirby, 2001). Where cognitive appraisal theories presume that people will experience *either* fear *or* anger in the face of threat, AIT expects that *both* emotions will be experienced. What matters is which emotion is stronger. According to Marcus and his colleagues, this has important behavioural consequences. If fear dominates, people are more likely to seek out information

and become less reliant on their ideological predispositions or partisan attachments. As a result, they are more susceptible to persuasion. Anger, according to these authors, has the opposite effects: people become less interested in new information, discount information that is at odds with their predispositions, and rely more on their established political habits.

Marcus and his colleagues (Marcus et al., 2019; Vasilopoulos et al., 2019a) apply this argument to support for the far-right Front National following the terror attacks on France in 2015. They focus on two predispositions: ideology and authoritarianism. The expectation was that people who became fearful in the wake of the attacks would rely less on these predispositions and pay more attention to which party was most likely to be able to deal with the novel threat. As a result, people who might otherwise be predisposed to vote for the Front National would be less likely to support the party because it was an untried option. Anger was expected to have a very different effect. Angry voters would double down and rely even more on their habitual predispositions. Their conservative ideological orientations and authoritarianism would enhance the appeal of the Front National. Moreover, 'if the threat is experienced as a familiar assault on cherished values, then the FN, the party long advancing the need to defend nationalist values, will likely be appealing to angry voters' (Vasilopoulos et al., 2019a, p. 683). The authors find that angry voters were indeed more likely to vote for the Front National, whereas fearful voters were more likely to vote against the far-right party. Importantly, while fear diminished the effect of authoritarianism and right-wing ideological identification on support for the Front National, anger enhanced their effect.

Jost (2019) has taken issue with these conclusions on empirical grounds. He is critical of the inclusion of both fear and anger in the

same model, arguing that it leads to a suppression effect. Reanalysing the data used by Vasilopoulos et al. (2019a), he concludes that fear has a positive effect on support for the Front National and that the effect is mediated by both anger and authoritarianism. This is not simply a disagreement about model specification. The disagreement hinges on whether or not 'Anger constitutes an independent emotional appraisal, triggered by different dimensions of threat' (Vasilopoulos et al., 2019b, p. 714). Given that the data are cross-sectional, this issue cannot be resolved empirically. The same is true of the causal status of authoritarianism. In their response to Jost, Vasilopoulos et al. (2019b) express their scepticism that authoritarianism mediates the effect of fear. Their point is that authoritarianism is a long-term psychological disposition. Whether socialised or rooted in genetic inheritance, it is unlikely to be affected by short-term emotional responses to threat. They maintain their position that anger moderates the impact of authoritarianism.

Rico et al.'s (2017) investigation of the emotional underpinnings of support for populism lends weight to the contention that anger, not fear, is the key to support for populist parties. Using a three-wave panel survey, they find that Spanish citizens were more likely to support populism if they were angry about the economic crisis, while being fearful had no effect. Rejecting the notion that emotions are only elicited by cognitive appraisals, they focus on how different emotions shape people's interpretations of events according to the appraisals associated with those emotions: 'Because the populist worldview strongly resonates with the basic elements of anger, populist ideas appear to be exceptionally suited to the expression of anger and to fulfilling the specific motivations that it triggers. By contrast, populist attitudes should remain unaffected by fear, because the populist worldview is at odds with

the appraisal and behavioral tendencies that characterize that emotion' (p. 448). It remains to be seen, though, whether their findings extend to support for populist parties as opposed to populist attitudes.

Magni's (2017) study of the effect of anger on support for UKIP in Britain in the wake of the financial crisis challenges the notion that the relationship between anger and support for populist parties is straightforward. On the contrary, Magni argues that the effect of anger is conditional on a low sense of political efficacy: angry people are only apt to support populist parties when they perceive that their own ability to influence politics is limited. His argument draws on cognitive appraisal theories of emotion. According to these theories, people experience different emotions depending on the appraisals elicited by a given situation. Key appraisals in the case of anger include frustration, perceived unfairness and blaming others for the situation (Kuppens et al., 2007). Magni argues that populist parties are able to attract angry citizens because their anti-elite messages provide 'a clear target to blame' (p. 94) and promise a means of remedying the unfairness of their situation by removing the cause of their frustration. In doing so, populist parties offer 'a pathway to action outside the system for citizens who feel powerless *within* the system' (p. 94). Importantly, their rhetoric also serves to 'promote a sense of empowerment among inefficacious citizens by offering messages that celebrate the political role of ordinary citizens' (p. 95). People who feel politically efficacious, on the other hand, can assuage their anger by voting for a mainstream opposition party. Magni's analysis of the effect of anger on support for UKIP in Britain in the wake of the financial crisis supports his argument that the effects of anger depend on voters' sense of political efficacy. A causal mediation analysis lends additional weight to his argument by showing that political

alienation mediates the effect of anger on UKIP support among low-efficacy voters.

Research linking emotions to support for populist parties is in its infancy. To date, studies have relied on observational data, leaving a large question mark over any causal inferences. Magni (2017) had access to panel data, which provided a somewhat stronger basis for inferring causality by enabling him to model the role of anger in increasing support for UKIP between 2005 and 2010. However, as Vasilopoulos et al. (2019b) observe, experiments are needed to allow causal inferences with a higher degree of confidence. At the same time, more studies using observational data could speak to the generalisability (or lack thereof) of the associations detected to date, which are based on just two right-wing populist parties. Such studies could also expand the range of emotions that might be linked to support for these parties beyond anger and fear.

28.5.2 Personality Traits

Studies of the impact of personality on support for populist parties have typically focused on the Big Five personality traits. This choice is not surprising, given that these traits are widely seen as capturing the key dimensions of variation in personality and are believed to be related to attitudes and behaviours in a wide array of domains, including politics (Mondak, 2010; see also Chapter 5). A key assumption underpinning these studies is the notion that there must be a match in some sense between an individual's personality and the party. According to the congruency model of political preference (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004), people choose parties based on how well a party's aims and image accord with their own personality traits. In a similar vein, the elective affinity model focuses on 'the forces of mutual attraction that exist between the

structure and contents of belief systems and the underlying needs and motives of individuals' (Jost et al., 2009, p. 308). From this perspective, voters will seek a party that satisfies epistemic and existential needs that are ingrained in their personalities. This will lead them to choose a party whose ideology matches their personality and meets their psychological needs. Given these assumptions, studies have theorised about the match between the messages of populist parties and each of the Big Five personality traits.

Low scores on agreeableness have been linked theoretically to support for populist parties. This trait describes people who are trusting, altruistic, kind, caring, and concerned about getting along with others. Bakker and colleagues (2020) find a significant negative correlation between agreeableness and populist support in 11 of 15 tests using samples from 8 countries. They argue that agreeableness is the most likely of the Big Five traits to predict support for populist parties because their anti-establishment message resonates with the personality of voters who score low on this trait: 'A party that claims that the political establishment cannot be trusted and is dishonest speaks the language of these low agreeable voters' (Bakker et al., 2016, p. 316). Others have theorised that the messages of populist parties should appeal to people who score low on agreeableness because this trait is linked to prejudice, negative attitudes towards outgroups, and anti-immigrant sentiment (Fatke, 2019; Kappe, 2015; Vasilopoulos & Jost, 2020). Meanwhile, the angry rhetoric typical of populist parties is incongruent with the qualities that comprise agreeableness (Vasilopoulos & Jost, 2020).

There is also evidence that support for right-wing populist parties is negatively associated with openness to experience (Ackermann et al., 2018; Vasilopoulos & Jost, 2020). People who are high on this trait are curious,

intellectual, independent-minded, and open to new ideas. Accordingly, several studies have predicted that openness to experience will correlate negatively with voting for populist parties. This is predicated on a link between close-mindedness and anti-immigrant sentiment that would enhance the appeal of populist parties to people who are low on openness to experience (Ackermann et al., 2018; Kappe, 2015). Conversely, people who score high on this trait may be put off by the sorts of simplistic messages that characterise the rhetoric of populist parties (Ackermann et al., 2018; Vasilopoulos & Jost, 2020). However, Fatke (2019) argues that the relationship between openness to experience and voting for a populist party could actually be positive since it may make voters more open to switching their allegiance to a new party. Moreover, people who score high on openness may be less leery of a radical shift to the populist right (Vasilopoulos & Jost, 2020).

Several studies have suggested that conscientiousness will be positively related to support for right-wing populist parties. The assumption is that the need for structure and adherence to norms that characterises conscientious people fosters conservatism and negative attitudes towards immigrants who are seen as threatening the status quo (Ackermann et al., 2018; Fatke, 2019; Schoen & Schumann, 2007; Vasilopoulos & Jost, 2020). However, conscientiousness could inhibit vote switching among those who might otherwise be predisposed to shift to a populist party (Fatke, 2019).

The potential connections between both neuroticism and extraversion and voting for populist parties are harder to discern. In the case of neuroticism, a link has been made between the negative emotions that typify this trait and support for populist parties. Some point to anger (Fatke, 2019); others to fear (Schoen & Schumann, 2007). Neuroticism has also been linked to a lack of political trust

and seeing immigrants as a threat to societal stability (Ackermann et al., 2018). As for extraversion, 'introvert populists seem as plausible as extravert populists' (Fatke, 2019, p. 139). Still, extraversion could encourage support for populist parties because extraverts are inclined to social dominance and are prone to anti-immigrant sentiment (Ackermann et al., 2018; Schoen & Schumann, 2007; see also Chapter 21).

Many of these arguments linking the Big Five to voting for populist parties seem plausible but the links can be complex. On the one hand, there are various possible causal paths between personality traits and vote choice. On the other hand, the effects of traits may be moderated by other predispositions. Mediating effects have received the most attention. Personality traits are stable, long-term predispositions that are shaped by genetic inheritance and by childhood socialisation and other early environmental influences (e.g., see Chapter 3). As such, their effects on support for populist parties are assumed to be mostly indirect.

Various causal paths have been proposed. Several studies have investigated the roles of authoritarianism and social dominance orientation (SDO; Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016; Bakker et al., 2016; Vasilopoulos & Jost, 2020; Zandonella & Zeglovits, 2012). Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) values obedience, respect for authority, conformity with in-group norms, and intolerance of those who do not conform to those norms (Duckitt, 1989; see also Chapter 11). SDO, meanwhile, is characterised by a preference for group-based dominance and inequality (Sidanius et al., 2001). Both orientations would thus seem to have a natural affinity with support for right-wing populist parties. The findings, however, are mixed. RWA and SDO, along with perceived immigrant threat, all mediate the effects of openness to experience and agreeableness

on support for the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), but only RWA mediates the effect of conscientiousness (Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016). Moreover, RWA was unrelated to FPÖ voting in a study of young men (Zandonella & Zeglovits, 2012). In the United States, agreeableness had a negative effect on support for the Tea Party, even when controlling for authoritarianism (as measured by respondents' child-rearing values) and right-wing ideology, but authoritarianism and right-wing ideology mediated the effects of the other Big Five traits (Bakker et al., 2016).⁴ Finally, in France, authoritarianism and SDO were both positively associated with voting for Marine Le Pen, the leader of the far-right Front National, in the first round of the 2017 French presidential election, but negatively associated with supporting Jean Luc Mélenchon, the founder of the far-left populist Left Front (Vasilopoulos & Jost, 2020).

In addition to authoritarianism and SDO, Vasilopoulos and Jost (2020) look at the role of system-justifying attitudes. System justification theory presumes that people are motivated to consider the existing social, economic, and political systems as fair and legitimate (see Chapter 37). As such, it represents 'an inherently conservative inclination to preserve "the way things are"' (Jost & Andrews, 2011, p. 1092). Accordingly, system-justifying attitudes correlated negatively with voting for Le Pen. However, the effect on support for Mélenchon was positive. The authors attribute this to the tendency for system justification to

be associated with leftists in France. Even controlling for these predispositions, the effects of personality traits (see below) continue to be significant, except that agreeableness is no longer positively associated with support for the far-left populist candidate.

Surprisingly few studies have examined whether populist attitudes mediate the effects of any of the Big Five traits on populist party support.⁵ Ackermann et al. (2018) report that the negative associations between openness to experience and agreeableness and voting for the Swiss People's Party and the positive associations with conscientiousness and extraversion are only mediated to a minor extent by populist attitudes. Negative attitudes towards immigration are a more important mediator. However, while their measure of populist attitudes taps into anti-elitism and belief in popular sovereignty, it does not capture belief in the virtue of ordinary people. Agreeableness and conscientiousness continue to have a significant effect even controlling for both populist and immigration attitudes.

A key moderator of the effects of personality traits is ideology: 'left-wing and right-wing populists are not the same, psychologically speaking' (Vasilopoulos & Jost, 2020, p. 1). This conclusion is based on a comparison of the effects of the Big Five on voting for Mélenchon and Le Pen in the 2017 French presidential election. Agreeableness and openness to experience correlated positively with voting for Mélenchon, but correlated negatively with voting for Le Pen; conscientiousness had the opposite effects. The authors suggest that these patterns reflect the differences between inclusionary (left-wing) and exclusionary (right-wing) populism when it comes to immigrants and other minority groups. However, this conclusion is undercut by Bakker et al.'s (2016, 2020) findings that agreeableness has a significant negative effect on support for populist parties on both the left

⁴ The authors were unable to examine the role of authoritarianism in explaining the relationships between the Big Five and support for the Dutch Freedom Party and the German Die Linke for lack of a measure.

⁵ For studies of the effect of populist attitudes on support for populist parties, see, for example, Akkerman et al. (2017); Van Hauwaert and van Kessel (2017).

and right. The German case is especially telling as there are two populist parties: people who scored low on agreeableness were attracted to *both* the right-wing AfD *and* the left-wing Die Linke (Bakker et al., 2020). Meanwhile, openness to experience was positively associated with support for Die Linke, negatively associated with support for the right-wing Tea Party in the United States, and unrelated to support for the right-wing Freedom Party (PVV) in the Netherlands (Bakker et al., 2016). Conversely, conscientiousness had a positive effect on support for the Tea Party and the PVV, but no effect on support for Die Linke. The effects of neuroticism and extraversion also varied. Clearly, more work is needed to determine whether there are consistent differences in the relationships between the Big Five and voting for left- versus right-wing populist parties.

One issue that has received insufficient attention is the measurement of these traits. Different studies use different measures, depending on the availability of data. Some use the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Bakker et al., 2016; Fatke 2019; Kappe, 2015); others use 10-item (Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016) or 15-item (Ackermann et al., 2018; Fatke, 2019) versions of the Big Five Inventory (BFI); still others employ the NEO-Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI; Ackermann et al., 2018; Schoen & Schumann, 2007) or the 50-item International Personality Pool-Five Factor Model (IPIP-FFM0; Bakker et al., 2016). This lack of standardisation is potentially consequential. Findings may differ across studies because the measures used were different. Moreover, because each trait is comprised of six facets, the associations with support for populist parties may vary depending on the particular facets that have been captured.

As with studies of the effects of emotions, experiments are needed to increase confidence in causal inferences and to be more confident

of the mechanisms linking the Big Five traits to support for populist parties. Bakker and his colleagues' (2020) conjoint experiment is a rare example of a study that can validate the proposed causal mechanism; namely, the susceptibility of people who score low on agreeableness to anti-establishment messages. Experiments could also advance understanding of how the political or economic context conditions the effects of personality traits (Bakker et al., 2016). Closer attention to the rhetoric employed by different populist parties is also needed in order to understand how changing emphases affect the relative importance of the different traits (Ackermann et al., 2018). Finally, the congruence model (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004) emphasises the importance of the fit between the voters' traits and the traits of party leaders, suggesting that we need to bring party leaders into the picture to gain a full understanding of the associations the Big Five traits have with populist support.

28.6 Conclusion

In sum, populism is a very fluid concept that political psychologists are struggling to distinguish from the study of radical right parties and radical right ideology, dissatisfaction with politics and distrust of elites, and a general anti-establishment sentiment. We have argued here that there are three dimensions of populist attitudes that capture the phenomenon in question when they are taken together: anti-elitism, people centrism, and Manichean world views. The comparative study of populist attitudes needs to be streamlined so that all versions of populism can be captured through the use of indicators tapping these three dimensions. Using voting for populist parties is another option, but this measure might hide the true potential for populism in the population. Thus, using both types of measure in conjunction is probably an ideal way to

proceed in the comparative analysis of populism from a psychological perspective.

Our brief analysis of socio-demographic predictors of populist attitudes and populist voting indicated that people are not enamoured with populism because of their social background characteristics. People's support for populist parties does not coincide with existing cleavages along economic, generational, or gender lines. Populism thus seems to be more of a psychological construct that has mostly psychological antecedents. We have identified two important ones here: emotions, particularly anger and anxiety, and some of the Big Five personality traits. But here, too, there seems to be no personality trait that affects voting for all types of populist parties. However, the uncertain findings are tainted by the use of different definitions of populism, problems in measurement, and contextual effects. We have proposed a more unified approach to studying populism. By relying on a core definition, a common set of measures and a more streamlined set of psychological determinants and by employing more experimental approaches, the field can gain a deeper understanding of the political psychology of populism.

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29 A Cultural Theory of Autocracy-vs-Democracy

On the Psychological Foundations of Political Regimes

Christian Welzel

Pessimism is too often treated as an indication of superior intellect.

Inspired by John Kenneth Galbraith

29.1 The New Democratic Gloom

In the face of surging authoritarianism seemingly everywhere in the world, media pundits and academics alike prophesise a groundbreaking erosion of democracy and its liberal principles (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). The resilience and revival of autocratic rule among major powers, most notably China and Russia, as well as recently amassing evidence of a worldwide democratic recession (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019; Mechkova et al., 2017), fuel a swelling pessimism about the future of democracy (Foa & Mounk, 2016, 2017). The new gloom magnifies older concerns about a lingering legitimacy crisis of democracy. These concerns have been simmering for a long time throughout Western democracies (Crozier et al., 1975; Habermas, 1984), which have all experienced the same worrisome trends. These include declining voter turnout, a weakening identification with established political parties, shrinking membership of churches, trade unions, and other voluntary associations, together with crumbling trust in key institutions, from the media to parliaments to government (Pharr & Putnam, 2000).

The alleged erosion of trust in institutions raises the strongest concerns. Observers fear that fading public trust will cause social unrest and bring extremist parties to power, which then hollow out and eventually abandon

democracy (Bellah et al., 1996). Signs of raging dissatisfaction with democracy, evident in recent anti-establishment riots like the *gilets jaunes* in France or PEGIDA in Germany, further amplify these worries.

However, a revisionist camp of scholars interprets the facts in a starkly contrasting manner (Dalton, 2004, 2013, 2018; Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Inglehart, 1997, 2018; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Norris, 1999, 2002, 2011; Welzel, 2013). Revisionists point out that the decline in public trust is by no means as uniform and sweeping as its advocates suggest. Next, revisionists do not consider low levels of public trust as such a bad thing to begin with. On the contrary, they see low trust as a source of vitalising impulses for democratic institutions. As the revisionists argue, a generational shift from authoritarian towards emancipative values has elevated the normative standards under which people judge the performance of democratic institutions, turning undemanding subjects into ‘critical citizens’ (Norris, 1999, 2011). Critical citizens feel more easily underwhelmed by the performance of their institutions, which is exactly what low trust figures show. Criticalness motivates people to raise their voice in public. The resulting rise in protest activity heightens the pressure on elites to listen to people’s demands (see also Chapter 31). As a consequence, the

institutions' accountability and responsiveness actually improve – not despite, but because of, low public trust and the related surge in civic protest.

From the revisionists' point of view, dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy in daily *practice* does not mean that people turn their backs to democracy as a *norm*. Indeed, revisionists cite evidence that – in spite of fluctuating dissatisfaction with the daily practice of democracy – support for democracy as the most desirable form of government has persisted on an almost unchangingly high level in all Western countries for decades. Furthermore, revisionists stress that a tectonic shift from authoritarian to emancipative values has strengthened people's commitment to the most fundamental principles of democracy, in particular, freedom of choice and equality of opportunities – the two pivotal values of Enlightenment philosophy (Alexander & Welzel, 2017; Norris, 2017; Voeten, 2017).

Recently, the debate is turning again in favour of the pessimists – and this time with a vengeance. Among the various voices within this gloomy turning, the recently stated 'deconsolidation thesis' challenges the revisionists' optimistic interpretation of democratic legitimacy most profoundly (Foa & Mounk, 2016, 2017). Proponents of the deconsolidation thesis claim that public support for democracy is in a worldwide decline, even among mature Western democracies. What seems to be particularly worrisome is that the decline is most pronounced among the younger generations. The pessimists also see the fading democratic passion among Western youth as the primary source of the swelling popularity of illiberal populism (see also Chapter 28). The pessimists warn that we are at the eve of a new dark era that will turn more people away from democracy and its liberal principles.

29.2 An Alternative Perspective

I object to the newly surging gloom in scholars' views of democracy. Specifically, I argue that the recent electoral success of illiberal populism in Western democracies results from the sudden mobilisation of a previously passive, but actually shrinking and increasingly cornered, electorate in left-behind segments of our societies. This electorate predominantly comprises 'old white men' with low education in traditional occupations who cling to authoritarian values within progressively emancipatory societies. The mobilisation of this voter segment reflects its members' raging anger about the majority's turn towards emancipatory ideals, from gender quotas to same-sex marriage to refugee aid, and the resulting liberal consent among the political establishment (Norris & Inglehart, 2019).

But despite the recent agitation of anti-liberal voter segments, concerns about an erosion of democracy's legitimacy among Western populations at large are mistaken. The reason is that generational replacement, together with expanding education, continues to fuel a glacial cultural shift from authoritarian to emancipative values. And rising emancipative values mean a strengthening, not a weakening, of democratic legitimacy in the deeper layers of public mentality. I flesh out these points in the following paragraphs. In the concluding section, I will engage in some informed speculation of how the coronavirus crisis (which is ongoing at the time of this writing) impacts on the rise of emancipative values.

29.3 Democracy's Inspiration

The key inspiration of democracy – the idea that people live in freedom and have an equal voice and vote in public affairs – is rooted firmly in the Enlightenment view of human nature. According to this view, all humans are

equipped with the faculty to think for themselves, make reasonable judgements, act with purpose, refine their views in deliberation with others, and tame their self-interest in light of the legitimate self-interest of their fellows. In cultures that breed these innate human qualities, democracy is the ideal order to provide the common good (Dahl, 1973; Held, 1997).

To be understood and appreciated, democracy needs a citizenry among which the belief in these Enlightenment values is solidly encultured. Where these values are underdeveloped, democracy might be sustained by exceptionally benevolent elites. But relying on benevolent elites is a naive bet on democracy. A merely elite-sustained democracy has no defence when autocratic temptations corrupt the elites' democratic commitment. In fact, this is what the current resurgence of authoritarianism demonstrates in a number of backsliding democracies.

Since the Washington Consensus in the early 1980s, a steep increase in Western-funded democracy promotion, combined with the conditioning of international financial aid on electoral accountability, reshaped the incentive structure of the international system. Indeed, the elites in many countries felt tempted to introduce free elections and democratic constitutions (Yilmaz, 2019). The ensuing regional waves of democratisation affected many countries such that large population segments now lack an intrinsic appreciation of democracy's Enlightenment values. Seemingly widespread support for democracy all over the world is only masking the fact that the apparent avowal of the word 'democracy' often lacks a firm foundation in values (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019; Kruse et al., 2019). In countries where this lack of a profound value base is endemic, seeming support for democracy coexists – not surprisingly – with severe misunderstandings of what democracy actually means (Kirsch &

Welzel, 2019; Kruse et al., 2019). These are also the countries where democracy recedes under the surge of illiberal populism.

In the European Union (EU), Romania, Hungary, and Poland are cases in point. During the accession to the EU in the 1990s, the governments of these countries institutionalised democracy at a higher level than the values of the respective populations support (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Populist leaders intuitively recognise such regime-culture misfits, capitalise on them in their campaigns, win elections this way, and eventually cut back on democracy's liberal qualities. Viktor Orbán's propagation of 'illiberal democracy' is paradigmatic. One might actually conclude that the world has, in a sense, become 'over-democratic' during the apex of the Third Wave and is now experiencing a 'regression to the mean' (Welzel & Inglehart, 2019).

29.4 Democracy's Culture-Bound Ascension

Since the 1960s, the world as a whole has become gradually more democratic through two trends: (1) a continuous rise of democratic standards among Western countries and (2) a sequence of regional waves of democratisation into non-Western countries, interspersed by intermittent reversals. As of now, the world is still at a historic record level of democracy, although a mild recent backsliding to lower levels of democracy is apparent in most regions (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019). The key question is whether this backsliding will turn out to be a temporary intermission of the long-term trend or whether it will reverse the ascending democratic trajectory altogether.

I argue that greater awareness of democracy's cultural anchors helps us to answer this critical question with a greater sense of realism. These cultural anchors reveal themselves

when we recognise the element of continuity that endures throughout all the democratic up- and downswings of recent decades. Mainstream scholarship is altogether negligent about this element of continuity, so it is overdue to pinpoint it.

Since the end of the Second World War, the global variation in autocracy-vs-democracy has mapped astoundingly tightly on the countries' belongingness to Western and non-Western culture zones. In fact, the tightness of this cultural mapping is a temporal constant that accounts for a striking 70% of the global variation in autocracy-vs-democracy – in *any* given year from 1960 until 2016 (Figure 29.1). This element of continuity indicates that, throughout all the various trending patterns, we always find countries from Western cultures at the forefront of democracy. In other words, the global average in democracy continued to rise constantly, but the highest levels of democracy nevertheless remained in the West – at any point in time.

The cultural essence that underlies the Western/non-Western distinction is a dimension of moral values that I call *authoritarian-vs-emancipative* values (Welzel, 2013). Indeed, fully 55% of all the cultural differences between the Western and non-Western world¹ boil down to differences over authoritarian-vs-emancipative values (Figure 29.2). In light of this evidence, widespread emphasis on emancipative values turns out to be the signature feature of Western culture.

Emancipative values combine a libertarian emphasis on freedom of choice with an egalitarian emphasis on equality of opportunities.² Emancipative values in this understanding reflect the origin of liberal democracy in Enlightenment thought. These values do not express a superficial endorsement of the catchword democracy; instead, they reflect a principled and psychologically deeply grounded appreciation of democracy's key ethical

principles. That is why the spread of emancipative values in a population has way more predictive power over the countries' actual level of democracy than is true for the percentage of people who report that they support democracy.³

29.5 The Rise of Emancipative Values

Originally a domain of liberal philosophers, emancipative values began to spread into wider population segments when mass-scale economic progress profoundly improved the living conditions of ordinary people, giving people access to previously unknown goods, services, and opportunities, as well as the prospect of upward social mobility through education. Taken together, these increasingly

¹ Underlying the statistics is the historically grounded scheme of global cultural zones by Welzel (2013) and its refined version by Brunkert et al. (2019).

² Using World Values Survey data from about 100 countries around the world, emancipative values combine responses to a total of 12 questions to measure people's support for equal freedoms. The measurement is explained in detail by Welzel (2013). There is a dispute about the measurement equivalence of emancipative values (Alemán & Woods, 2016; Sokolov, 2018). These authors claim that emancipative values do not measure the same concept across countries because the constituent items show different factor loadings in different countries. Two publications object this claim: 'Misconceptions of Measurement Equivalence' (Welzel & Inglehart, 2016) and 'Measurement Equivalence?' (Welzel et al., 2019). In the latter, the authors demonstrate that functional equivalence allows different items to play the same role in different countries. For this reason, the variable factor loadings of the single items do not disturb the equivalent functioning of the items' summative index, which is evident in emancipative values' cross-country predictive powers over many variables of substantive interest.

³ In fact, under control of emancipative values, support for democracy has actually no predictive power at all over the countries' actual levels of democracy (see Welzel & Inglehart, 2019).

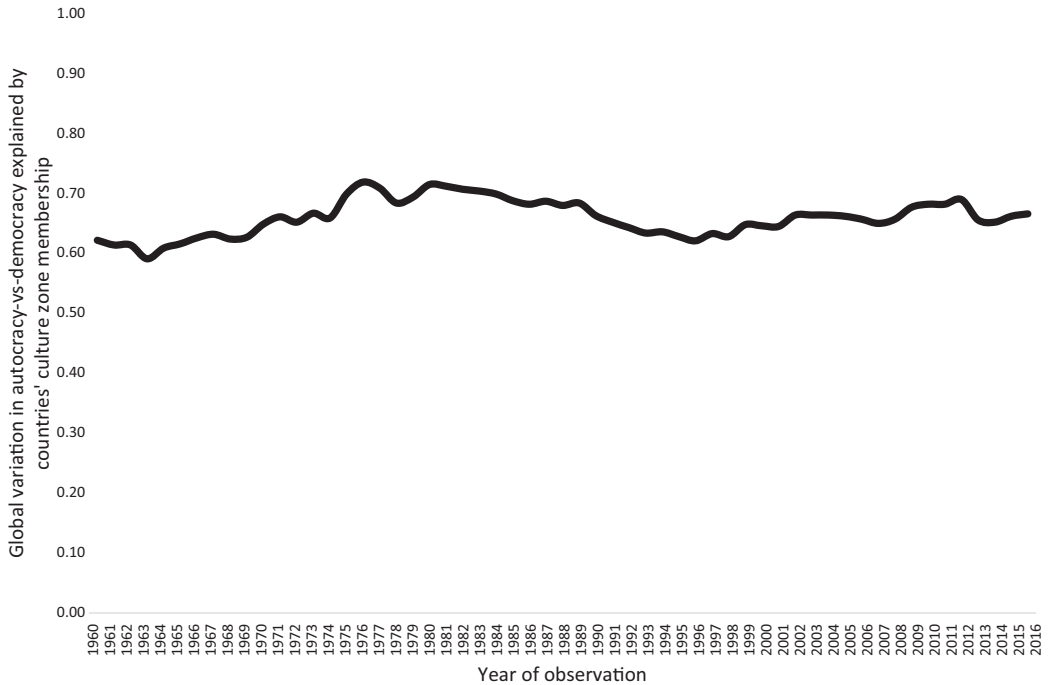


Figure 29.1 Temporal constancy in the global variation in autocracy-vs-democracy due to the countries' culture zone membership

Note: Data are from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project (www.v-dem.net) and cover 175 countries. Countries are attributed to culture zones due to Welzel's (2013) historically grounded culture zone scheme. Autocracy-vs-democracy is the product of V-Dem's electoral, participatory, and liberal component, as explained by Brunkert et al. (2019). To calculate culture zone averages in autocracy-vs-democracy countries are weighted proportional to the size of their national population. *Source:* Welzel (2021, Fig. 1), by permission of the author

enabling living conditions enhanced people's agency in taking their lives into their own hands, planning for themselves and making their own judgements. Once people learn to think for themselves, their need for doctrinal guidance in what to believe and to do fades; they no longer want to be told what decisions to make and what actions to take. In that moment, people find inherent appeal in emancipative values (Welzel & Inglehart, 2019).

In this Enlightenment moment, a drive towards liberation from domination of one's thoughts and actions rises from dormancy. This awakening is a natural response of the human mind to increasingly enabling living

conditions. For this reason, no ideological programme and no orchestrated strategy is needed to enculture emancipative values once people experience enabling living conditions (Welzel & Inglehart, 2019). In other words, emancipative values are not the result of a top-down fabricated ideology; they evolve naturally from bottom-up processes under the respective living conditions – no matter if those in power want it to happen or not.

For several decades, rising living standards, falling mortalities, and declining fertility rates, as well as expanding education and progressing female empowerment, transformed existential conditions into enabling environments

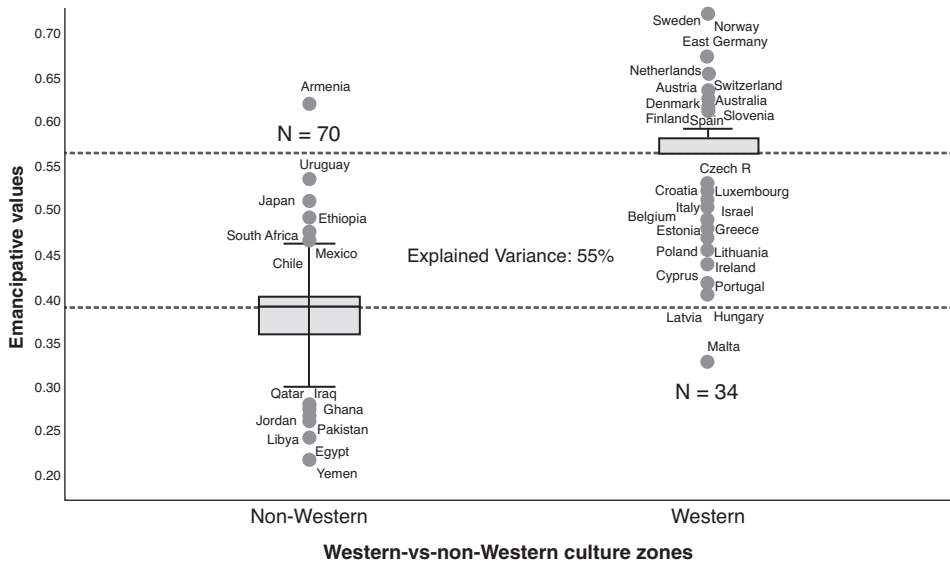


Figure 29.2 The Western/non-Western divide over emancipative values

Note: Data are from the World Values Survey (WVS; www.worldvaluessurvey.org; see Haerpfer et al., 2018), using the most recent survey from each country to measure emancipative values. Countries are attributed to the Western and non-Western culture zones due to Welzel's (2013) historically grounded scheme. For the calculation of Western and non-Western means in emancipative values countries are weighted by population size.

in most parts of the world, thus placing more action resources into the hands of ordinary people. Only a shrinking number of trouble spots remain excluded from this generally progressive tendency (Goldstone & Diamond, 2020; Pinker, 2018; Rosling et al., 2018). Across the globe, action resources, emancipative values, and liberal democracy have been rising in baffling unison, promoting an encompassing trend towards human empowerment more broadly speaking (Figure 29.3). Consequently, emancipative values diffuse beyond the borders of Western culture and are now ascending through generational replacement across all of the globe's culture zones (Figure 29.4). True, widespread emphasis on emancipative values still remains a singularity of the West, yet the dynamic points to an almost ubiquitous rise of these values across the world.

29.6 Anti-democratic Scripts of Modernity

Since Russia's anti-Western turn and China's global outreach, the power structure of the international system is ceasing to operate as uniformly in favour of democracy as it used to in the period preceding and following the end of the Cold War (van den Bosch, 2020). With Russia and China, two superpowers are increasing their ability to propagate an anti-democratic script of modernity. Anti-democratic scripts of modernity were influential in the past when major industrial powers, like Nazi Germany and fascist Japan in the 1930s and the Soviet Union during the 1950s, seemed to pursue with great success a non-democratic course of modernisation.

Barrington Moore (1966) distinguished three paths into modernity and the democratic route

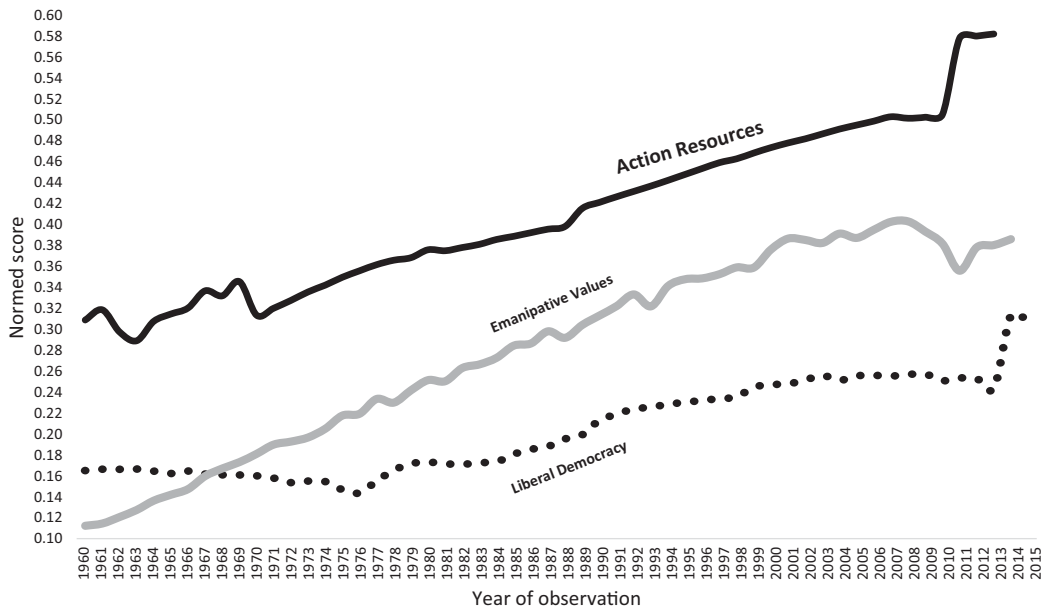


Figure 29.3 The global rise of the three ingredients of human empowerment

Note: ‘Action Resources’ and ‘Liberal Democracy’ cover all countries in the world with available data, with varying numbers of observations depending on observation years. ‘Emancipative Values’ are limited to the roughly 100 countries covered by the European Value Study (EVS)/WVS, using cohort-based back-in-time estimations as explained in Welzel and Inglehart (2019). All data are weighted by the countries’ population size. Accordingly, trends reflect more what happened in the bigger than in the smaller populations – thus reflecting the state of humanity. ‘Action Resources’ are a composite measure of economic prosperity, life expectancy, academic education, income equality, and inverse fertility based on World Bank and United Nations Development Programme indicators. ‘Emancipative Values’ measure support for universal freedoms from survey items in the EVS/WVS. ‘Liberal Democracy’ measures the combination of liberal, electoral, and participatory democracy components from V-Dem. All three measures are explained in Welzel and Inglehart (2019)

was just one of them, next to fascism and communism. While fascism and communism have been deselected from history, we now see populist authoritarianism compete with liberal democracy for the better version of modernity. Today, Russia and China are the leading advocates of the anti-democratic script of modernity. Nevertheless, the idea is the same: societies that lack the West’s cultural imprint from the Enlightenment can pick from the modernisation package those parts that their rulers find appealing, like technological progress and military prowess, while avoiding the disliked

emancipatory consequences known from the West, most notably, liberal democracy.

Fascist and communist versions of the anti-democratic script did not prevail. Available evidence suggests that the contemporary versions of the anti-democratic script will not prevail either. The reason is that living conditions continue to become more enabling in most places of the world; and this enabling fosters emancipative values – irrespective of a culture’s particular traditions (Cho, 2014). This rise is a force of nature that even the most potent autocrats cannot stop.

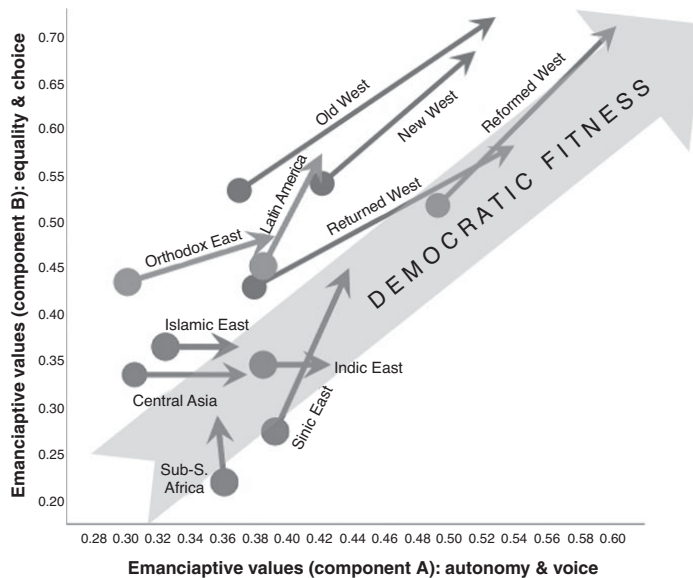


Figure 29.4 The generational rise of emancipative values by global culture zones

Note: Direction of arrows points from the value position of the oldest cohort in a culture zone to that of the youngest one, using the most recent survey per country. Respondents of each country are weighted by the share of their population in the total population of their respective culture zone. For the Sinic East this means that the values of the Chinese influence the culture zone average about 10 times as strongly as the values of the Japanese. Culture zone schema from Welzel (2013)

29.7 The Selective Force in Global Regime Evolution

Emancipative values are on a long-term rise and have evolved to ever new frontiers, with same-sex marriage and animal rights among the more recent extensions. Despite this ascending dynamic, the correlation between democracy and emancipative values is a temporal constant, exhibiting a persistently tight connection throughout the past decades (Figure 29.5). This evidence indicates that, despite democracy's recurrent up- and downswings, we always find those countries at the forefront of democracy whose populations most firmly enculture emancipative values.

Global regime dynamics in autocracy-vs-democracy exhibit an intriguing simultaneity. On the one hand, democracy oscillates in recurrent cycles along an ascending trajectory. On the other hand, steadily rising emancipative values correlate with democracy at constant strength throughout all of democracy's cycles. This simultaneity can only exist because a twofold regularity in global regime dynamics prevails: (1) during democratic upswings, countries with more widespread emancipative values are *more* likely to follow the trend and make shifts towards democracy; (2) during democratic downswings, countries with more widespread emancipative values are *less* likely to follow the trend and withstand

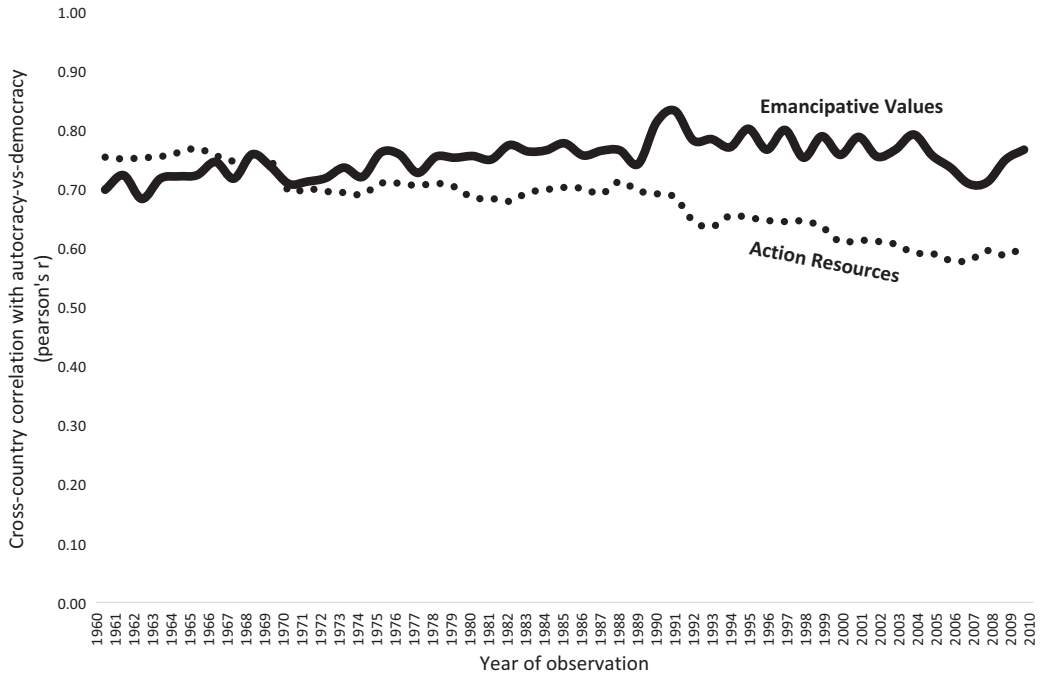


Figure 29.5 Autocracy-democracy's constant tightness to emancipative values

Note: Data for democracy are from the V-Dem project, using the product of V-Dem's electoral, participatory, and liberal components, as explained by Brunkert et al. (2019). 'Action Resources' comprise the populations' material, cognitive, and connective resources, while 'Emancipative Values' indicate their emphasis on universal freedoms. Both are estimated as explained in Welzel and Inglehart (2018). Country coverage for 'Action Resources' varies from 150 cases in 1960 to 162 cases in 2010. Country coverage for 'Emancipative Values' is constantly 94 cases worldwide, which represents more than 90% of the global population.

shifts away from democracy. Hence, the dynamic of emancipative values is the decisive selective force in the global evolution of political regimes.

29.8 Debunking the Deconsolidation Thesis

These insights contradict the thesis that democracy's cultural foundation is in a process of deconsolidation. The deconsolidation thesis is most profoundly mistaken in its portrayal of intergenerational cultural change. Its advocates propagate that mass support for democracy is in decline all around the world, including most

notably long-established democracies, and that it is the younger generations in particular who turn their back on democracy.

None of these claims are tenable, however. Mass support for democracy increased in more countries than it declined, and most of these changes vary within negligible percentage ranges (Figure 29.6). Worldwide, mass support for democracy remains stable on a very high base level (Alexander & Welzel, 2017; Norris, 2017; Voeten, 2017).

More importantly, lip service to democracy as documented in surveys is an altogether inconclusive indicator of a culture's fitness for democracy. The reason is that overt

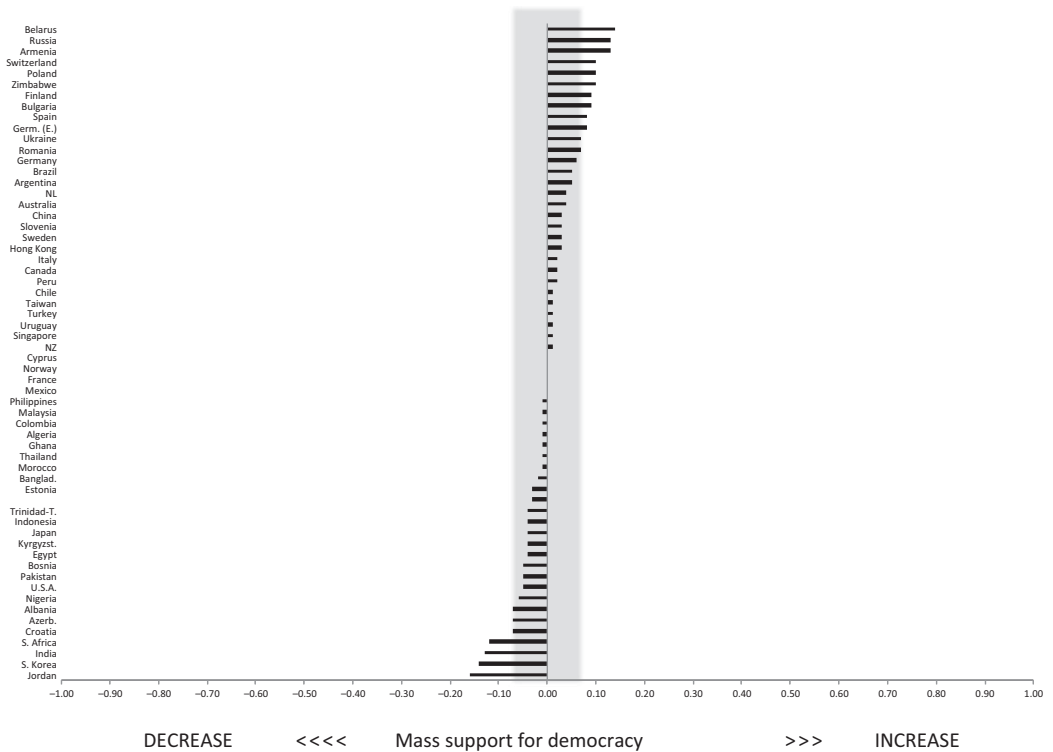


Figure 29.6 Changes in mass support for democracy from the earliest to the latest observation per country

Note: Data are from the WVS; see Haerpfer et al. (2018)

support for democracy obscures deeply encultured differences in how people understand democracy. Some of these understandings are actually so strongly twisted into an authoritarian direction that the meaning of support for democracy reverts into its own negation – support for autocratic rule, that is. Where this is the case, people systematically mistake autocratic regime characteristics for democratic ones. Consequently, autocracy is likely to prevail or to be revived in precisely these places (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019; Kruse et al., 2019).

Authoritarian propaganda deliberately nourishes these misperceptions. As a matter of fact, most autocracies portray themselves as democracies, thus hijacking the term for their ideologically motivated redefinitions.

The usual indoctrination denigrates Western democracies as overly liberal perversions of ‘true’ democracy, which is then presented as a form of ‘guardianship’ by which ‘wise’ rulers govern in people’s best interests. In return for such ‘enlightened’ governance, the citizens owe their rulers obedience.⁴ Schools, the media, and other institutions under government control all disseminate those guardianship narratives, which vary from culture to culture in attire, but not in content. Accordingly, data from the WVS exhibit an astoundingly large percentage of people who understand

⁴ One of the WVS items actually phrases the meaning of democracy as ‘people obey their rulers’ and this notion of democracy finds astoundingly high levels of support in non-Western cultures.

democracy as ‘people obey their rulers’ (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019).

In the absence of emancipative values, people lack the moral stature to resist authoritarian propaganda. Therefore, autocrats have a vested interest in preventing emancipative values from surfacing (Brown, 2001; Márquez, 2017). To achieve this end, autocrats breed national identity cults that describe a collective destiny in explicit opposition to the West’s liberal values. Anti-Western identity cults create modern forms of tribalism that de-individuate people to turn them into blind followers (Popper, 1945). In China, Russia, Turkey, Venezuela, and other places where illiberal forces are in power, we witness these indoctrinations on a daily basis. By emphasizing their nations’ non-Western destiny, autocrats hope to erect a psychological shield against the intrusion of emancipative values, which are portrayed as genuinely Western – hence, alien to the domestic culture and to be refuted for precisely this reason.

The key question, however, is whether dictators can always brainwash people as much as they wish. If they could, a dictatorship – once in place – would be able to perpetuate itself endlessly. As plausible as this scenario might seem in the face of the current resurgence of authoritarianism, mass upheavals in the past have overthrown autocracies repeatedly and with increasing frequency, most of the time with a surprising vengeance that even the most knowledgeable experts did not see coming (Chenoweth & Cunningham, 2013). In a nutshell, the manipulative power of authoritarian indoctrination is not limitless. Leadership cults and their collectivist identity frames might decelerate modernisation’s emancipatory impulse, but they cannot completely block it: the link between emancipative values and enabling living conditions remained strong throughout the last half-century and there are no signs that this natural link will vanish (Welzel, 2020).

When emancipative values spread, misunderstandings of democracy as obedience to rulers recede across all types of regime (Figure 29.7). In line with this observation, misunderstandings of democracy as obedience to rulers have been increasing among people with weak emancipative values. Among people with strong emancipative values, to the contrary, such authoritarian misunderstandings of democracy have been receding (Figure 29.8). This evidence reinforces the conclusion that strong emancipative values provide the most powerful antidote to authoritarian redefinitions of democracy.

29.9 Flipping the Generational Story

From the viewpoint of emancipative values, the generational story advocated by proponents of the deconsolidation thesis needs to be turned upside down. Among the publics of mature Western democracies, the decisive generational dynamic is not a decline in the younger cohorts’ support for democracy, but rather, a massive generational shift in the moral type of democracy supporter. Indeed, rising emancipative values have replaced the dominance of illiberal democracy supporters among older generations with a dominance of liberal supporters among young generations (Alexander & Welzel, 2017).

This remarkable generational change is important, for it has an inherently logical consequence: democracy’s liberal qualities are more firmly institutionalised among populations with larger proportions of liberally oriented democracy supporters. Vice versa, the liberal elements of democracy are deficient or altogether absent where illiberal democracy supporters prevail (Alexander & Welzel, 2017). Hence, what matters is not the *amount* of democracy support in a society, but rather, the prevalence of a liberal *type* of democracy supporter. And generational change brings the

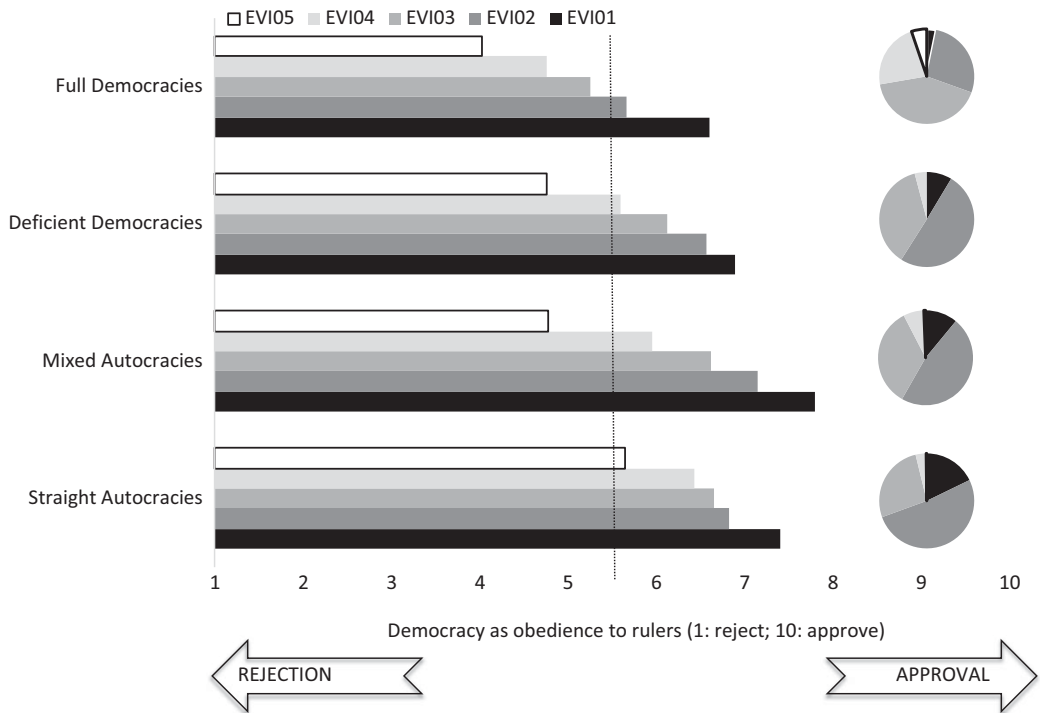


Figure 29.7 Misunderstandings of democracy as ‘obedience to rulers’, by emancipative values and regime type

Note: Data are from the WVS; see Haerpfer et al. (2018). The Emancipative Values Index (EVI) varies from 0 to 1. ‘EVI01’: people scoring 0–0.20 on emancipative values. ‘EVI02’: people scoring 0.20–0.40 on emancipative values. ‘EVI03’: people scoring 0.40–0.60 on emancipative values. ‘EVI04’: people scoring 0.60–0.80 on emancipative values. ‘EVI05’: people scoring 0.80–1 on emancipative values. ‘Straight Autocracies’: countries scoring 0–0.25 on autocracy-vs-democracy. ‘Mixed Autocracies’: countries scoring 0.25–0.50 on autocracy-vs-democracy. ‘Deficient Democracies’: countries scoring 0.50–0.75 on autocracy-vs-democracy. ‘Full Democracies’: countries scoring 0.75–1 on autocracy-vs-democracy. ‘Autocracy-vs-Democracy’ uses Brunkert et al.’s (2019) measure of ‘comprehensive democracy’ based on V-Dem.

liberal type of democracy supporter to dominance (Alexander & Welzel, 2017). In flat contradiction to the deconsolidation thesis, the ongoing generational change in mentalities operates in favour, not in disfavour, of the legitimacy of democracy.

29.10 Trajectories and Cycles

Over the last 120 years, democracy has been progressing in recurrent cycles along an

ascending long-term trajectory. This combination of trajectories and cycles in regime dynamics reflects a similar dynamic in psychological orientations. Here, the trajectory is characterised by a long-term generational rise of liberal-emancipative values that is visible all over the world, albeit at different intercepts and slopes. But there are also liberal-vs-illiberal mood swings in public attitudes that follow a cyclical pattern. For some time now, we have faced an illiberal cycle visible within a

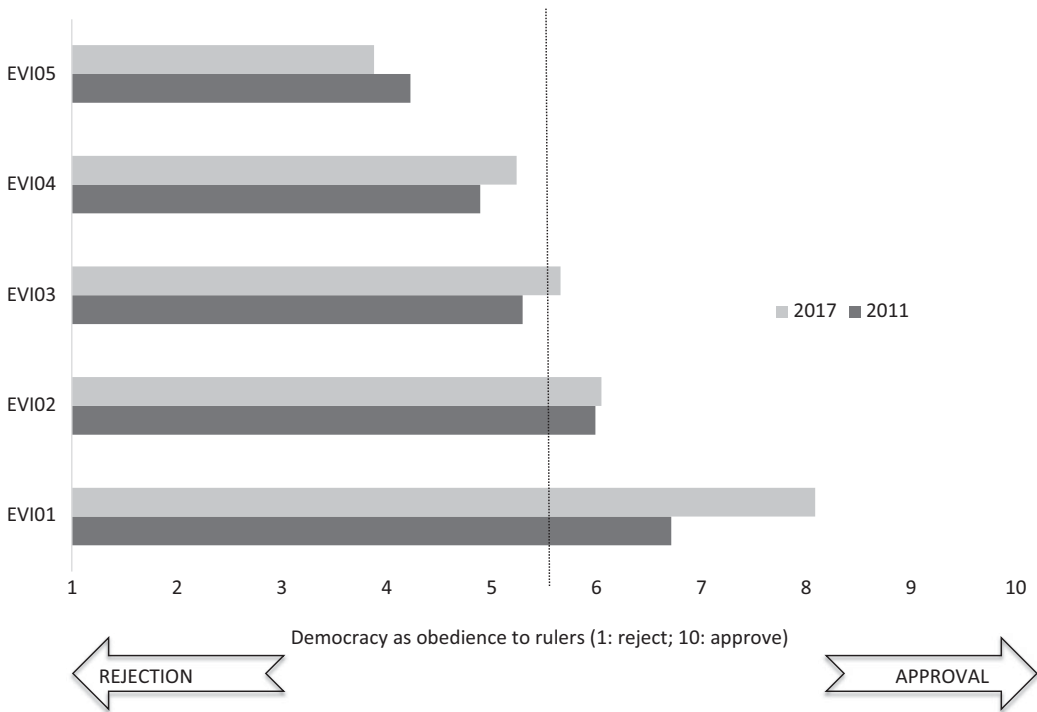


Figure 29.8 Misunderstandings of democracy as ‘obedience to rulers’, by emancipative values and over time

Note: Data are from the WVS; see Haerpfer et al. (2018). EVI varies from 0 to 1. ‘EVI01’: people scoring 0–0.20 on emancipative values. ‘EVI02’: people scoring 0.20–0.40 on emancipative values. ‘EVI03’: people scoring 0.40–0.60 on emancipative values. ‘EVI04’: people scoring 0.60–0.80 on emancipative values. ‘EVI05’: people scoring 0.80–1 on emancipative values.

global rise of strong leader support. And even though emancipative values continue to depress people’s strong leader support, this support has increased throughout all levels of emancipative values – except the very highest level at which we see a decrease (Figure 29.8). What is more, new evidence shows that these liberal-vs-illiberal mood swings drive corresponding cycles in liberal-vs-illiberal regime dynamics, following a thermostatic model (Claassen, 2019). Right now, we face an illiberal cycle in both policy moods and regime dynamics (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019).

Due to the thermostatic model, publics transit from a more liberal into a less liberal mood in response to a liberal policy shift when they

begin to feel that the liberal shift is going too far. This mood swing manifests itself in electoral results, bringing illiberal parties into power who then devise an illiberal policy shift – until the electorate starts again to feel that this is enough, thus transitioning into the next liberal mood swing.

Due to this model, the current illiberal mood swing is not durable and will revert to a liberal mood again. If so, the momentary illiberal zeitgeist is a temporary phenomenon and not the beginning of a long-term democratic downturn that will reverse the centennial ascension of democracy. This conclusion is reinforced by our observation that illiberal mood swings happen along a long-term liberal

ascension driven by the almost ubiquitous generational rise of emancipative values.

29.11 A Cultural Theory of Autocracy-vs-Democracy

What explains the tight link between emancipative values and liberal democracy and its constant strength over time (Brunkert et al., 2019)? In answering this question, I propose a cultural theory of autocracy-vs-democracy. This theory conceptualises the relationship between emancipative values and democratic institutions as a supply-demand link with respect to freedoms. In this relationship, democratic institutions constitute the supply of freedoms, while emancipative values constitute the demand for them. While values change continuously, albeit slowly, through generational replacement, institutions change through rare but incisive ruptures, like revolutions, coup d'états, or invasions. Hence, a co-evolutionary dynamic between these two differently paced processes follows a tectonic tension-release logic: incrementally rising demands for freedom build up an accruing tension with frozen supply levels, until this tension releases through a sudden regime change that brings the supplies back into equilibrium with the demands. Accordingly, the direction and scope of regime change operate as a correction to the supply's once accrued misfit to the demand. This model implies three regularities:

- (1) Where the supply of freedoms falls short of the demand, an occurring regime change shifts the supply *upward*. In this case, we observe democratisation.
- (2) Where the supply of freedoms exceeds the demand, an occurring regime change shifts the supply *downward*. In this scenario, we witness autocratisation.
- (3) Where the supply of freedoms roughly fits the demand, no regime change occurs and

the supply stays in place. This is the case of regime stability, which can be either democratic or autocratic stability.

The evidence in Figure 29.9 confirms each of the three propositions. On the horizontal axis, one sees to what extent a country's supply of freedoms at the earliest year of observation underbid or overbid the population's demand in the same year. These regime-culture misfits then explain what we see on the vertical axis: the direction and extent of subsequent regime changes to the latest year of observation. Indeed, where regimes were too autocratic relative to the surrounding society's cultural values, democratisation happened and did so in approximate proportion to the regime's misfit to its embedding culture. Vice versa, where regimes were too democratic relative to the surrounding society's cultural values, autocratisation happened and did so in approximate proportion to the regime's misfit to its embedding culture. Likewise, neither democratisation nor autocratisation are observed where regimes roughly fit the culture of the society in which they are settled.

Logically, if this equilibrium mechanism is a constantly operating force, the link between emancipative values and liberal democracy remains tight at any point in time – no matter what direction the ebb and flow in autocracy-vs-democracy is rolling.

Of course, regime changes are always executed and sealed by elite-level actors. Given this truism, it is clear that the equilibrium mechanism shown in Figure 29.9 works for a particular reason: regime-culture misfits provide an opportunity for counter-elites to rise, to challenge the regime in public, and to mobilise popular support in favour of turning the regime into the *opposite direction* of its misfit to the culture. That is, a turn towards democracy when the regime is over-autocratic relative to its surrounding culture, and a turn

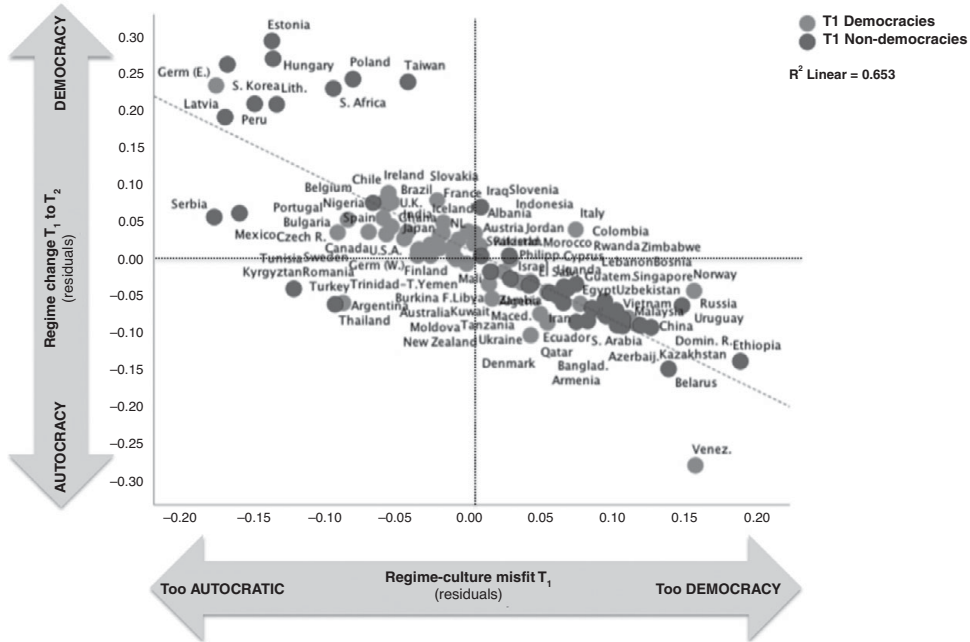


Figure 29.9 Regime change and stability in autocracy-vs-democracy as a function of glacially accrued regime-culture misfits

Note: Observations include all countries ($N = 98$) that have been surveyed at least twice by the EVs/WVS, focusing on the times of the earliest (T_1) and latest (T_2) survey. The mean time distance between T_1 (on average 1996) and T_2 (on average 2012) is 16 years. Measures on both axes are controlled for the variable time distance between T_1 and T_2 . Misfit scores on the horizontal axis are the residuals obtained from regressing a country's score on democracy on the population's mean score in emancipative values at T_1 . Change scores on the vertical axis show the change of a country's score on democracy from T_1 to T_2 . *Source:* Welzel (2020, Fig. 3.3), by permission of the author

towards autocracy when it is over-democratic relative to its cultural environment.

29.12 Conclusion

In essence, democracy is about freedoms – freedoms that entitle people to self-determine their private lives and to have a voice and vote in public life. In that very sense, democracy operates on our species' most highly evolved natural quality: human agency. On a mass scale, democracy in this understanding existed nowhere until the Industrial Revolution brought enabling living conditions to ordinary people. The

reason for democracy's tie to mass-level-enabling living conditions is straightforward: democracy is a demanding system that requires certain qualities from the publics among which it is practised. Specifically, ordinary people need to possess the resources that make them capable and to endorse the values that make them eager to practise the freedoms to which democracy entitles them. When people acquire the ability to practise freedoms, they naturally begin to value these freedoms, which is the moment when emancipative values evolve bottom-up.

The long-term democratic trend over the past 50 years reflects the fact that globally

progressing modernisation plays more action resources into the hands of ordinary people and that this enabling turn in living conditions gives rise to emancipative values. In perspective, these trends make modern mass publics more capable and eager to defend and demand freedoms. Since these groundbreaking empowering trends are spreading and accelerating, the long-term odds are tilted heavily in favour of democracy and against autocracy – despite the momentary democratic downturn. The prevalent generational profile in emancipative values reinforces this conclusion. By the same token, the countries' vulnerability to the democratic downcycle varies with the differential prevalence of emancipative values in their populations.

These lines are written at a time when the coronavirus pandemic is in full swing and when the social consequences are still unclear. On a global scale, the coronavirus pandemic is the most incisive crisis of humanity since the Second World War. Except for times of war, governments around the world are enforcing lockdown measures that curtail people's democratic freedoms on an unprecedented scale. Politicians declare these restrictions as temporary, but the question is whether greed for power will tempt rulers to retain the concentration of competences in the executive that the current crisis has brought about. In the logic of this chapter's argument, the answer lies in how the pandemic affects the trajectory of emancipative values: should it slow down or revert the rise of these values, public moods will turn protective and increase support for authoritarian government. In this case, the prospects for liberal democracy are dire.

Conventional wisdom holds that existential threats do cause protective shifts in people's values, which turn them away from emancipatory ideals. But the threats for which this is known usually embody a group hostility, like in war, civil war, or terrorism when one group

tries to extinguish the other, or when immigrants are suspected of taking the natives' wives, jobs, and place in society (see also Chapter 21). The coronavirus pandemic, by contrast, is an anonymous threat that does not embody group hostilities, yet puts all of us in danger, independent of the usual group divisions. Therefore, the coronavirus crisis might not cause the xenophobic impulses that operate against emancipative values. Like the universal threat of global warming (see Chapter 34), the coronavirus pandemic might actually strengthen a general sense of humanity that lowers group hostilities. And the current curtailment of freedoms due to lockdown measures might strengthen people's appreciation of their democratic freedoms. In this scenario, the ascending trajectory of emancipative values would continue.

To study these possibilities, we are currently conducting a three-wave international panel study ('Values in Crisis' – VIC). Preliminary data from Germany and the UK suggest that greater concern about the consequences of the coronavirus crisis for one's close ones and the society writ large actually associate with stronger emancipative values. These results are, of course, premature. At any rate, there are clear reasons to believe that the prospects of democracy depend on the trajectory of emancipative values.

In conclusion, a proper understanding of democracy's cultural anchors informs a two-fold, albeit succinct, conclusion. Negatively expressed, the prospects of democracy are bleak where emancipative values remain weak. Positively turned, wherever emancipative values come to light, democracy shines bright.

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30 Psychological Theories Meet the Challenge of Persuading and Mobilising Voters

Donald P. Green and José S. Gomez

30.1 Introduction

Textbooks and summaries for general audiences abound with psychological principles of social influence and persuasion. A brief tour of catalogues and taxonomies includes Kellerman and Cole's (1994) list of 64 messaging strategies for getting others to comply with requests, which widened the scope of an earlier effort that generated 16 such strategies (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967). More familiar to most readers is the list of six principles of interpersonal influence assembled and popularised by Cialdini (1984, 2001). The how-to-be-influential literature continues to flourish in various forms, extolling the use of 'nudges' to influence policy-relevant behaviour (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) or the use of 'wise' interventions that leverage 'recursive' psychological theories of change to generate large effects from the accumulation of inputs (Walton, 2014).

One might surmise from the abundant literature that combines psychological research on persuasion and social influence that crafting effective persuasive and influential appeals is not only feasible, but can be done fairly reliably with appropriate guidance from the relevant theories. Those who write for popular audiences are unstinting in their use of examples and applications, ranging from coaching to negotiations to marketing. One recurrent example, and the focus of the present chapter, is electoral politics. Political campaigns seek to raise money, recruit volunteers,

persuade people to support their cause, and get their supporters to cast ballots. Thus, the fit between the aims of a political campaign and the advice offered by 'compliance-gaining' psychological tactics seems perfect. And political campaigns are eager to use tactics that might give them a competitive edge.

The question for this chapter is whether the proffered psychological insights work in practice. Recent decades have seen an important development in the evaluation of campaign tactics: the widespread use of the randomised control trial (RCT), in which registered voters are randomly assigned to receive campaign communication or not. Hundreds of such trials have been conducted since the late 1990s, often on a grand scale and occasionally with an eye towards assessing the application of a psychological insight, such as the effects of self-prophecy. As we point out in this chapter, in many cases field tests of a psychological claim generate an estimated effect that is much smaller than the lab-based tests on which pioneering psychological articles were based. The implications of large-scale testing are profound, not only because of the guidance they offer for political campaigns, but also because of their implications for prominent psychological theories. Because psychologists seldom cite these RCTs and seem largely unaware of them, one function of this chapter is to call attention to some important empirical results.

Another function of this chapter is to raise awareness of just how small the effects of

recommended compliance-gaining techniques typically are. Effect sizes reported in widely cited examples are often vastly greater than what is typically observed in studies that employ these tactics in real-world settings. Some of the discrepancy may be due to the inevitable slippage in implementation that occurs when a psychological tactic is deployed in the real world, but discrepancies also arise when tactics are implemented without difficulty. A more likely culprit than implementation problems is what might be called 'legendary psychology': cherry-picked findings that are told and retold in ways that grossly exaggerate the probative value of the original data and research design. Field tests by independent teams of researchers (including those who were drawn to the topic because they were eager to confirm and harness the posited effect) reveal the unreliable way in which psychological knowledge about messaging and social influence is currently propagated.

The chapter is structured as follows. We begin by giving a brief overview of the causal questions that political campaigns seek to answer and a thumbnail sketch of the kinds of RCTs that are typically conducted. Next, we review the application and testing of psychological theories in two broad domains: voter mobilisation and voter persuasion. When reviewing the get-out-the-vote literature, we pay special attention to tests of light touch interventions that ostensibly produce large effects. When reviewing the persuasion literature, we emphasise propositions about the effects of different types of messages. With a few noteworthy exceptions involving injunctive social norms, most theory-guided interventions produce disappointing effects. We conclude by discussing what this means for the scope conditions of psychological theories and why more emphasis on scope conditions is needed when theory-inspired messages are recommended to practitioners.

30.2 Overview of Campaign-Related RCTs

The use of randomised trials to assess the efficacy of campaign tactics has a long history. An early example of such work was Gosnell's (1927) study of voter registration and turnout in Chicago during the 1924 and 1925 elections. Gosnell gathered the names, addresses, and background information of thousands of voting age adults living in various Chicago neighbourhoods. He then divided these neighbourhoods into blocks, assigning certain blocks to the treatment condition of his experiment, which consisted of a letter urging adults to register to vote. Tabulating the official registration and voting rates in his treatment and control groups enabled Gosnell to assess the effects of his intervention. Similarly, in 1935, Hartmann (1936) conducted a controlled experiment in Allentown, Pennsylvania, in which he distributed 10,000 leaflets bearing either 'rational' or 'emotional' appeals for the Socialist Party. Ballot returns showed Socialist voting to be somewhat more common in wards that received emotional leaflets. Eldersveld's (1956) study of voter mobilisation in the Ann Arbor elections of 1953 and 1954 built randomisation into the basic design of the Gosnell study. Assigning voters to receive phone calls, mail, or personal contact prior to Election Day, Eldersveld examined the effects of different types of appeals, both separately and in combination with one another.

The advent of survey research during the 1950s and 1960s, however, upstaged the use of field experimentation, and, according to a review by Green and Gerber (2002), only a handful of campaign-related experiments were conducted between 1954 and the mid-1990s. The revival of experimental evaluations began with Gerber and Green's (2000) large randomised evaluation of a non-partisan campaign to encourage voter turnout

in New Haven via mail, phone calls, and door-to-door canvassing.¹

The torrent of voter mobilisation studies that followed examined a variety of different tactics – email, social media messages, radio and TV advertisements, and lawn signs, to name a few. The most important feature of this literature is that several tactics have been studied extensively – so much so that meta-analyses produce extremely precise pooled estimates. For example, Green and Gerber (2019) report a meta-analysis of 104 distinct studies of the effects of direct mail, of which 49 involve non-partisan voting appeals that use no special psychological tactics – no social pressure, reminders of a past pledge to vote, or expressions of gratitude. The pooled random effects meta-analytic estimate is 0.30 percentage points, with a 95% interval ranging from 0.14 to 0.45 percentage points. In other words, if the control group votes at a rate of 50%, the treatment group sent one of these mailers would vote at a rate of 50.3%.² Another noteworthy fact is that such meta-analyses, regardless of the tactic being studied, rarely generate estimates that are larger than 7 percentage points, with most estimates falling in the range of 0 to 3 percentage points. Readers should bear these effect sizes

in mind when considering the reported effects described in this chapter.

Slower to develop was the literature on persuading voters to change which candidate or ballot measure they will vote for. The main impediment to these studies is the lack of inexpensive individual-level outcome measures. Unlike voter turnout, which is a matter of public record in the USA and several other countries, how people vote is typically secret (caucus voting is an exception). One way to circumvent this constraint is to randomly assign voting precincts rather than individual voters, but then the challenge is to muster sufficient resources to treat a large number of precincts. Another approach is to conduct an end-line survey with voters in the treatment and control groups, but surveys of this kind can be expensive. Moreover, given low response rates, it can be challenging to conduct an experiment of sufficient size to generate ample amounts of outcome data. One attractive approach is to create an online panel survey in advance of a field experiment, since post-treatment response rates among those who have previously completed a baseline survey tend to be quite high (Broockman et al., 2017). However, this method, though much more statistically efficient than most alternatives, is expensive, and the conclusions it renders are confined to the types of people who agree to participate in panel surveys.

Some combination of precinct-randomised and survey-based persuasion experiments currently account for more than 50 large-scale experiments. Many are programme evaluations of little interest to psychologists, but several specifically invoke psychological propositions such as source credibility (Shaw et al., 2012). In addition, several noteworthy persuasion experiments that are tangentially connected to political campaigns are of interest to psychologists insofar as they test theories about perspective-taking and perspective-giving (Kalla & Broockman, 2020).

¹ Like the Gosnell and Eldersveld experiments, the Gerber and Green study used public records to measure whether people voted. The main technical innovation of the Gerber and Green study was its method for addressing non-compliance – the failure to reach targeted voters by phone or at their doors. Whereas Eldersveld combined the control group with the uncontacted members of the treatment group, Gerber and Green analysed the treatment and control groups as assigned and estimated the average effects of the treatment among ‘compliers’ using the statistical procedure described by Angrist et al. (1996), which has since become standard.

² Sending larger numbers of mailers typically produces stronger effects, but effects diminish and seem to crest at five mailings. See Green and Zelizer (2017).

As RCTs have grown in number and sophistication, they have also become increasingly attractive to political entities outside academia, who have little incentive to pre-register the research or share the results publicly. Moreover, when non-academic groups do share results, they tend to do so selectively, which introduces the potential for bias in meta-analyses that use unregistered studies (Green & Gerber, 2016). The number of RCTs conducted outside of universities is growing rapidly and may be larger in number and scale than the corresponding set of academic studies.

30.3 Messaging and Voter Turnout

For decades, social psychologists, especially in the United States where turnout tends to be relatively low, have offered theory-inspired suggestions designed to get people to vote. In this section, we show a recurrent pattern by which theories are offered, shown to be promising, and then tested in the field. We begin with the noun/verb hypothesis: the proposition that it is more effective to encourage someone to ‘be a voter’ (noun) rather than ‘to vote’ (verb). Next, we consider two closely related propositions, one about ‘self-erasing errors of prediction’ (Sherman, 1980) and the other about ‘implementation intentions’. Third, we consider messages that invoke descriptive norms (Cialdini, 2007) by calling people’s attention to the rates at which others vote. Finally, we focus on prescriptive norms, which emphasise that voting is a civic obligation and that whether one lives up to this obligation is a source of pride or shame.

30.3.1 Be a Voter

One of the most intriguing messaging hypotheses concerns ‘noun wording’. The underlying theory, as summarised by Walton (2014), holds

that ‘Noun wording represents voting as an opportunity to become a valued kind of person – a “voter” – not an errand to be accomplished’ (p. 74). The sentinel study conducted by Bryan et al. (2011) presented eligible voters on the day before or the morning of an election with an internet survey. The election in question was the 2008 presidential election in Study 2 (N = 88) and the New Jersey gubernatorial election in Study 3 (N = 214). Participants in the treatment condition responded to a series of 10 survey items framed using nouns (e.g., ‘How important is it to you to be a voter in tomorrow’s election?’). Those assigned to the control condition encountered survey items that were framed using verbs (e.g., ‘How important is it to you to vote?’). The massive apparent treatment effect headlines the opening sentence for Walton’s (2014) review of practically useful theoretical innovations in psychology: ‘Citizens complete a survey the day before a major election; a change in the survey items’ grammatical structure increases turnout by 11 percentage points’ (p. 73).

Because the treatment is administered in the context of a survey, the intervention is more contrived than a typical campaign tactic, such as a phone call or piece of direct mail. But it is nevertheless interesting theoretically and practically, as vast numbers of voters respond to election surveys. The question is whether the sentinel study’s effects have held up when replicated in other contexts.

The first round of testing by another research group set in motion a debate about the robustness of the original result. Gerber, Huber, Biggers, and Hendry (2016a) used a phone survey (as opposed to an online survey) to administer the noun/verb primes to 4,468 registered voters within four days of state primary elections in 2014. Because the study differs from the original study in several ways – mode of administering the treatment, the electoral context, the subject pool (both in size and

composition), and the average length of time between the survey and the election – the authors acknowledge that their study may be read as an assessment of the generalisability of the original results (Gerber, Huber, Fang, & Reardon, 2016) rather than a true replication. As it turned out, the noun treatment group voted at a rate of 30.1%, as compared to 31.1% among the verb group. The estimated effect is –1 percentage point, and the top of the 95% confidence interval is just 1.8 percentage points. A variety of robustness checks, including restricting the analysis to only those who completed the survey the day before the election, suggest effects that are close to zero. Gerber et al. (2018) revisited the noun versus verb comparison in the context of reasonably competitive statewide elections in 2015, this time using online surveys to administer the treatments, as in the original Bryan et al. (2011) study. The study ($N = 3,078$) showed a weak positive effect of 0.7 percentage points; when the sample is restricted to those who responded on or the day before Election Day ($N = 1,566$), the estimate is 0.8 percentage points. Again, the top of the confidence interval is nowhere close to the estimates presented in Bryan et al. (2011).

In their rejoinder, Bryan et al. (2019) contend that Gerber et al. (Gerber, Huber, Biggers, & Hendry, 2016b; Gerber et al., 2018) failed to incorporate key ingredients of their original study in their replications, especially the restriction that subjects who have not yet voted be primed the day before elections. Their reanalysis of the Gerber et al. (2018) data suggests that the noun treatment has effects on the order of 3 percentage points when delivered one to two days before Election Day but no effect if delivered earlier than that (p. 25541). This rejoinder set in motion yet another round of replications (Gerber et al., 2019), this time in the context of the 2016 presidential election. Subjects

($N = 1,678$) were surveyed online the day before Election Day using the same noun versus verb protocol. The noun group voted at a rate that was slightly lower than the turnout rate of the verb group. The top of the 95% confidence interval is just 1.3 percentage points. To summarise, the initially reported results do not fall within the 95% confidence intervals of any of the three follow-up studies, and a meta-analysis of all three studies combined (focusing solely on those who were surveyed the day before Election Day) is close to zero.

30.3.2 Self-Prophecy and Implementation Intentions

Both the theory of ‘self-prophecy’ (Greenwald et al., 1987) and the theory of ‘implementation intentions’ (Gollwitzer, 1999) hypothesise that the trajectory of an individual’s behaviour can be altered by inducing the individual to state that they will take a certain action. Both theories have been used to promote voter turnout.

When asked to predict whether they expect to undertake some desirable action, such as voting, people frequently say they will. According to Sherman (1980), inducing individuals to predict their behaviour creates a sense of obligation to follow through, which then leads to a higher level of adherence to the predicted course of action. Would asking individuals if they expected to vote, a question that is overwhelmingly answered in the affirmative, raise turnout?

The ‘self-prophecy effect’ was first applied to voting behaviour by Greenwald and colleagues (1987). Prior to the 1984 presidential election, several dozen college students were phoned and asked questions about the upcoming election. They found that the incremental effect of adding an item that asked subjects to predict their participation in the election increased their voting rate by a remarkable

23 percentage points. Subsequent studies were much less supportive. When the same experiment was repeated by the original authors in a 1986 senate election and a 1987 state primary, they found little effect. A replication study by Smith et al. (2003), which was approximately 10 times the size of the original Greenwald et al. study, tested the self-prophecy hypothesis in advance of the 2000 presidential primary. They compared the turnout of subjects asked if they knew where and when to vote with those asked these questions and whether they expected to vote on Tuesday; the incremental effect of the self-prophecy treatment was -0.1 percentage points. Cho (2008) replicated this experiment on a larger scale during the 2008 presidential primary and found a 2.2-percentage-point turnout increase. A large study by Nickerson and Rogers (2010), also conducted during the 2008 presidential primary, found a 2-percentage-point effect. Although the effect of self-prophecy found in each of these three follow-up studies was not statistically significant, pooling these findings together suggests that self-prophecy might produce a small boost in turnout, although nothing close to the finding reported in the sentinel study.

A similar theoretical proposition is the implementation intentions hypothesis, which posits that getting a person to state a goal and then to elaborate the steps necessary to achieve that goal makes accomplishing the goal more likely. The process of imagining the process by which goals will be achieved makes the steps required more salient and illuminates the path for successful goal-oriented action. A get-out-the-vote (GOTV) messaging strategy based on this theory supplements the self-prophecy item (do you expect to vote?) with follow-up questions about what subjects need to do to achieve their (now stated) intention to vote.

An early effort to test implementation intentions in a field setting was Nickerson and

Rogers (2010). Registered voters were asked if they intended to vote (85% said yes), and then randomly selected respondents were asked a series of questions about actions related to casting a ballot: Around what time do you expect you will head to the polls on Tuesday? Where do you expect to be coming from when you head to the polls on Tuesday? What do you think you will be doing before you head out to the polls? Notably, the implementation intentions script (which combines a standard GOTV message, an inquiry about intention to vote, and the implementation intentions questions) boosted turnout by 4.1 percentage points, and the incremental effect of the three implementation questions was 2.1 percentage points.

Several subsequent studies have investigated the effect of elaborating a voting plan. These include Cho (2008) and Gerber et al. (2015), who found negligible effects of an implementation intentions phone call script. Overall, scripts that evoke self-prophecy and implementation intentions appear to boost turnout, but their effects tend to be much smaller than suggested by the sentinel studies.

30.4 Descriptive Norms

Messages that stress descriptive norms call attention to what others do, with the implication that you should do likewise. Early experiments seemed to suggest the effectiveness of such messages for encouraging public-regarding behaviours, such as reusing towels in hotels (Goldstein et al., 2008). In the lead-up to an election, the statement, 'Everyone else is voting, and you should, too', suggests that you should conform to others' example, either because others know best or because there are personal advantages to following the crowd. Conversely, a statement of the form, 'Turnout is low, so we hope that you will vote', sends a mixed message; voting is encouraged,

but the descriptive norm is to abstain from voting.

An early study (Gerber & Rogers, 2009) seemed to confirm the descriptive norms hypothesis by showing that voting *intentions* are affected by information about whether turnout is likely to be high or low. Subsequent studies have gauged the effects of such information on subjects' actual turnout. Panagopoulos et al. (2014) presented voters in a 2011 municipal election with mailers that conveyed different information about what others were likely to do. In the high turnout condition, the mailer included the wording, 'THE MAJORITY OF YOUR NEIGHBORS DO THEIR CIVIC DUTY. DO YOURS TOO.' Following this statement, individuals were told, 'TURNOUT IN YOUR COMMUNITY: 70%', in reference to turnout in the 2008 general election. In the low turnout condition, the wording was reversed: 'THE MAJORITY OF YOUR NEIGHBORS DO NOT DO THEIR CIVIC DUTY. BUT YOU SHOULD DO YOURS.' Following this statement, individuals were told, 'TURNOUT IN YOUR COMMUNITY: 35%', in reference to turnout in the 2006 election. Turnout was, however, unaffected by the descriptive norms treatments.

Another study by Murray and Matland (2014) presented parallel experiments conducted in Lubbock, Texas and Kenosha, Wisconsin. Mailers sent to subjects in the low descriptive norm condition included the following passage:

In the Lubbock city elections earlier this year, voter turnout was around 10%, among the lowest levels recorded in the past twenty years. While there are many opportunities to participate, millions of people in Texas never take advantage of these opportunities. Many experts are discouraged by how few voters they expect for the upcoming election. We encourage you to buck this trend among your fellow Lubbock citizens and vote on Tuesday, November 2nd.

By contrast, the high descriptive norm language expressed optimism:

In the General Election in Lubbock in 2008, voter turnout was over 70% of registered voters and among the highest levels recorded in the past twenty years. Throughout the country there has been a surge in voter participation. Many experts are encouraged by this trend and are expecting another large turnout in the upcoming election. We encourage you to join your fellow Lubbock citizens and vote on Tuesday, November 2nd.

The results were ambiguous. In Lubbock, the mailers were equally (in)effective regardless of whether they conveyed high or low norms or none at all. In Kenosha, the high norm language boosted turnout significantly, whereas the low norm language had no effect vis-à-vis an untreated control group.

Pooling these studies suggests that the effects of descriptive norms are rather limited (see also Gerber, Huber, Fang & Reardon, 2016), and scholars have even offered evidence suggesting that the perceived *lack* of participation by others may precipitate action (Hassell & Wyler, 2019).

30.5 Social Pressure to Adhere to Prescriptive Norms

Social pressure is exerted by praising those who uphold an injunctive social norm or by chastising those who violate them. The level of social pressure exerted can be varied by manipulating the intensity of the message or disclosing the individual's level of compliance with the norm. In the voter mobilisation literature, social pressure messages typically involve three components: exhorting the receiver to comply with the social norm that voting is a civic obligation, stating that the receiver's behaviour will be monitored, and warning that the receiver's compliance may be disclosed to others.

Field experiments that test the effects of social pressure date back to Gosnell's (1927) aforementioned study of voting in the 1924 election, in which he mailed Chicagoans a political cartoon depicting non-voters as unpatriotic 'slackers'. The idea of revealing to voters that their participation in elections will be monitored dates back at least to Gross et al. (1974), who tested its effects on voter turnout in college campus elections. Decades later, this line of inquiry was revived by Gerber et al. (2008), whose experimental study of social pressure sparked a series of follow-up experiments that shed light on the conditions under which social pressure's effects are large or small. We therefore begin with the Gerber et al. (2008) study and discuss how the interpretation of its results has evolved in the wake of subsequent research.

Set in the context of a low-salience 2006 primary election in Michigan, the Gerber et al. (2008) experiment involved five randomly assigned groups: a control group consisting of 100,000 households and four groups of 20,000 households apiece that received a single piece of mail. The first treatment group scolded non-voters in general and reminded recipients that voting is a civic duty. Voters in the second experimental group (the 'Hawthorne' condition) were told that they were part of a study that would monitor whether they voted, but would not contact them further. A third group received the 'Self' mailing, which indicated that voting is a matter of public record and presented an official-looking log of whether each member of the household voted in two recent elections. The fourth treatment group received the 'Neighbors' mailing, which included not only the voting records of those in the household, but also others living on the block. Both the Self and Neighbors mailing scolded non-voters and promised a follow-up mailing that updates the voting log with turnout records from the upcoming election.

Results showed that turnout increases steadily as social pressure mounts: the Self mailing increased turnout by more than 4 percentage points and the Neighbors mailing increased turnout by more than 8 percentage points. The latter result remains one of the strongest mobilisation effects observed in a large-scale randomised trial, an effect that continued to elevate turnout among recipients over several subsequent election cycles (Coppock & Green, 2016).

Because the Michigan study was conducted on a vast scale, the question is how well the results have held up over time as studies have employed social pressure tactics in different electoral contexts. The most widely replicated arm of the original study has been the Self mailer, with many variations attempting to soften its tone to minimise backlash and complaints. Gerber and Green (2017, table 5) summarise the results of seven large-scale replications conducted in elections in which the control group voted at rates ranging from 3.2% to 49.0%, as compared to 29.7% in the Michigan study. Four studies produce larger percentage increases in turnout than the Michigan study, while three produce smaller increases. However, a very large study conducted in a large number of states in the 2014 midterms found weaker (but significant) effects using a somewhat less confrontational mailing than in the Michigan study (Gerber et al., 2017). As for the Neighbors treatment, one (publicly available) study was conducted amid the very high salience gubernatorial recall election in Wisconsin in which turnout in the control group was 65.4%. The authors find an average treatment effect of just 1.0 percentage point, but this figure partly reflects the fact that more than 40% of the subject pool had more than a 90% probability of voting in the absence of treatment. Among those whose baseline propensities fell between 20% and 40%, the average treatment effect is 3.3

percentage points. This figure is much lower than the original Michigan finding, perhaps suggesting that the original findings reflected the low salience election context and a targeting strategy that focused primarily on voters with middling propensities to vote.

30.6 Discussion of Turnout Literature

The theory-inspired literatures described above show a recurrent pattern in which sentinel studies report effects much larger than the studies that attempt to replicate or extend them. In the case of the noun/verb literature, follow-up studies suggest either that there is no turnout effect, or that the scope conditions for obtaining effects are quite narrow. In other cases, replications suggest that there may be a glimmer of an effect (e.g., implementation intentions, descriptive norms), but perhaps not one that justifies designing message campaigns around the associated psychological theory. A partial exception is the turnout literature invoking prescriptive norms. Although the sentinel study's most remarkable finding (the strong effect of the Neighbors mailer) was not replicated in a high-salience election, the findings concerning the Self mailer hold up well in replications by other scholars studying low- and medium-salience elections. This pattern of results exposes a noteworthy gap in the literature, as noted by Rogers et al. (2017): there has yet to be a study in which the same pool of voters is randomly assigned to receive the same prescriptive norms encouragement either in a high-salience election or a low-salience election, so as to isolate the interaction between treatment and electoral context.

30.7 Persuasion Studies

Scholars and practitioners have also shown great interest in theory-driven strategies designed to change individuals' political

attitudes and vote preferences. In this section, we review a number of theories concerning individual susceptibility to persuasion. We begin with theories of source credibility, which imply that the messenger's identity can make the message more persuasive. Then, we consider the influence of individual-level traits on receptivity.

30.7.1 Endorsement

Studies of source credibility focus on the attitudes the message receiver holds towards a communicator, rather than the content of the communication. Hovland and Weiss (1951) argued that the agreeability of a statement would be influenced by an endorser's 'prestige'. In an experiment involving Yale undergraduate students, Hovland and Weiss found that individuals exposed to high credibility sources (such as medical journals) exhibited changes in their expressed opinions. Conversely, sources with low credibility (such as magazines) were largely unpersuasive. In the realm of electoral politics, endorsers are hypothesised to provide deeply influential cues about the ideological proximity of candidates to individuals (Jamieson & Hardy, 2009). The bulk of research following Hovland and Weiss (1951) on source credibility has been conducted in a similar fashion: (1) in lab settings where subjects, typically college students, are exposed to ideas advocated by individuals or organisations presumed 'credible' usually because they have expertise on a given issue and (2) using outcomes, such as stated support for candidates or issues, that are measured immediately following experimental stimuli. Despite the fact that these conditions seem to favour strong persuasion effects, studies find mixed results. Scholars report massive persuasive effects (Jackson & Darrow, 2005), null effects (Morin et al., 2012), and even backlash effects (Becker, 2012).

Field-based RCTs on this subject are relatively sparse, but they offer more consistent results that mostly show limited persuasive effects. Shaw et al. (2012) partnered with a sitting Republican governor with a high approval rating among his co-partisans in an effort to both mobilise and persuade Republican voters in favour of the governor's supreme court candidate vis-à-vis an automated phone message. The combination of high favourability and credibility held by the Republican governor seems to offer an extremely potent stimulus. The authors found neither substantively large nor statistically significant effects. While some reservations may be raised due to the impersonal nature of the intervention, other RCTs employing more personal tactics have not fared much better. Kalla and Broockman (2018) find large persuasive effects across two canvassing interventions when attitudes were measured immediately. In subsequent follow-ups, the authors find that these persuasive effects decay rapidly. Still, a sceptic might suggest that late endorsement appeals by organisations can galvanise supporters. However, in their meta-analyses of similar persuasive appeals, Kalla and Broockman (2018) find that not only do early persuasion effects decay rapidly, late persuasion efforts fail to generate any detectable effects in contexts where party cues guide voter choice.

Indeed, some persuasive campaigns have been found to be worse than ineffective. Nickerson (2007) partnered with a progressive political organisation in a canvassing effort on behalf of state legislative candidates but found that the intervention had a negligible effect on the vote preferences of Democrats as well as an unintended negative effect on independent voters. Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009) also found a backlash in their experimental study of a liberal group's canvassing efforts, which inadvertently persuaded Republicans to vote against the endorsed Democratic candidates.

Much of the literature on source credibility has found null results. However, there is one noteworthy exception. In 2010, Barton et al. (2014) organised a canvassing effort in partnership with a candidate running for local office. In this case, treated individuals were canvassed directly by the candidate. The authors found a massive 21-percentage-point boost in likelihood of support when canvassed personally by a candidate running for county legislature (Barton et al., 2014). Scholars have pointed out, however, that these results should be interpreted with caution as the standard errors associated with the estimates are large (Kalla & Broockman, 2018). Similar studies conducted in the United Kingdom (Foos, n.d.) and Italy (Cantoni & Pons, 2016) find far smaller effects.

30.7.2 Individual-Level Traits and Persuadability

A final collection of studies has focused on the moderating effects of individual-level characteristics on the effectiveness of persuasive appeals. Here, we focus on psychological characteristics, such as personality, and identity-based factors, such as race or ethnicity.

Personality

An individual's personality, defined as a 'multi-faceted, enduring psychological structure' through which individuals come to interact with the world (Mondak, 2010; see also Chapter 5), is thought to generate predictable responses to stimuli (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2011a; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, Dowling, et al., 2011). Although this literature has relied largely on observational research to study the link between personality and political attitudes or beliefs, recent studies have used experimental methods. Observational

studies highlight the associations between personality traits and various measures of political engagement and attitudes (Mondak, 2010; see also Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2011b for a review). The Big Five core personality traits – Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness to Experience – are increasingly used as co-variables that accentuate or diminish responsiveness to political communication.

For example, Gerber et al. (2013) studied the effect of various randomly assigned appeals emphasising social pressure, civic duty, or instrumental benefits on survey respondents' turnout intentions, conditional on personality traits. Their results indicate that mobilisation messages had heterogeneous treatment effects. For example, those scoring high on Extraversion were less susceptible to social pressure than those scoring low on that personality trait. Overall, however, the pattern of results does not suggest a high level of personality-driven heterogeneity in treatment effects. In some personality-message pairs, the authors find results inconsistent with their expectations; for example, those scoring high on Agreeableness, who were presumed to be receptive to messages emphasising altruistic and cooperative outcomes, proved not to be especially responsive to civic duty appeals.

Another field study to assess the moderating role of personality was conducted during the 2010 California midterm elections. Settle et al. (2017) randomly assigned registered voters to receive a postcard mobilisation treatment designed to induce an emotional response to the degree of political contention in the election. The authors tested whether subjects who were genetically predisposed towards negative affectivity (which encompasses the neuroticism trait of the Big Five) would be less likely to vote after treatment

exposure. The authors find no evidence that those predisposed towards negative affectivity responded to the mailers differently than other individuals.

While these studies reveal important insights into the fairly weak association between personality and responsiveness to communication, their emphasis on mobilisation leaves open the question of whether personality moderates the effects of issue- or candidate-centred attempts to persuade. The broader literature on persuasion indicates that such appeals are often ineffective (Kalla & Broockman, 2018), and the question is whether there is a meaningful portion of the population for whom the appeals have their intended effect. Presumably, this portion is small, given that the overall effect is so close to zero.

30.7.3 Need for Cognition

Scholars have also studied the potential influence of individual traits other than the Big Five, most notably the need for cognition (NFC). NFC is an individual's tendency to engage in effortful cognitive endeavours (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). This literature contends that those with NFC are more likely to evaluate arguments critically, although individuals with strong pre-existing beliefs may also be more resistant to counter-attitudinal information regardless of its quality. As a result, the link between NFC and the potential for persuasion is not straightforward. Arceneaux et al.'s (2013) study, comprised of two lab experiments, provides the best test to date of the association between need for cognition and persuasion. They find little evidence that individuals exposed to news that shares their ideological leaning become more resistant to opposing arguments. However, this literature awaits a field test that exposes subjects more naturalistically to political

messages and measures outcomes more unobtrusively days later.

30.7.4 Social Identities

An individual's self-identification may also structure their interactions with and perceptions of the world. Beyond signalling credibility, in-group members' appeals or symbols are considered persuasive because they activate the salience of an identity. A large literature examines the effects of racial primes, which lead people to place more weight on racial attitudes (Mendelberg, 2001), as well as their psychological group attachments or group interests (Fraga, 2018). Such priming is of special importance in the American context, where race has long played a central role in social cognition of political events (Chong & Junn, 2011; Dawson, 1995; see also Chapter 14).

However, here again we see a divergence between results obtained from survey experiments and those obtained from field experiments. The latter often produce surprisingly weak results. Trivedi (2005) tested the effect of identity-based GOTV appeals on Indian-Americans. Subjects in their study received mailers which emphasised either US citizens, people of colour, or Indian-Americans as a relevant group. Notably, turnout for those exposed to any of the mailers was 1.1 percentage points greater than for those who did not receive mailers, but the effect failed to reach statistical significance. The authors conclude that, 'identity-based appeals via direct mail are not effective enough on their own to produce large changes in voter turnout' (Trivedi, 2005, p. 121). Other studies have reported somewhat more upbeat results based on identity appeals to communities that have high 'identity strength' (Valenzuela & Michelson, 2016), but on

average identity-based appeals seem not to have special potency.

30.8 Discussion of the Persuasion and Messaging Literature

Although large-scale persuasion RCTs are less abundant than turnout RCTs, they too shed light on frequently adduced psychological theories. Perhaps the most interesting finding is that not only do persuasive messages tend to have weak effects (especially when outcomes are measured at least a day after treatment), but that these persuasive effects tend not to vary markedly across individuals. Coppock et al. (2020) drive home this latter point by using an array of survey experiments to show that persuasive treatment effects are strikingly homogenous across individuals, even among those who identify with different political parties. Providing information or making arguments in favour of a given candidate or policy tends to move everyone slightly in the intended direction (see Coppock et al., 2020 for similar findings regarding presidential TV ads). The notion that persuasion occurs 'in parallel' is an empirical challenge to much psychological theory, which emphasises the specific types of receivers who resonate to particular kinds of messages.

30.9 Conclusion

The burgeoning number of field experiments conducted in the context of political campaigns provides an important new set of stubborn facts with which psychological theories must contend. It is easy to dismiss the often-weak effects of interventions in the field as instances in which the treatment was administered amid distractions, but similar findings emerge even when interventions are delivered in a highly regimented way via face-to-face

interactions (see Kalla & Broockman, 2018, 2020). Perhaps redoubled efforts to discover more effective interventions will make theory-inspired interventions more effective. Another possibility is that the theories themselves are overrated in terms of the effects they generate. This is not to say that the theories touted in textbooks are worthless; rather, under naturalistic conditions, they produce modest effects. Indeed, a turnout or persuasion effect of 2 percentage points, which is a generous reading of the average effect of interventions in this literature, is too small to ‘see’ through personal experience and a far cry from the anecdotes that often accompany legendary accounts of persuasion.

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31 Collective Action for Social Change

Individual, Group, and Contextual Factors Shaping Collective Action and Its Outcomes

Emma F. Thomas, Winnifred R. Louis, and Craig McGarty

Collective action is a pervasive aspect of social and political life in the 21st century. In 2020, it is difficult to use social media or turn on the news without encountering an example of people co-acting with others to advocate for a desired social or political change (e.g., minority rights, marriage equality, abortion rights, climate justice). In the past 20 years, collective action has also been increasingly studied as a motivated and consequential form of behaviour. For political psychologists, collective action is one of the primary ways (along with voting) that people can represent their political will in a democracy, reflecting a behavioural nexus between the psychological and political (Thomas & Louis, 2013). So, how do people co-act to achieve common (group) goals? What are the psychological mechanisms that facilitate this process?

One set of answers to these questions stemmed from research in the social identity tradition and focused primarily on the psychological bases of group behaviour (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). Thus, this research identified group processes in general – and social identification in particular – as key drivers of collective action for social change (Klandermans, 1997, 2002). Van Zomeren et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis demonstrated that collective action is predicted by commitment to groups that mobilise action (that is, social identification), perceiving an injustice, and believing that one's group could take effective action.

However, subsequent research suggests that to only locate collective action as an outcome

of identity, injustice and efficacy may not sufficiently address the complexity of this phenomenon (Duncan, 2012). Consistent with broader theorising within the social identity tradition, subsequent developments demonstrated the critical importance of *context*: if social identification captures how people understand themselves and their position relative to others, then context reflects 'those forces external to actors which enable or constrain their action' (Drury & Reicher, 2009, p. 712). Accordingly, the next wave of collective action research identified a complex and often ironic role for the kinds of experiences that people have. Specific (tragic) events can act as signal moments to ignite action (Thomas, Smith, et al., 2019), but contact with members of out-groups can paradoxically undermine action intentions among disadvantaged group members (Dixon et al., 2012; Wright & Lubensky, 2009). Recent research has also kindled debate about a prospective role for moral motives (van Zomeren, 2013) and ideology (Jost et al., 2017), suggesting that a broader focus is necessary.

This chapter adapts Duncan's (2012) framework to take a wider perspective to examine contemporary scholarship in relation to the individual, group, and contextual factors shaping collective action and its outcomes. As shown in Figure 31.1, individual differences and life experience have direct and indirect effects on participation in collective action via the combination of identity, injustice, and efficacy (termed 'group consciousness';

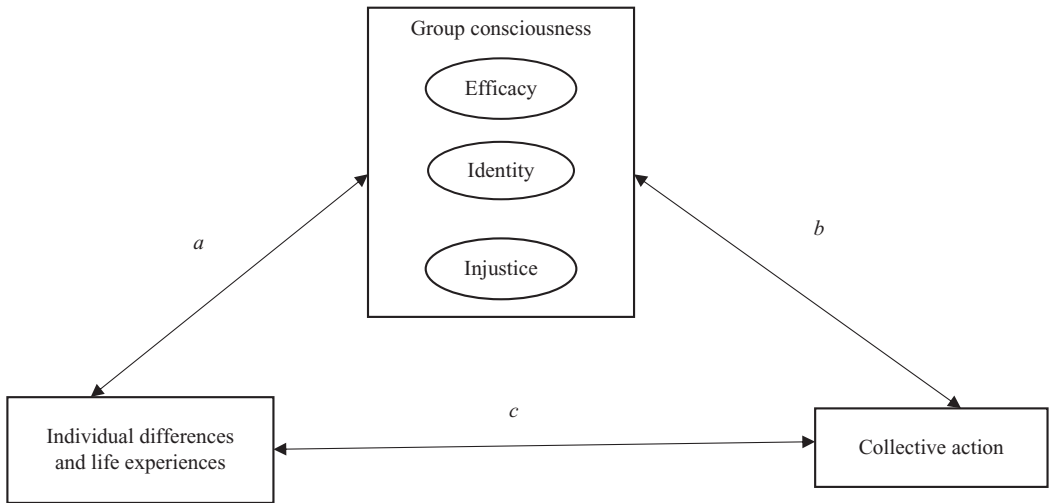


Figure 31.1 Duncan's (2012) integrated model of personality and social psychological theories of collective action

following the meta-analytic summary of van Zomeren et al., 2008). Group consciousness is, in turn, the proximal predictor of collective action. In this chapter, we focus especially on those factors associated with the second generation of collective action research which have generated significant scholarly activity in the past ~10 years. However, before doing so, we provide a working definition of collective action and situate the behaviour in the context of its collective underpinnings.

31.1 What Is Collective Action and in Whose Interests Are 'We' Acting?

Much of the literature adopts Wright et al.'s (1990, p. 995) definition that a group member engages in collective action any time that they engage in an action designed to benefit their whole group. In their meta-analysis, van Zomeren et al. (2008) operationalised collective action broadly as attitudinal support for protest and/or intention to engage in behaviours that address a group's disadvantage. In sociology and political science, 'civil resistance' (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011) and 'civic

engagement' (Torney-Purta, 2002) are both terms that overlap with collective action. For Simon et al. (1998, p. 646), social movement participation is the 'ultimate' form of collective action. In all cases, the focus is on social changes as defined subjectively by the collective actors.

Initially, research focused on collective actions taken by members of disadvantaged groups to respond to injustice that they, collectively, experience. Thus, the goal was to understand how people respond to (Wright et al., 1990), and cope with (Mummendey et al., 1999; van Zomeren et al., 2004) their disadvantage. Subsequent research recognised that action can also be taken by people who do not themselves experience the disadvantage, either as allies or in solidarity with disadvantaged group members. Advantaged group members play an important role in effecting progressive forms of social change in solidarity with disadvantaged groups (Subašić et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2012). Advantaged group members can also resist social change and act collectively to promote their own group interests via reactionary collective action

(Becker, 2020). Finally, people can act collectively in contexts in which distinctions between advantaged and disadvantaged, or high and low status, groups are unclear: for instance, to challenge injustices perpetrated against the environment and non-human animals (Becker, 2012). Thus, current approaches recognise that collective action is not limited to redressing own-group disadvantage.

The forms of behaviour that constitute 'collective action' have also expanded. The past decade has witnessed increasing recognition that collective action can take many different forms: it can occur online and offline (Kende et al., 2016); it can be violent or non-violent (Tausch et al., 2011); persuasive or confrontational (Wright, 2009); and reflect benevolent support for disadvantaged group members or attempts to challenge systems of inequality (Thomas & McGarty, 2018). It occurs in democracies but also in repressive or revolutionary contexts (Ayanian & Tausch, 2016; McGarty et al., 2014).

This relative expansion of the consideration of who the collective actors are and the form of behaviour has led some to advocate for clarity about the working conceptualisation and definition of collective action (e.g., Wright, 2009). The debates about the sincerity and relative importance of online forms of action also suggest active contention around whether some forms of collective action are more legitimate and worthy of study than are others (see Schumann & Klein, 2015). Nevertheless, the common underlying element to each of these actions is captured in Tajfel's (1981, p. 244) definition, where he suggests *collective action* is 'efforts by large numbers of people, who define themselves and are defined by others as a group, to solve collectively a problem they feel they have in common, and which is perceived to arise from their relations with other groups'. It is therefore necessary to consider the nature of the

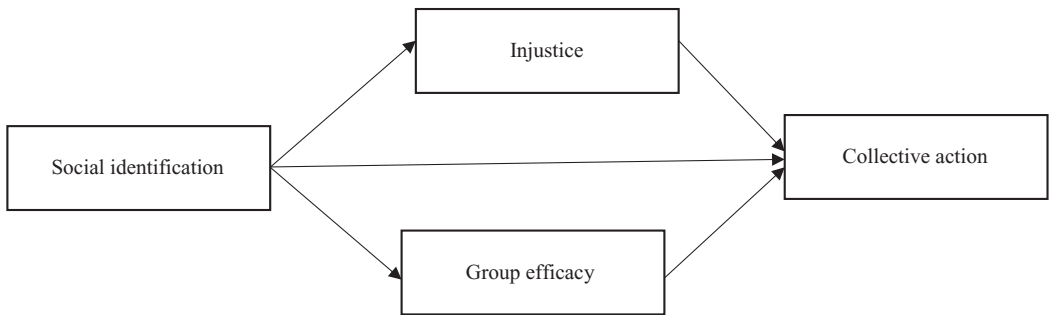
psychological link between the individual and group (Figure 31.1, path b).

31.2 The Collective Nature of Collective Action: Identity, Injustice, and Efficacy as Group Consciousness

A clear implication of the definition above is that collective action is structured by people's commitment to groups: it is something that people do with, and for, other people, in situations where thoughts and action are driven by group interests and values (Louis et al., 2005). This psychological commitment to groups has been captured as *social identification* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). Social identification reflects the part of one's identity that relates to membership of groups, along with the 'emotional and value significance of group membership' (Tajfel, 1982, p. 292). When a relevant social identity becomes salient, group members will enact the norms, values, and behaviors that define the group (relative to out-groups) in that context (Turner et al., 1987).

People can be committed to (and socially identify with) the groups that, themselves, subjectively experience the disadvantage (e.g., female, black person, member of the LGBTIQ community; Klandermans, 2002). The theoretical and meta-analytic integration presented by van Zomeren and colleagues (2008) demonstrated that socially identifying as a member of a disadvantaged group gives rise to the perception of injustices experienced by fellow group members, and beliefs that co-action can be effective (group efficacy). These three factors together form the *social identity model of collective action* (SIMCA; see Figure 31.2a). Recent research supports the key tenets of SIMCA over time (longitudinally) and also for both members of ostensibly advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Thomas, Zubielevitch, et al., 2019). Thus,

(a)



(b)

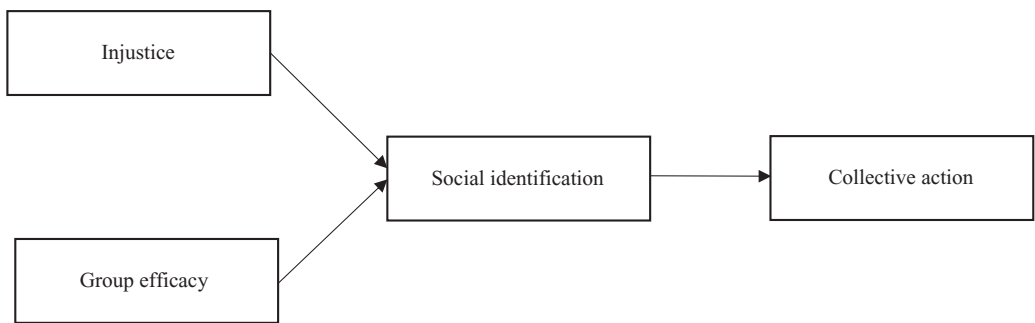


Figure 31.2 The social identity model of collective action (a) and the encapsulated model of social identity in collective action (b)

objective (structural) advantage is less relevant than if group members *subjectively* perceive themselves to be unjustly disadvantaged and believe that they can challenge these conditions through joint action (also Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2007).

However, people can also belong to groups based on collective recognition of the need to address injustice: *politicised identities* are those in which people are aware that their grievances are shared by others, make adversarial attributions for those grievances, and believe that they need to convince other bystanders to make a difference (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). There are various forms of politicised identity, perhaps most obviously *activist*

identities (Louis et al., 2016) and identities based on commitment to social movements (Stürmer & Simon, 2004). *Dual identities* – that is, identification with both a disadvantaged minority group (e.g., Turkish migrant) as well as a higher-order, national, group (German) – are also often politicised identities (Simon & Grabow, 2011; Simon & Ruhs, 2008). Van Zomeren et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis demonstrated that politicised social identities are particularly strong predictors of action.

Opinion-based identities, that is, identities based on opinions about how the world should be (Blüch et al., 2007; McGarty et al., 2009) can also be politicised – although there are many examples of opinion-based groups which

are not necessarily political per se (e.g., the intergroup tension between Apple users and PC users). Given that many people who take collective action do not identify as activists per se (Stuart et al., 2018), opinion-based groups provide a useful way of understanding diffuse forms of collective action in cases where action is not underpinned by any one formal social movement organisation. Opinion-based groups also help to explain the psychological bases of co-action across ostensibly distinct category memberships. That is, because both advantaged and disadvantaged group members can identify with an opinion about desired social relations, opinion-based groups provide a useful analytical tool to understand co-action across ostensible category boundaries. For instance, Thomas, Smith, et al. (2019) showed that identification as a supporter of refugees (pro-refugee identification) predicted collective action to support refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria in six different countries (Australia, Britain, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and the United States). Measurement of pro-refugee identification was statistically invariant across countries suggesting that it was the universal, psychologically unifying, factor in response to the crisis that effectively united people to take global co-action across great national diversity. Where do such groups come from?

The *encapsulated model of social identity in collective action* (EMSICA) suggests that opinion-based group memberships can arise from perceptions of injustice and beliefs about the effectiveness of co-action (Thomas et al., 2012). That is, whilst SIMCA may help to explain how grievance and efficacy build upon pre-existing group memberships to facilitate action, EMSICA identifies where those groups originate (Thomas et al., 2015). To the degree to which people perceive an injustice and feel that collective efforts can change the state of affairs, this seems likely to promote

commitment to groups based on those desired changes (opinion-based group formation). For example, Chayinska et al. (2019) found that, in Ukraine in 2014, identification with the Euromaidan movement encapsulated much of the relationship between anger and efficacy, and the commitment to take action against a government that was seen as too closely aligned with Russia and too far from the rest of the Europe.

Thus, a number of approaches agree that the combination of identity, injustice, and efficacy are – individually and in combination – the proximal drivers of collective action (Figure 31.1), path b). Duncan (2012, p. 781) labels the latent combination ‘group consciousness’, an overarching term capturing variables ‘related to group identification and common fate, critical analysis of a group’s position in society, and a collective orientation towards redressing power imbalances between groups’. Where do such groups come from? As outlined by EMSICA (Figure 31.2b), emergent, politicised group memberships can flow from the perception of injustice and a belief in the effectiveness of co-action. But how does one come to see a given cause or issue as one that is unjust, necessitating redress through co-action with others? To address this question necessitates a closer consideration of the role of context and experiences, as well as the role of ideology and moral reasoning (Figure 31.1, path a; Duncan, 2012).

31.3 Life Experiences: (Online) Interaction and Reaction

People do not decide to act in a vacuum. Recent work highlights that the experiences that people have matter to their initiation of, and engagement in, collective action (Duncan, 2012; Livingstone, 2014). These experiences can relate to the iconic issues or events that

they encounter (directly or vicariously) and interactions that they have with like-minded others, and/or the interactions that they have ('contact') with members of dis/advantaged groups themselves. In the 21st century, such interactions are increasingly occurring online via social media and other forms of networked communication (e.g., Castells, 2012).

31.3.1 Interactions about Disadvantage, Iconic Images or Events

The starting point here is the longstanding observation – stemming from Lewin (1947) – that social interaction is a catalytic shaper of attitudes and commitment to social change. For instance, Thomas et al. (Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2016; see also Thomas & McGarty, 2009) present experimental evidence that – compared to a non-interaction control group – people who had spent time discussing global inequalities in access to safe water were more strongly identified with an anti-poverty opinion-based group, and reported greater group efficacy and a heightened commitment to take anti-poverty action. Bongiorno et al. (2016) provide similar evidence of a mobilising effect of social interaction in the context of action to halt climate change.

Two theoretical statements help us to understand why this is the case. The *normative alignment model* suggests emotional experiences and efficacy beliefs arise and become integrated into identity as norms through social interaction (Thomas et al., 2009). Thus, through interaction, 'who we are' (the social identity) becomes inherently intertwined with feelings of anger and agency (efficacy beliefs) – qualitatively transforming the group membership akin to the politicisation process described above. Smith, Thomas, & McGarty (2015) add another piece of the puzzle: they

suggest that feelings of grievance must be aired, and validated through social interaction in order for groups to form to address desired change in the world. When this happens – and there is a sense of consensus within the interaction that what *is* (the descriptive norm or current state of affairs) is not what *should be* (the injunctive norm or ideal state of affairs) – new forms of collective self-hood or social identity precipitate through an *identity-norm nexus* (see also Smith, Gavin, & Sharp, 2015).

With the advent of new forms of technologies, such processes are no longer limited to the offline (face-to-face) environment. Social media provide new ways of exposing people to disadvantage even across great geographical distance (Castells, 2012). To the extent that watershed, iconic moments or events are discussed online, such interactions appear to drive widespread collective mobilisation, even across nations (Thomas, Smith, et al., 2019). For instance, Smith et al. (2018) analysed tweets about the images of drowned Syrian child refugee Aylan Kurdi and the refugee crisis. They used a natural language processing tool to create an index of collective action to support refugees from the content of tweets (i.e., the words people used) and examined how solidarity-based collective action changed over time. They showed that support for refugees was sustained where people continued to interact about the harms and threat experienced by refugees. However, when those interactions ceased, so too did the collective action in solidarity with refugees (Thomas et al., 2018).

Although some people have derided online forms of action as 'slacktivism' (insincere, trivial, or self-promoting in nature), the current evidence suggests that online forms of engagement are a genuine expression of a collective self (or social identity; Kende et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2015). A meta-analysis suggests

that the net effect of online interactions on political engagement is significant and positive (Skoric et al., 2016).

31.3.2 Interactions between Groups: Intergroup Contact

People do not only interact face to face or online about societal injustices with like-minded others, they also interact with members of other groups. The past decade has witnessed considerable debate about the role of contact between groups (intergroup contact; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) in promoting versus undermining collective action for social change among disadvantaged and advantaged group members (e.g., Dixon et al., 2010; Wright & Lubensky, 2009). Positive contact between members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups was seen as a key strategy for bringing about social change via reductions in prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The idea here was that 'liking' and positivity between groups should foster more positive intergroup relations.

However, a number of commentators began to question whether positive intergroup contact may promote more benevolent (harmonious) intergroup relations at the expense of genuine social equality (Reicher, 2007). Wright and Lubensky (2009) suggested that, for disadvantaged group members, positive (benevolent) forms of contact with members of advantaged groups may *undermine* collective action to promote greater equality between groups because the social psychological drivers of each are very different (see also Dixon et al., 2010). Indeed, it has been demonstrated cross-sectionally (Cakal et al., 2011), longitudinally (Tropp et al., 2012), and experimentally (Becker et al., 2013) that, for disadvantaged group members, being friends with members of the advantaged group paradoxically reduces actions to promote one's own group interest. Thus, the two implicit models of social

change – the prejudice reduction model and collective action model – may work against one another.

This need not always be the case, however. Becker et al. (2013) demonstrate, for instance, that intergroup contact in which an advantaged group member explicitly criticises the legitimacy of their in-group privilege does not reduce collective action among advantaged group members. That is, consistent with the ideas in Section 31.3.1 above, contact in which a specific, desired, social change is articulated does not undermine action (Droogendyk et al., 2016).

Notably, contact may play an important role in mobilising efforts among advantaged group members. Hoskin et al. (2019) demonstrated that intergroup contact (between people in developed and developing countries) was positively associated with action to support global poverty reduction, mediated by increases in an anti-poverty opinion-based group. However, this effect of contact on solidarity-based collective action via opinion-based group formation only occurred for those who rejected the legitimacy of social hierarchies (social dominance orientation; see Section 31.4.2). Similarly, Meleady and Vermue (2019) showed that positive (but not negative) intergroup contact promotes solidarity-based collective action among advantaged group members because it reduces endorsement of the legitimacy of social hierarchy. Thus, intergroup contact can provide the basis for cooperation across ostensible group boundaries.

In combination, these findings suggest that it is the substantive nature of the contact between members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups that explains the vexed relationship between contact and collective action. Beyond the mere characterisation of contact as positive or negative per se, we need to better understand what forms of contact, and for whom, have a facilitating versus pacifying effect.

31.4 Individual Differences and Collective Efforts to Resist Injustice

Although group memberships are the proximal driver of collective action for social change, not everyone is equally likely to develop such a commitment. The social identity approach theorises *perceiver readiness* as the degree to which people are likely to take up specific social categories (identities; Turner et al., 1987, captured here as group consciousness, Figure 31.1). As such, an examination of the individual differences – factors that may approximate perceiver readiness within a social identity framework – may help us understand the distal factors associated with motivation to engage in collective action.

31.4.1 Moral Conviction

Moral conviction is a meta-cognition that a given attitude or stance is rooted in a sense of fundamental right or wrong (Skitka, 2010). When one's position (e.g., being anti-poverty, pro-life) is experienced with moral conviction (also called 'a moral mandate'), it is experienced as self-defining, concrete, and absolute. Critically, being morally convicted is directly associated with politically relevant behaviours including voting and activism (Skitka & Bauman, 2008; Skitka & Morgan, 2014, for reviews; see also Chapter 19). For instance, Skitka et al. (2017) showed that, in the context of the legalisation of same-sex marriage and allowing concealed weapons on university campuses, moral conviction was associated with action because of the perceived anticipated benefits (but not anticipated harms of the counter-position) and feelings of anticipated pride and regret.

Linking with the conceptual process outlined in Figure 31.1, van Zomeren et al.'s (2012) extension of the social identity model of collective action recognised that some people may

be more likely to develop politicised identities than others. Their analysis showed that the degree to which one's stance on a given issue is held with moral conviction shapes the likelihood of committing to politicised groups (i.e., forming a group consciousness, Figure 31.1), thereby promoting engagement in collective action (see also van Zomeren, 2013; van Zomeren et al., 2011). Thus, in addition to the evidence of direct links presented by Skitka and colleagues (Figure 31.1, path c), moral conviction is also indirectly related to collective action because people who are higher in moral conviction are more likely to commit to groups (socially identify; path a) which, in turn, enables co-action (path b).

31.4.2 Ideology

In a similar vein, broad ideological beliefs about the legitimacy of hierarchies (social dominance), the system (system justification), and threats to the social order (right-wing authoritarianism) may also play a role in shaping commitment to collective action. Indeed, Jost and colleagues (2017) argued that an analysis of ideology is an important complement to intergroup analyses of collective action because it helps us to understand (1) when people will engage (versus remain apathetic), but also (2) whether those actions are aimed at defending the status quo or challenging it.

Accordingly, some analyses have examined the role of broad individual differences about legitimising ideology in shaping engagement in collective action directly, but also in combination with other factors. The dual process model (e.g., Duckitt & Sibley, 2010) posits that that two broad ideological attitudes – *social dominance orientation* (SDO) and *right-wing authoritarianism* (RWA) – capture challenges to group dominance and threats to the social order, respectively. Building off these insights,

Thomas, Smith, et al. (2019; see also Cameron & Nickerson, 2009; Stewart et al., 2016) considered whether SDO and RWA shape commitment to groups based on support for (versus opposition to) Syrian refugees amid the 2015 refugee crisis (Figure 31.1, path a). Their analysis showed that both SDO and RWA negatively predicted self-categorisation as a supporter of Syrian refugees (path a). Moreover, SDO interacted with media exposure about the plight of refugees (and, in particular, the iconic image of drowned Syrian refugee child, Aylan Kurdi) such that the likelihood of ‘becoming’ a supporter (group formation) was lowered for people who reported high levels of media exposure and were higher in SDO. Thus, views about the legitimacy of hierarchies acted as a filter through which depictions of suffering were viewed and responded to (Saeri et al., 2015). Similarly, Choma et al. (2019) examined the effects of RWA and SDO on collective action to target societal moral breakdown, financial/economic management, equalise race relations, and address climate change. RWA and SDO were both positively associated with collective action to address moral breakdown and negatively associated with collective action to promote climate change and equality between black people and white people in America; neither had clear patterns of association with action in the financial management domain.

Jost and colleagues (2017) presented a theoretical integration of ideology and the social identity model of collective action to suggest that *system justifying ideologies* – that is, the tendency to defend and justify the existing structure of inequalities in society – have key implications for people’s identities, beliefs about their ability to effectively challenge the system, affective reactions to injustice (group consciousness; Figure 31.1, path a) and action. However, Jost et al. theorised that the specific valence of the relationship between system

justification and social identification / reactions to injustice (cognitive and affective) depend on whether the group member is high or low status. For high-status group members, system justification should enhance identification with their (advantaged) social group, while for low-status group members, system justification would undermine identification with their (disadvantaged) group. For both groups, system justification is associated with dampened perceptions of injustice (cognitively and affectively), ultimately flowing through to foster system-supporting forms of collective action to the detriment of system-challenging collective actions. Osborne and colleagues (2019) provide a test of these key claims in a large, nationally representative, sample of white and Maori New Zealanders and provided support for its broad tenets.

31.5 Outcomes of Action: After the Rally, What Next?

While there has been an explosive growth in research identifying the antecedents of action, far less attention has been devoted to understanding the outcomes of collective action (Figure 31.1, path c; Louis, 2009). This paucity is all the more surprising given that social or political change usually takes years, if not decades, to eventuate. Collective actors need to sustain their motivation through countless incremental gains and grim set-backs (Thomas et al., 2009). An emerging literature has begun to consider the consequences of collective action for the collective actors themselves, and for societal bystanders.

31.5.1 Outcomes for Collective Actors

Participation in collective action has the potential to precipitate deep psychological changes in the short term (immediate emotional reactions of joy and pride, or anger

and frustration; Drury et al., 2005; Tausch & Becker, 2013), medium term (enduring feelings of empowerment; Drury & Reicher, 2005), and long term (changes to core values and orientations; Thomas, McGarty, Reese, et al., 2016; see Vestergren et al., 2017, for a typology and systematic review). Drury and Reicher (2009, p. 708) suggest that psychological *empowerment* – defined as a positive, subjective ‘sense of being able to (re)shape the world’ – arises from collective action in which members of otherwise subordinated groups have challenged existing intergroup relations. Thus, empowerment arises where actors enact their identity in opposition to the power and practices of dominant out-groups. Such feelings are important because they sustain involvement in the cause and connect specific protest or crowd events with broader social movements (Drury & Reicher, 2009).

Empowerment is not an inevitable outcome of action, however. Recently, Louis and colleagues (2020) provided a differentiated account of the outcomes of collective action. Their *DIME model of collective action outcomes* suggests that collective action that is felt to be succeeding will reinforce action via increasing energisation (Drury & Reicher, 2009). However, the failure of one’s campaign or movement to achieve its goals is suggested to be associated with four discrete, but interconnected, outcomes: an actor can give up and reduce their psychological commitment to the group (disidentify; Becker & Tausch, 2014); try new tactics in response to the perceived intransience or illegitimate actions of an out-group (including violent tactics, innovation; Drury & Reicher, 2005); increase their moralised commitment (moralise; Skitka & Bauman, 2008), and/or redouble efforts to achieve change (energise). The balance of these responses depends upon the form of previously taken action (i.e., political action or radical action) and whether that action was

understood to have succeeded or failed. A meta-analysis of nine studies, involving different samples and issues (e.g., marriage equality, environment, the right to life), supports the claim that, on average, failure promotes three distinct outcomes: disidentification with the group, increased intentions to redouble one’s efforts, and increased intentions to engage in radical action. Identifying the moderator that explains which trajectory group members take remains an important direction for future research.

31.5.2 Outcomes for Societal Bystanders

Although not specifically captured in Figure 31.1, it is also the case that collective action will only successfully induce social and political change where it influences broader public opinion (Burstein, 2003). Accordingly, a key ‘outcome’ of collective action is therefore the extent to which it persuades those who may be agnostic, sympathetic – or even opposed – to movement goals to increase their attitudinal and psychological commitment to achieving the desired social change. Thomas and Louis (2014) provide an experimental test of the ‘logic of strategic non-violence’ (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011) to show that collective actions which are non-violent more effectively persuade bystanders that the cause is legitimate and should be supported (see also Feinberg et al., 2020; Orazani & Leidner, 2019). Conversely, more radical (violent) forms of action diminished support – except for where there was understood to be corruption in the overarching system (Study 2). Under these circumstances, bystanders understood confrontation as more legitimate and necessary given that appeals to the usual political authorities would not be successful because those authorities had vested interests. Clearly, collective actors must walk a fine line between actions that communicate the illegitimacy of the

current state of affairs, and actions that are themselves seen as illegitimate (Feinberg et al., 2020).

31.6 Concluding Comments and Future Directions: Where Are We Now and Where to Next?

In this chapter, we adapted Duncan's (2012; Figure 31.1) integrated model of collective action to review current scholarship into collective action. The past 20 years have witnessed considerable growth in the forms of action that can be studied and understood as 'collective action', as well a broader focus on the populations who undertake it. Consistent with decades of theorising within the social identity tradition, we considered evidence that those related to commitment to groups (social identification) – and the feelings of injustice and/or agency that arise from those groups – are the proximal predictors of action (Figure 31.1, path b). However, it is also clear that such group memberships are not fixed or immutable across time and context. Rather, interactions with like-minded others shape engagement and disengagement; contact with members of out-groups has mixed and often counterintuitive effects on action (path c), but also shapes action indirectly via group memberships (path b). Similarly, not everyone is equally disposed to commit to groups or take up action: distal factors like moral conviction and ideological world views shape whether people are more likely to engage, and whether they do so to maintain or challenge the status quo (path a). Finally, collective action has consequences for people's sustained commitment to social change, but also their subsequent tactical choices (path c).

Yet it is clear from the above that there are still gaps in knowledge. What kinds of experiences create mobilisation potential? How does the sharing of experiences shape the quality of

the emergent group (group consciousness) and for whom do they do so (individual differences)? Separating out the (currently combined; Figure 31.1) individual differences and life experiences components will help to identify where the groups come from and aid an understanding of how they qualitatively transform over time. Moreover, we need more focus on the societal context in which these actions occur. Indeed, different factors may play a more or less important role in different cultures; and some forms of action are likely to be more/less palatable in different cultural contexts (van Zomeren & Louis, 2017).

Finally, collective action will only successfully induce social and political change where it influences broader, sympathetic, public opinion (Burstein, 2003). In order to theoretically and empirically connect collective action with social and political change, we need more principled ways of understanding the different constituents or subgroups that together comprise the broader community (those who are apathetic, sympathisers, active in a conventional campaigns, radicals; see Thomas, Bury, et al., 2019, for an example). All of these developments will necessitate a framework for articulating the many factors that shape action, and diverging forms of action, for different constituents within the broader community.

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32 Opinion Formation and Polarisation in the News Feed Era

Effects from Digital, Social, and Mobile Media

Johanna Dunaway and Jaime Settle

32.1 Introduction

The co-occurrence of increasing polarisation alongside a rapidly evolving media environment encouraged widespread speculation that the two phenomena are related. Digital media is a ‘punching bag’ of sorts for those concerned with the normative implications of growing societal divisions. Opinion echo chambers and filter bubbles, attributed to user behaviour and algorithmic processes on digital and social media, are described as pervasive drivers of polarisation because they discourage regular, serendipitous exposure to oppositional views – exposure that is thought to increase tolerance and support for compromise (Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2017).

Rigorous scholarship studying this association reveals a more nuanced picture. Though social media users are exposed to more congenial than oppositional political information, cross-ideology exposure is frequent; nearly half of viewed content is cross-cutting (Bakshy et al., 2015). Drivers of selectivity are increasingly complex across digital and social media. Many sites and platforms are social more than political and are structured accordingly (Messing & Westwood, 2014; Settle, 2018). Social network ties and endorsements increase exposure diversity (Goel et al., 2010; Messing & Westwood, 2014), and web traffic is highly concentrated on mainstream sites (Flaxman et al., 2016;

Hindman, 2018). Evidence for the influence of echo chambers is decidedly mixed.

Findings about how digital, social, and mobile media polarise users are also more complicated than typical depictions. Though the opportunity for exposure and attention to polarising information on digital, social, and mobile media is high, the power and nature of its impact remains in question. First, ceiling effects due to already high rates of affective polarisation help to explain why there is less evidence demonstrating the persuasive or polarising effects of echo chambers (e.g., Peterson et al., 2018, but see De Benedictis-Kessner et al., 2019). Second, exposure to oppositional views among partisans strengthens existing predispositions (Bail et al., 2018); it does not increase tolerance and compromise as commonly theorised. Third, the conditions under which political views dictate exposure are more complex (and therefore largely unknown) for many newer media forms (Stroud, 2017). Finally, the effects of cognitive biases are conditioned by information complexities in the digital media environment when exposure occurs (Dunaway et al., 2018; Dunaway & Soroka, 2021; Settle, 2018).

Considerably more is known now than a decade ago, when many of these technologies were in their infancy. However, efforts to understand the implications of changing communication technology for media effects have

produced mixed findings and made limited progress towards a cohesive and generalisable theoretical explanation, despite advances in research design and methodologies increasingly equipped to study these phenomena (e.g., De Benedictis-Kessner et al., 2019). Why?

A primary reason for this is that media effects scholarship has often neglected insights from political psychology and information processing, contributing to a lack of theoretical coherence across these bodies of work. Though extant work thoroughly examines directional psychological motivations dictating media choice and exposure, it does not equally consider other cognitive traits and biases driving choice, exposure, and processing. Accuracy-based goals, emotions, or needs for cognition, affect, or entertainment can offset the structural aspects of digital media that encourage ideological segregation (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2013; Arceneaux & Vander Wielen, 2013; Prior, 2007). Given ample evidence that communication technology influences information processing, any viable explanation of the implications of changing technology on media effects must reconcile with these literatures.

Research from political psychology and information processing presents three primary lessons to scholars of media effects. First, in an era of media fragmentation, we must focus more broadly on the determinants of choice by moving beyond partisan selective exposure to include other drivers of selectivity. Second, exposure does not equal influence. The cognitive biases and motivations that structure information processing must be taken more seriously. Additionally, we must update expectations about the consequences of motivated reasoning given the growing consensus that partisanship is a social identity (see Chapter 25); if the predominant form of polarisation is social, counter-attitudinal information may be processed as a potential threat to group

identity and, thus, may have ramifications beyond opinion entrenchment. Third, the unique features of media delivery in the digital age – the affordances and technological configurations – can compound or offset the effects of selection and exposure. In the review that follows, we demonstrate the ways that these insights should change the questions that media scholars ask, and therefore shape our collective understanding of the impact of digital, social, and mobile media on political opinion and preference formation.

32.2 Changing Politics, Changing Technology: A Brief History of Media Effects

Others have discussed the general trajectory of media effects research. Studies of media effects began with the arrival of radio, with a focus on persuasion and attitude change born from fears about all-powerful media and government propaganda. After several years, effects research evolved towards the view that media messages exert very little influence (e.g., Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Lazarsfeld et al., 1948), only later to settle somewhere in between (e.g., Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Zaller, 1992). In the twilight of the broadcast era, the consensus among researchers was that media effects were powerful, but limited and indirect (Iyengar, 2017; Jamieson, 2017).

Our focus here is more narrow. The history of media effects research is driven by a handful of factors. First, scholars derive theories in reaction to the political context of the time, such as scholarly theories of massive broadcast media effects borne from concerns about duplicitous governments' use of propaganda following two world wars (Iyengar, 2017; Jamieson, 2017). Second, scholars derive theories based on the affordances and features of existing and newly arrived communication

technologies, such as the shift from print to audio-visual forms of news or the expansion of choice with the arrival of cable TV. In the wake of dramatic changes in communication technologies, researchers naturally are pre-occupied with how fundamental shifts in the media environment might change current understanding about the conditions under which media effects occur (Iyengar, 2017). Finally, the literature often focused disproportionately on persuasion, at the expense of integrating work on other outcomes into a more cohesive, broad framework of media effects.

By the conclusion of the print-broadcast era, media effects researchers could draw several inferences about persuasion, political knowledge, and political polarisation. We highlight these below.

Opinion Formation

Early work in minimal effects research debunked mass influence theories such as the ‘magic bullet’ or ‘hypodermic needle’ by illustrating that audiences are active and selective, and that their choices (and thus rates of exposure) are conditioned on interest, predispositions, and interpersonal contexts (Iyengar, 2017; Jamieson, 2017). This work eased fears about persuasion from mediated propaganda by demonstrating how the predispositions and agency of audiences dictate media selections and attentiveness (Stroud, 2017). Later research identified powerful but limited persuasive effects, demonstrating that persuasion from mediated exposure to political information occurs, but only under narrow and specific conditions (Zaller, 1992). Once researchers accounted for political predispositions, political interest, and the direction and intensity of messages, the challenges to identifying persuasive media effects were clear. Because message exposure does not equal attention or acceptance, those who are highly attentive are

rarely persuaded because of previously held predispositions and those who are uninterested are rarely exposed to persuasive information (Zaller, 1992).

It was not until the near conclusion of the broadcast era that researchers expanded their focus to outcomes beyond persuasion and identified significant media effects. Agenda-setting, priming, and framing effects were discovered, and though powerful, were also limited and indirect (Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Evidence of persuasion by the media remained relatively elusive due to the continued influence of predispositions, occurring only under narrow conditions – in particular information contexts with highly intense, one-sided messages, and for specific subsets of individuals – the minimally interested and attentive citizens lacking partisan predispositions (Zaller, 1992). Source credibility also emerged as an important factor, structuring the effectiveness of issue framing and media messages more generally (Druckman, 2001; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998).

Political Knowledge

Parallel research on political knowledge developed to explain how citizens make political decisions, especially in light of low knowledge, anaemic participation, and the inability to link voting decisions to coherent ideologies (Converse, 1964; Zaller & Feldman, 1992; see also Chapters 5 and 6). Initially, predominant accounts depicted uninformed citizens as rationally avoidant of information-seeking costs (Downs, 1957). Rational explanations later advanced theoretically with insights from psychology, which provided a cognitive basis by which to explain miserly citizen attention to and retention of political information (Lau & Redlawsk, 2006; Taber, 2003; see also Chapter 8). That humans are cognitive misers is a primary explanation for limited media

effects on learning and persuasion because both require attention and processing (Zaller, 1992). However, heuristics, including source credibility, helped people behave as though informed (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998).

Polarisation

It was not until near the end of the print-broadcast era that scholars earnestly debated mass polarisation. Elite polarisation was already on the rise and considered a primary driver of strengthening partisanship (Hetherington, 2001), opinion polarisation (Layman & Carsey, 2002), and sorting (Levendusky, 2009). The rationale for polarisation as a top-down process also relied on cognitive explanations. Elite polarisation clarified distinctions between the two parties, improving citizens' ability to understand the differences and align their preferences accordingly (Hetherington, 2001). Scholars debated for more than a decade the extent to which opinion polarisation existed, but the crux of the disagreement was one of definition and measurement (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Fiorina et al., 2008). Still mired in debates about whether mass political polarisation was occurring, researchers could draw few conclusions about media and polarisation during this time (Prior, 2013).

With each iteration of technological change, we have struggled to fully understand the implications for media effects on opinion formation, and more recently, political polarisation because existing theories have not evolved to provide an explanation that is theoretically coherent with the advances in what we know about how people process social and political information.

The earliest media effects literature failed to adequately consider psychological effects, with its assumption of homogeneous passive audiences and a rigid threshold for persuasion. However, beginning with the minimal effects

era, media effects work was often informed by psychology, even if the streams of research were more parallel than fully integrated. It was not until the era of direct but limited effects (i.e., near the end of the broadcast era) that media effects research more fully considered psychological factors, such as the importance of predispositions, that people are inattentive cognitive misers, and the effects of the information context.

Synthesising these diverse literatures made several things clear. Researchers' understanding at the time can be summarised as follows. Cognitive biases, especially those aimed at avoiding cognitive effort and dissonance, limit both learning and persuasive effects from media. Audiences have preferences, predispositions, and agency to make media selections or avoid media messages altogether, both of which limit media effects (Stroud, 2017). Though media messages can have a significant effect on opinions related to direct interpretation (i.e., people can learn from mass media), mediated messages rarely affect deeply entrenched attitudes except under very narrow conditions (Zaller, 1992). Media influence is primarily indirect and occurs mainly through their ability to set the agenda and prime considerations that affect political decision-making (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). While research has not yet established a causal relationship between media and mass polarisation, at that time elite-signalling was thought to structure partisanship and polarisation in the electorate by clarifying distinctions between the two parties (Hetherington, 2001). Have these conclusions changed during the digital era?

32.3 Implications of Changing Communication Technology for Media Effects

The 'Golden Era of Television' occurred in a very different technological and political

context. The uniformity of the media environment – that the combined national television market share of the three major broadcast networks comprised nearly 90% of the national television audience with synchronised programming schedules across them – meant there was nothing but news to watch on television for several hours of the day (Prior, 2007). The significant market share also meant relatively little competitive threat or need for content differentiation. The national news available across the three networks (as well as most newspapers and radio programmes) was homogeneous relative to today (Prior, 2007). Additionally, polarisation had not yet taken root. What societal fractures did exist were not aligned in ways that reinforce ‘mega identities’ (Mason, 2018). As a result, though partisan predispositions still dictated limitations for persuasion (Zaller, 1992), partisan-motivated reasoning was not as overwhelming an influence as it is today. Finally, although tractable ways to measure media exposure remained elusive, there were a finite number of ways that people could navigate the information environment given the technology and affordances of the era: people could read newspapers or magazines, watch television, or listen to the radio. Even if our measurements were biased, we had more confidence in the uniformity of the behavioural processes underlying media exposure.

These contextual differences meant the conclusions drawn at the end of the print-broadcast era were less vulnerable to the exclusion of nuanced cognitive and social phenomena. However, effects research can no longer afford to silo its theories. Media effects research in the 21st century must better integrate psychology; changes to the media environment wrought in the past 30 years function primarily through psychological effects. Without meaningfully integrating these concepts into the media effects literature, we

risk perpetuating a disjointed set of empirical findings not guided by a unified set of theories. How has our understanding of media effects changed with the arrival of the digital era? Insights from cognitive, political, and social psychology are particularly relevant with respect to fragmentation and choice, the distinction between exposure and attention, and the information-processing effects of technological affordances and features from the digital media environment.

32.3.1 Fragmentation and the Determinants of Choice

Since the arrival of cable and the re-emergence of partisan news, commentators and researchers (Sunstein, 2017) have cautioned against echo chambers in which individuals, through the selectivity afforded by a high media choice environment, are primarily exposed to attitude-consistent news. This argument is predicated on the idea that motivated reasoning underpins selective exposure behaviours, which affect the information to which audiences are exposed (Stroud, 2011), or whether they avoid political information entirely (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2013; Prior, 2007).

Motivated reasoning posits that goals influence information seeking and evaluation for impression formation (Kunda, 1990). Directional goals – based on preference for reaching a particular conclusion typically guided by ideology or partisanship – drive media selection and/or processing such that disagreeable information is avoided, ignored, or processed to arrive at the desired conclusion (Kunda, 1990). Alternatively, accuracy-based goals motivate information seeking for correctly informed decisions (Druckman et al., 2013; Lodge & Taber, 2013).

In debates over media and mass polarisation, selective exposure perspectives prioritise the concern that directional goals and

motivated exposure to attitude reinforcing information will strengthen and further polarise citizens' views. These concerns are not unfounded. The tendency to select media based on partisanship is well demonstrated in lab-based experiments (Levendusky, 2013a, 2013b; Stroud, 2011). Yet evidence that people consistently seek pro-attitudinal information and avoid attitude-discrepant information, both online and offline, is inconsistent (e.g., Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011). Studies based on audience and web-tracking data show low levels of online ideological segregation (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011), significant overlap in online news audiences across the ideological spectrum (Nelson & Webster, 2017), and web traffic highly concentrated on popular, relatively neutral sites (Flaxman et al., 2016; Hindman, 2018).

Other perspectives emphasise content diversity in high-choice settings and highlight the role entertainment preferences play in discouraging exposure to political information in the first place (Prior, 2007). Participant-preference design studies show that in conditions of high choice, audience preferences for entertainment over news encourage more opting out of news than partisan news selection, suggesting that earlier limits to experimental designs overstate the prevalence and effects of partisan selective exposure (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2013).

Algorithmic filtering via search engines, news aggregators, and social networking sites also drive concerns about partisan enclaves and ideological segregation. These platforms personalise content, potentially generating 'filter bubbles' (Pariser, 2011). But evidence for bubbles and enclaves is also mixed (e.g., Weeks et al., 2017), as is evidence about their effects (Flaxman et al., 2016; Peterson et al., 2018). Some studies find that digital media encourage partisan enclaves (Adamic & Glance, 2005), but others find that high-choice

and network structures encourage cross-ideological exposure (Goel et al., 2010). Though Bakshy et al. (2015) find that exposure to like-minded information is more frequent relative to counter-attitudinal information, they also find significant amounts of exposure to cross-ideological content on Facebook. Evidence suggests cross-ideology exposure is attributable to the 'social' nature of networking ties and endorsements, which cross the ideological spectrum to increase exposure diversity (Goel et al., 2010; Messing & Westwood, 2014). Though there is substantial evidence for the presence of partisan enclaves, echo chambers, and filter bubbles, they do not create complete silos on social media. Instead, these 'silos' are prevalent but porous to cross-ideological content. Social media platforms may even facilitate exposure diversity.

Selective exposure research often underplays the fact that people sometimes seek, and are open to, new information. Motivated reasoning according to political identity is not the only driver of information processing; even like-minded partisans do not all seek and process information the same way (Arceneaux & Vander Wielen, 2013). Psychological traits such as Need for Cognition (NFC) or Need for Affect (NFA) also influence whether individuals seek out and are receptive to political information (see Chapter 5). Those who are high in NFA are more emotionally attached to their political party, making counter-attitudinal information less effective, whereas those with high NFC are more open to opposing views, in part because they are willing to expend effort to process information and also because their partisan support is less based on emotional attachment (Arceneaux & Vander Wielen, 2013).

In addition to individual characteristics, information context shapes motives for information seeking and processing. This is because

emotions explain variability in openness to new information, highlighting the importance context when information exposure occurs (see also Chapter 9). For example, more people who post political status updates use anxiety in their posts than people who do not post political status updates (Settle, 2020). This suggests that intermediated media depictions (e.g., comments on news articles) will have different effects than reading news articles in isolation. Anxiety is an affective state that motivates more effortful information seeking (Atkeson & Maestas, 2012; Brader, 2006), but anxiety moderates the effectiveness of information (Arceneaux, 2012; Weeks, 2015), and opinion strength is weakened when anxiety is high. Political circumstances can motivate accuracy-based information seeking (Bolsen et al., 2014), and the extent to which elite position-taking makes party preferences clear, or obscures them, influences the use of partisan-motivated reasoning strategies (Druckman et al., 2013).

In short, partisan selective exposure and partisan-motivated reasoning are not automatic – they vary according to individual-level characteristics and political, social, and informational contexts. Inconsistencies in the literature reflect a disproportionate emphasis on the consequences of structural market change – media fragmentation – and near single-minded focus on how it contributes to partisan selective exposure. Political psychology reveals numerous ways in which individual differences and the informational and political context shape information seeking and processing in ways that can moderate the effects of the information environment (Arceneaux & Vander Wielen, 2013; Druckman et al., 2013). Though the high-choice setting provides the *opportunity* for motivated information seekers to engage in partisan selective exposure, they will not always do so.

32.3.2 Exposure Does Not Equal Influence

Insights from psychology and information processing also remind us that media exposure does not equate to attention. There are three ways that psychological findings should inform the way we think about the distinction between media exposure and media influence in the digital era. First, just as polarisation and sorting affect *what* people expose themselves to, these phenomena affect the way people process information. Second, source cues still matter, but they are considerably more complex in a high-choice, high-polarisation environment. Finally, we need to take more seriously the role of incidental exposure; people likely process information in different ways when they seek it out relative to when they come across it inadvertently.

Motivated Reasoning and Polarisation

In Section 32.3.1, we described how the direction and accuracy goals of motivated reasoning influence the way people seek out media. But the influence of this process extends to how they process information when they do encounter it. Some approaches that blend motivated reasoning and media-structural accounts to explain how political impressions are formed cast doubt on the idea that selective exposure is primarily to blame for a more polarised and misinformed electorate. For example, several studies question the benefits of exposure to counter-attitudinal information based on motivated reasoning, which suggests that partisans will either tune out counter-attitudinal information, or counter-argue it upon exposure, thereby reinforcing existing attitudes (Arceneaux et al., 2013; Bail et al., 2018). While selective exposure accounts make a solid case for the attitude-reinforcing effects of selectivity and like-minded exposure, limited evidence demonstrates conditions

under which counter-attitudinal information is attended to or processed to elicit persuasion and attitude change (Arceneaux et al., 2013). People tend to reject information counter to previously held attitudes and beliefs (Kunda, 1990).

Identity salience, affect, and out-group bias are instrumental to motivated reasoning. Under motivated reasoning, there are several reasons exposure to counter-attitudinal information is unlikely to alter preferences and predispositions among partisans. Rather than persuasion, exposure to counter-attitudinal information increases the salience of the existing in-group identity, prompting counter-arguments as part of a defensive identity-protecting position (Arceneaux et al., 2013; Bail et al., 2018). Exposure to attitude-discrepant information produces even stronger beliefs among those who held particularly strong predispositions in the first place (Redlawsk, 2002). Numerous studies demonstrate the tendency to reject, resist, or dismiss information counter to existing beliefs – especially when the information induces a defensive position (Kunda, 1990), or comes from a less than credible source (Arceneaux et al., 2013). For partisans, direction-motivated reasoning goals should dictate how much congenial information is accepted and disagreeable information is resisted.

This work demonstrates that persuasion from media depends on more than just exposure to messages. It depends equally on the receipt of messages (or attention to messages) and message acceptance, all of which are strongly affected by predispositions and motivated reasoning (Zaller, 1992). Partisan news cannot have a direct effect on people who choose to not to watch it because they prefer entertainment (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2013). Nor will it have a persuasive effect on out-partisans who are exposed, but dismiss, ignore, or counter-argue it (Arceneaux et al., 2013). If

echo chambers or partisan news exposure do have an effect on either like-minded or oppositional partisans, the attitudinal or behavioural influence would likely be minimal, reinforcing already held beliefs. Very few studies fully confront these kinds of ceiling effects, or deal directly with attitudinal change and behavioural consequences (but see De Benedictis-Kessner et al., 2019 and Peterson et al., 2018).

Further complicating how we understand the mechanisms of persuasion is the consensus that psychological forms of polarisation are more pronounced than opinion or ideological polarisation in the United States. Scholars who focus on mass polarisation are now primarily concerned with social forms of polarisation (Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018; Iyengar et al., 2012; Lelkes et al., 2017; Mason & Wronski, 2018; also see Chapter 25) and the implications stemming from the fact that political identities are sorted in concert with other key social identities (Mason, 2018). Research in political psychology and motivated reasoning illustrate several important implications of a more sorted and more affectively polarised electorate. First, partisanship today correlates strongly with world view and social and cultural identity (Mason, 2016). These sorted, strongly identified partisans have more intense emotional responses to political information relative to their weaker counterparts (Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018), and expressive partisans are particularly likely to react with anger to the perception of threat (Huddy et al., 2015). Intensified partisan affect (as a consequence of more sorting) increasingly reflects in- and out-group bias in which in-group favouritism is increasingly associated with out-group animus (Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018; Mason & Wronski, 2018). This is a different political context relative to the days of the print and broadcast era. Today, dislike for out-partisans is so pervasive that partisanship has surpassed race as the primary characteristic by which

people discriminate (Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). Out-group animus now surpasses in-group favouritism as the primary driver of political behaviour; the motivation to beat the other team often trumps performance-based candidate evaluations.

These changes to the US political context should strengthen the influence of motivated reasoning and cognitive biases on political information processing. For more sorted and affect-driven partisans, counter-attitudinal information is a threat to self-concept and group membership; not only will it be ignored or attended only to reinforce existing beliefs (Druckman et al., 2013; Lodge & Taber, 2013), but it might also present threats to one's identity and sense of belonging. The same logic applies to attitude-consistent information. Generally speaking, motivated reasoning and high rates of affective polarisation may limit major attitudinal and behavioural effects from exposure to mediated political information, at least with respect to vote choice or attitude change.

Source Cues

In the contemporary media environment, people have many options for media platforms and the news sources within those platforms. In fact, the structural shift to this high-choice environment drives concerns about partisan selective exposure, echo chambers, and the pernicious effects of exposure to partisan news (Stroud, 2011). Though the polarising effects of media choice are still debated (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2013; Lelkes et al., 2017; Prior, 2007), the way partisan source cues operate is not. When individuals purposively seek news among cable channels or websites, selective exposure is often based on partisanship indicated by source cues (Lelkes et al., 2017). However, newer information complexities, such as those afforded by social media, mean

we know far less about how source cues dictate exposure or influence processing in these contexts (Feezell, 2018; Settle, 2018).

Assessments of the role source cues play on digital, social, and mobile media cannot be divorced from the effects of polarisation on levels of media trust. Ladd and Podkul (2020) argue that the unique factors of mid-20th-century America – low competition among news outlets, low political polarisation, low income inequality, and fast economic growth – facilitated high levels of trust in the news media. Partisan attacks on the media – predominately from the right – have lowered considerably the esteem with which the public holds the media as an institution, as well as the credibility of individual news sources. A rich history of research documents the importance of credibility in persuasion. To the extent that people no longer find the media credible, we would expect a decrease in media influence more generally (Ladd & Podkul, 2020).

However, we do not yet know the particularities of how low levels of media trust and partisan differentials in said trust relate to the evaluation and use of source cues on social media. Data from the Pew Research Center suggest that people do not trust the political news they find on social media (Jurkowitz & Mitchell, 2020), but it is unclear how much source cues play a role in this low level of trust. Mistrust in political news could also be a product of trust in the platforms themselves, perceptions about low credibility of the people sharing political information online, or generalised concerns about misinformation online.

People are most persuaded by sources they trust, particularly individuals they know personally. A hallmark feature of social media is the ability for people to share their personal views and reshare news stories, displacing news editors as the curators and gatekeepers of what is considered newsworthy. As a result,

network and filtering effects may matter for perceptions of credibility (e.g. Feezell, 2018), and this affect sharing, and resharing in particular, which are akin to endorsement on social media (Messing & Westwood, 2014; Weeks et al., 2017). The indirect effects of these behaviours are an area in which we need more research.

On social media, news carries labels often accompanied by implicit personal endorsements. The key question is how recognisable these differential source cues are on social media platforms, and whether people are able to distinguish high- and low-quality sources. With respect to the first question, Settle (2018) finds large variation between people in the number of news sources they recognised and the ideological leaning imputed to different sources. When asked to evaluate a list of 36 different news sources, 43% of respondents in a national sample recognised fewer than 10 of the sources, while 12.4% recognised 30 or more. Moreover, most people thought that the majority of the sources had an ideological leaning. The theory of selective exposure is predicated on people's ability to identify sources that are more likely to cover topics they care about or to cover those topics in a manner consistent with their prior attitudes. This premise is most likely to hold for the most politically knowledgeable (Stroud, 2011). Settle (2018) finds that adding a news source cue to content made people more likely to think that content was political, and that adding a source that many people recognise as having an ideological bias, such as Fox News, can send a signal about the partisanship of the person who posted the item, even if the news story content was non-political. Thus, the very act of news sharing may heighten perceptions of polarisation.

The importance of source cues has also influenced research evaluating susceptibility to misinformation. Source credibility matters

in the evaluation of misinformation, depending on context of exposure (Bode & Vraga, 2015). For example, in politically polarised contexts, misinformation from co-partisan elites and news outlets with clear partisan signals is received as credible, while information from out-party elites and outlets is not. Partisan source cues can help determine what misinformation should be dismissed or ignored, at least for partisans and partisan leaners (Arceneaux et al., 2013).

Interestingly, Bode and Vraga (2015) show how directionally ambiguous source cues from algorithmic filtering can convey credibility and facilitate receptivity to misinformation corrections. Social media affordances for network and filter-based incidental exposure clearly have the potential to disrupt the influence of traditional partisan source cues; more research is needed on the precise conditions under which and for whom this occurs.

Incidental Exposure

The idea that people are inadvertently exposed to political information is not new; the literature on the effects of 'soft news' indicates that this exposure was important 30 years ago (Baum, 2003). However, people's exposure to political news while using digital, mobile, and social media is not only more frequent, but it is also of a qualitatively different nature. There remain many important questions to address in this area.

First, we need clearer distinctions between exposure and attention. For example, although news feed structures introduce more incidental exposure to news than high-choice settings like cable or the web (Feezell, 2018), only about 1 in 300 outbound clicks from Facebook go to news sites (Flaxman et al., 2016), and bounce rates for news sites are notoriously high (Hindman, 2018). On mobile devices, people pay far less time attending to

news stories to which they are exposed (Dunaway et al., 2018). Mobile news exposure is more akin to snacking – more incidents of exposure throughout the day, but in very small doses (Molyneux, 2017). In addition, cognitive and affective engagement with news is lower on mobile devices, potentially attenuating media effects (Dunaway & Soroka, 2021). Though *opportunity* for incidental exposure to political information on social media is frequent (Bode, 2016; Feezell, 2018; Settle, 2018), and possibly for mobile media as well (Molyneux, 2017), questions about audience attentiveness in these environments mean we are only just beginning to learn about the possible attitudinal and behavioural implications.

Second, we need to take seriously the role of ‘social’ in social media. According to Settle (2018), two key factors make exposure to political information different on social media. One is how the information is presented. The defining features of the modern news feed – those differentiating it from news websites – are the intermingling of social and personal information with political news, the social cues proximate to political news, and news source diversity. The other is what motivates exposure. Most people log in to Facebook for non-political reasons - to share information with (or gather it from) their social contacts. Yet, they are exposed to political information without seeking it. Political information is presented in a social and entertaining format, but it is neither sought out nor avoidable. News feed users regularly encounter news and political information despite the fact that they are seeking entertainment and social information. This suggests a much larger role of influence on affective and perceived polarisation than on opinion formation or attitude polarisation.

Finally, we should be concerned about how inadvertent exposure may perpetuate political misinformation (see also Chapter 33).

Evidence that digital and social media allow for high rates of incidental exposure is normatively positive from the perspective that exposure to, and acceptance of, misinformation online is primarily driven by partisan selective exposure and ideological segregation. However, outside that view, the possibility of exposure diversity does not remove cause for concern. Higher rates of incidental exposure to political information through mainstream sites and social networks means citizens are not completely isolated into echo chambers. But reading that as good news assumes that misinformation comes primarily from easily identifiable politically slanted perspectives, ideological media, or fake news and that it is targeted on the basis of partisanship.

If, however, misinformation comes from sources disguised as neutral or source intent is otherwise obscure – and evidence from recent elections suggests this is often the case (e.g., Kim et al., 2018), more incidental (or targeted) exposure might also mean more exposure to misinformation. Worse, in circumstances of incidental exposure to misinformation, those who are exposed are less politically interested with malleable political identities, making them more vulnerable to persuasion (e.g., Zaller, 1992). On the other hand, people who are online or on social media who are not motivated political information seekers attend and process political information differently when they encounter it (Settle, 2018). For these users, we cannot assume that exposure to political misinformation is equivalent to attention to, or acceptance of, that information. In short, despite the potential for persuasion under these circumstances, cognitive and affective biases mean we have no reason to be sure that exposure fosters misperceptions among partisans at least. However, research on both media effects and misperceptions suggests there is good reason to think the chances would increase along with the intensity of

exposure to that misinformation (Pennycook et al., 2018; Weaver et al., 2007; Zaller, 1992). The differential implications of incidental and motivated exposure to misinformation on digital, social, and mobile media is clearly an area where more research is needed.

32.3.3 The Effects of Affordances/ Technological Features

The digital media ecology is also introducing new sources of contextual variation that matter for the receipt and impact of information. The structural effects of media – such as its narrative structure, use of music, or animation, just to name a few – can affect both the cognitive access and emotional activation of information processing (Grabe et al., 2000; Lang, 2000; Lang et al., 2003). But the variety of structural effects is amplified in the digital space relative to the broadcast media era. The diversity of ways in which political information can be presented certainly affects attention and processing, but in ways we do not yet understand (Settle, 2018). The evidence we do have suggests the complexities of information blends and displays in the social media environment – or across various devices – have a clear impact on both the willingness and ability to process information upon exposure (Dunaway et al., 2018; Dunaway & Soroka, 2021; Settle, 2018). Moreover, the concept of ‘digital literacy’ is an important mediator that is frequently overlooked in studies of digital media effects (Munger et al., 2021).

The same cognitive biases leading us to avoid effortful processing induced by exposure to counter-attitudinal information also deter us from effortful processing induced by information complexities (Dunaway et al., 2018; Dunaway & Soroka, 2021). Do the fleeting attention spans of mobile users make them more or less susceptible to effects of misinformation? Do the social aspects of social

media make us more or less polarised (Messing & Westwood, 2014; Settle, 2018)? The rapidly proliferating menu of platforms and content requires careful consideration in media effects research because of the potential effects these options have on not just whether exposure is motivated or incidental, but whether and how the information is processed. We need to consider the differential effects these platforms and devices might have on the likelihood and extent to which information is attended and processed at all – affecting not just whether exposure occurs, but also the nature and duration of processing upon exposure.

As our discussion of attentiveness to digital, social, and mobile news suggests, attention scarcity in the digital media environment might limit the impact of exposure (Dunaway et al., 2018; Hindman, 2018). Facebook referrals drive most traffic to news websites, but referred users only stay for seconds. Mobile news consumers spend far less time reading news stories (Dunaway et al., 2018), even when exposed to them several times a day (Molyneux, 2017). What effects should we expect from such fleeting exposure? In order for media messages to affect learning, attitudes, or behaviour, they must first capture attention. Yet we are only just beginning to understand limits to attention in the digital media environment.

As we noted, newer structural formats such as the modern news feed also affect processing. They restrict choice and selectivity (thus, increasing the likelihood of incidental exposure) through algorithmic filtering and network effects. Several studies suggest that restricted choice through news feed structures increases rates of incidental exposure thereby facilitating learning (Bode, 2016) and agenda-setting effects (Feezell, 2018). News feeds also tend to blend and display social and political information in ways that shape cognitive and affective responses to encourage polarisation.

For example, Settle (2018) shows that when subjects were randomly assigned to receive higher levels of quantified feedback (i.e., more ‘likes’) on a political post, they reported higher levels of psychological attachment to their political party. The structural effects of news feeds provide a clear example of how changes to communication technology can affect information processing and opinion formation.

32.4 Where We Are, What We Can Learn from the Past, and Where to Go from Here

Much of what we know about media effects is based on a media landscape characterised by mass exposure and restricted audience choice. As choice expanded alongside news filtering and increasingly predisposed audiences, early predictions were that media influence would be substantially weakened because the conditions for exposure to news were limited for the persuadable and frequent only for those who hold increasingly rigid opinions (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2013; Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). Iyengar (2017) and others have argued that one implication of the structural changes to the media environment is that we are returning to a new era of minimal effects (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008).

Is this conclusion still merited given the explosion of research on digital, social, and mobile media in the intervening years? It is too early to tell. Old questions remain untested in the digital space, and new questions emerge alongside the development of platforms and ways of consuming media. We distil three key recommendations from the lessons explored above that will help guide research in the years to come.

First, we must widen our scope of inquiry beyond partisan selective exposure with respect to the importance of factors affecting media choice. Motivated reasoning is still a

key element influencing how people select into media, but directional goals do not always dictate motives for media selectivity (Arceneaux & Vander Wielen, 2013). These and other cognitive and affective biases operate in tandem with characteristics of political, informational, and social contexts to structure choice and processing (e.g., Bolsen et al., 2014; Druckman et al., 2013; Nir, 2011), but we are only just beginning to understand how. A key remaining unknown factor relates to the consequence of pervasive levels of affective polarisation on the way people seek out information. More broadly, in the rich media landscape of digital, social, and mobile media, we need to theorise from the affordances of the platforms to understand the factors likely influencing choice and exposure.

The second recommendation is that we cannot neglect the importance of attention in studies of media effects. Effects researchers lost sight of the importance of attention once before (Iyengar, 2017), which prolonged wide acceptance of the idea that media were capable of producing only minimal effects. A few key works helped to correct the direction of the paradigm primarily by demonstrating the theoretical importance of the distinction between exposure and attention in theories of persuasion (e.g., Zaller, 1992), and by demonstrating the methodological tools most suitable for capturing media effects (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

This is a situation we find ourselves in again, and it once again requires correction. Paying attention to attention, so to speak, means several things. We cannot repeat the mistake of the previous era: a nearly single-minded focus on how changing communication technologies impact pre-exposure processes such as selectivity and choice has resulted in relative neglect with regard to technological effects on information processing once exposure actually occurs (Dunaway & Searles, n.d.). We need to identify the ways that motivations and

cognitive biases structure information seeking and processing in the highly dynamic, visual, social, and personalised information context of digital, social, and mobile media. Simply put, research linking the digital media ecology to polarisation pays disproportionate attention to how the digital environment shapes *exposure* to political information, but far less attention to whether and how it operates in tandem with affordances and features of the media environment to govern political information *processing, acceptance, or endorsement*.

Success in this endeavour necessitates the expansion of methodological tools most capable of: (1) measuring important components of cognitive access such as attention, activation, arousal, and difficulty of cognitive processing and (2) demonstrating how communication technologies shape information content and structure in ways that constrain processing, which we maintain is a media effect.

Finally, as we try to understand how changing media technologies constrain media effects, we recommend making better distinctions between media effects born from information content and those born from information structure. Extant work on the fragmented media environment, selective exposure behaviours, and information processing signals strongly that the information contained in media messages and the complexity, slant, and valence of that content should influence the likelihood of its selection and the ease with which it is processed (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2015; Festinger, 1957; Kunda, 1990; Soroka, 2014; Stroud, 2011). As a result, we know the many reasons message content affects processing. However, the possibility of processing effects born from information structure seems relatively underappreciated in current research on media effects (but see Settle, 2018), and this is despite evidence from numerous information processing based media effects studies from the broadcast era, which made very clear that

information structure has independent effects on cognitive processing (e.g., Detenber & Reeves, 1996; Grabe et al., 2000; Lang, 2000; Lombard et al., 1997; Reeves et al., 1999).

Taking these lessons to heart can facilitate conclusions about the state of media effects in the 21st-century media marketplace. It is premature to conclude that we are in a 'new era of minimal effects'. The USA is something of an outlier when it comes to rising elite and mass affective polarisation (Boxell et al., 2020). Given contextual influences on motivated reasoning, we cannot assume homogeneous effects from the arrival of digital media across cultural, political, and institutional contexts. We know too little as of yet about the processing implications of so many changing platforms for digital communication. For example, far less is known about the frequency of incidental exposure on social media, or how the variable information blends and presentations affect information processing on these sites. Because extant research primarily tracks whether exposure happens, we know less about its effects. Finally, the idea that we are returning to an era of minimal effects only seems feasible if we restrict our search to persuasion, but there are countless other outcomes for which media could matter.

Our call in this chapter is to keep psychology front and centre in the expansion of the media effects literature in order to develop coherent and nuanced theories moving forward. To be confident in characterising media effects in the era of digital, social, and mobile media, we need to shine our light in the right places.

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33 Conspiracy Theory Belief and Conspiratorial Thinking

Christina E. Farhart

A perfect storm has been brewing across the globe: a coronavirus pandemic, social and political unrest, and conspiracy theories (CTs) flying through mainstream and social media. As such, scholars have sought to understand the situational, political, and psychological causes and consequences of CT belief. Since Hofstadter (1964), the rapid acceleration of this literature has occurred as the salience of conspiratorial rhetoric among elites and influencers has increased, particularly over the last decade.

However, CTs are not new. Some have been tied to myth and folklore, while others are implicated in the darkest parts of history – revolutions, witch-hunts, genocide, terrorism, and racial and ethnic prejudice. CTs may be a component of contemporary culture (Coady, 2006) intensified by the 24-hour media cycle and prevalence of social media, no longer simply manifestations of extremists and paranoids. Rather, CT belief is pervasive and common worldwide (e.g., Byford & Billig, 2001; Swami & Coles, 2010; Zonis & Joseph, 1994). For example, over half of Americans endorse at least one conspiratorial narrative (Oliver & Wood, 2014a) and nearly four-fifths of respondents in predominately Muslim countries believe the 9/11 attacks were carried out by US or Israeli governments (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2004).

Scholars have connected alarming developments in world politics to CTs. Populism, nationalism, xenophobia, and racism have played in parallel to world leaders using CTs

to justify authoritarianism and power consolidation (Uscinski, 2019). Misinformation and CTs have spread precipitously due to the ease of sharing across social media (Allcott et al., 2019), amplified by a 24-hour media cycle. Troublingly, correcting CTs after they spread proves difficult (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Thorson, 2015). They persist (Laine & Parakkal, 2017) and influence policy debates (Flynn et al., 2017; Nyhan, 2010) and political outcomes, such as the 2016 US presidential election (e.g., Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Guess, Nyhan, & Reifler, 2020) and Brexit (Swami et al., 2018) even after being debunked.

Moreover, CT belief correlates with illicit and anti-democratic activities, including willingness to engage in illegal behaviour (Imhoff et al., 2021), support for violence against the government or extremist intentions (Greenhill & Oppenheim, 2017; Rottweiler & Gill, 2020; Uscinski & Parent, 2014), and the spread of prejudice (Jolley et al., 2020). As salience and weaponisation of CTs increases, scholars must examine their origins, who believes them, why, and the resulting consequences. This chapter highlights the interdisciplinary roots of the study of CTs (for reviews see Douglas et al., 2019; Flynn et al., 2017), beginning with important definitions and then discussing the challenges related to measurement. Next, I highlight scholarship on the antecedents and consequences of CTs and CT belief, concluding with a few directions for future research.

33.1 Definitions: What Are We Talking About?

To start, *rumours* are a form of unverified information lacking a standard of evidence that often arise in ambiguous, dangerous, or potentially threatening contexts (DiFonzo, 2019). They circulate through a population and intensify when the rumour is ambiguous but concerns an important topic (Allport & Postman, 1947). Rumours are considered ‘claims of fact’ that have not been proven, yet continue to credibly spread because they are believed and shared (Sunstein, 2009, p. 6). Political rumours are not based on warranted beliefs (Keeley, 1999) and can become insidious forms of communication (Berinsky, 2017) contributing to democratic disfunction (Kuklinski et al., 2000).

Closely related is *misinformation*, understood broadly as wrong or false information without necessarily intending to mislead (see also Chapter 32). Nyhan and Reifler (2010) refer to ‘cases in which people’s beliefs about factual matters are not supported by clear evidence and expert opinion’ (p. 305). Southwell et al. (2018) note that misinformation speaks to ‘a category of claim for which there is at least substantial disagreement (or even consensus rejection)’ (p. 3). Thus, belief in misinformation refers to faith in unverified information (Anspach & Carlson, 2020). Whereas misinformation may not intend to mislead, disinformation does. *Disinformation* is false information like fake news, simulated documentaries, or deepfakes that spread intentionally to advance political goals or political subversion (Bennet & Livingston, 2018). Scholars link the spread of disinformation to growing legitimacy concerns in multiple democracies and declining institutional confidence, which undermines the credibility of official information and media coverage, making the public vulnerable to alternative information sources (Bennet & Livingston, 2018).

A *conspiracy* is a secret plot by two or more powerful actors (Keeley, 1999; Pigden, 1995), constructed to conceal secrets, seize power, undermine rights, or alter institutions (Douglas et al., 2019). However, they often fail or are exposed because it is challenging to keep plans and those involved quiet (Grimes, 2016; Keeley, 1999; Popper, 1972). *Conspiracy theories* encompass an allegation (regardless of truth) involving multiple coordinated, often powerful, actors or influential forces secretly plotting to ‘usurp political or economic power, violate established rights, hoard vital secrets, or unlawfully alter government institutions’ (Uscinski & Parent, 2014, p. 31). CTs may also violate democratic norms (e.g., Baden & Sharon, 2020) and are often unfalsifiable, making them difficult to debunk.

Political elites have weaponised CTs to mock and dismiss allegations against them or to impugn political opposition. However, CTs could be used as a rhetorical weapon to pathologise dissent (Wood, 2016). CTs may also reveal inconsistencies in official versions of events (e.g., Clarke, 2002), hold authorities accountable (Basham, 2003; Dentith, 2016), and even uncover real conspiracies (Swami & Coles, 2010). People use CTs to make sense of social and political realities (Radnitz & Underwood, 2017), to express values and moral feelings (Raab et al., 2013), and to explain or reinterpret uncertain events such as terrorist attacks, natural disasters, or nuclear spills (e.g., Cullen, 2019). Critical approaches focus on the historical and cultural construction of CTs (Moore, 2016), sometimes describing fringe views and other times highlighting CTs embraced by the mass public (Walker, 2019).

CT definitions determine who the *conspiracy theorists* are (Uscinski, 2019), often differentiating between those who believe in and those who propagate CTs. Philosophers have argued that there may be nothing wrong with CTs (Coady, 2006; Pigden, 1995), that it may be

rational to entertain them (Dentith, 2016), and belief may be due to a lack of alternative information (Sunstein, 2014; Sunstein & Vermeule, 2009). However, given negative connotations, the use of the term could signal irrationality, neutralising or delegitimising concerns or attempts at dissent (Orr & Husting, 2019). Those who identify resist the stigmatisation of ‘conspiracy theorist’ (Harambam & Aupers, 2017), fearing social exclusion (Lantian et al., 2018). Nevertheless, they seek a sense of community by differentiating from an out-group (Lantian et al., 2017), try to convert others to their point of view, engage in disputed political actions, and believe that the CT may lead to future change (Franks et al., 2017).

The belief in a singular or set of CTs is *conspiracy theory belief* (Douglas et al., 2019). Scholars have debated whether CT belief is ‘monological’ in that the belief in one CT predicts belief in other CTs (e.g., Goertzel, 1994; Sutton & Douglas, 2014; Swami et al., 2011; Wood et al., 2012). This may reveal an underlying belief system, or ‘self-sustaining worldview comprised of a network of mutually supportive beliefs’ even when the CTs conflict with one another (Wood et al., 2012, p. 767). Some have argued that the monological explanation lacks parsimony given that personality traits and demographic factors affect belief in specific CTs, which could create spurious correlations (Douglas et al., 2019).

Yet, the monological nature of these beliefs nonetheless provides a foundation for the study of a more generalised conspiratorial belief system. Scholars have referred to this with different terms including conspiratorial predispositions, conspiracism, conspiracy mindset or mentality, conspiracist ideation, or conspiratorial thinking (e.g., Brotherton et al., 2013; Imhoff & Bruder, 2014; Oliver & Wood, 2014a; Swami et al., 2017; Uscinski & Parent, 2014; van der Linden, 2013; Wood

et al., 2012). Conspiratorial thinking may co-vary with paranormal, religious, or pseudoscientific claims and is predicted by a willingness to believe in unseen, intentional forces and an attraction to Manichean narratives (Oliver & Wood, 2014a). Importantly, they encompass the belief that hidden powerful people or organisations are secretly manipulating events and power relations, and may illustrate an underlying tendency to prefer CT explanations because of a bias against powerful groups or official accounts (Douglas et al., 2019; Uscinski & Parent, 2014). Scholars continue to debate these definitions both within and outside of academia (Lewandowsky, 2019; Smallpage, 2019). Part of the controversy is tied to measurement, the subject to which I turn next.

33.2 Measurement: How Do We Assess CTs and CT Belief?

CT belief has been assessed in multiple ways. One way to measure belief is to create indices using specific political, contemporary, or historical CTs (e.g., Douglas & Sutton, 2008; Oliver & Wood, 2014a). Researchers often create indices combining individual CTs to test who might be more likely to endorse ‘right-leaning’ or ‘left-leaning’ theories (e.g., Miller et al., 2016). However, the validity and reliability of these scales may be subject to the set of CTs selected and whether people score high or low on a scale is due to the CTs’ believability or salience. To address concerns with validity across time and cultural context, Wood (2017) offers an adaptive scale. Others have examined the pros and cons of various survey techniques (see Berinsky, 2017; Clifford et al., 2019; Enders & Smallpage, 2019).

Alternatively, belief may be evaluated through a generalised scale to assess an underlying predisposition or ‘conspiratorial’ thought process (e.g., Hofstadter’s 1964 paranoid

style). Rather than measure specific CTs which vary across multiple dimensions including salience, plausibility, political leaning, or cultural relevance, researchers measure general tendencies towards CT belief (e.g., Brotherton et al., 2013; Bruder et al., 2013; Imhoff & Bruder, 2014). Uscinski and Parent (2014) refer to this as a ‘predisposition toward conspiratorial thinking’ (p. 14). Lantian et al. (2016) utilise a single item, whereas others use multiple items (e.g., Brotherton et al., 2013; Uscinski & Parent, 2014; see Swami et al., 2017 for a critique of existing scales).

Another complication is whether scholars are measuring true beliefs or an expressive response that reinforces an underlying world view like political ideology (e.g., Berinsky, 2017; Prior et al., 2015; Smallpage et al., 2017). Most survey formats present respondents with a CT statement and ask them to rate their agreement with the statement or the likelihood that it is true. Alternatively, open-ended questions request respondents to explain events which are then coded for accuracy and CT content (e.g., Krosnick et al., 2014). The use of open-ended measures may ensure that question format is not driving responses (Lyons et al., 2019). Clifford et al. (2019) suggest an explicit choice format, which asks respondents to choose between a conspiratorial and conventional explanation of the same event.

Beyond obstacles within survey or interview format, scholars also examine discourse and expressions of belief, particularly online and in the media (see Pasquetto et al., 2020 for social media data review; see also Chapter 32). Assessing discourse is valuable because it is not limited by researchers’ selections and allows scholars to evaluate how people engaging in the discourse create, express, and spread their CT beliefs (Douglas et al., 2019). The variety in measurement approaches allows scholars to collect larger, more representative samples

across cultural and political contexts to gain a richer understanding of CT communities and environments.

33.3 Antecedents: Where Does Belief Come From?

Only a handful of CT studies were published prior to the late 2000s but scholarship has since accelerated (Butter & Knight, 2019; McKenzie-McHarg, 2019). To understand who engages in CT belief and why, scholars have utilised psychological, sociopolitical, and situational explanations.

33.3.1 Psychological Factors

Some view CT belief as an evolutionary adaptation or by-product (van Prooijen and van Vugt, 2018). Others explain that people are drawn to CTs to make sense of the world (Hofstadter, 1964; Sunstein, 2014), explain uncertain or confusing occurrences (e.g., Leman & Cinnirella, 2013) and satisfy psychological motives: epistemic (e.g., the desire for understanding, accuracy, and subjective certainty, particularly of one’s environment), existential (e.g., the desire for control and security), and social (e.g., the desire to maintain a positive image of self or group; Douglas et al., 2017, 2019; see also Chapter 5).

Epistemic motives encompass the need to create a stable, accurate, and internally consistent understanding of the world by seeking causal explanations and patterns in one’s environment (Douglas et al., 2019). CT belief may be stronger when patterns are perceived in randomness (van der Wal et al., 2018; van Prooijen et al., 2018; Whitson & Galinsky, 2008), in line with paranormal and supernatural phenomena (Bruder et al., 2013; Drinkwater et al., 2012; Oliver & Wood, 2014a), and associated with paranoia (Grzesiak-Feldman & Ejsmont, 2008), system justification (Jolley et al., 2018;

see Chapter 37), and the need for cognitive closure (Leman & Cinnirella, 2013; Marchlewska et al., 2018). Agreeableness (Swami et al., 2011) and dogmatism (Baden & Sharon, 2020) also correlate with CT belief, as do lower levels of analytic or rational thinking (Swami et al., 2014) and hypersensitive agency detection (Douglas et al., 2016). As Douglas et al. (2019) summarised, CTs ‘appeal to individuals who seek accuracy and/or meaning, but perhaps lack the cognitive tools or experience problems that prevent them from being able to find accuracy and meaning via other more rational means’ (p. 8).

Existential motives involve the need to manage threat and concomitant anxiety (Green & Douglas, 2018; Grzesiak-Feldman, 2013; Radnitz & Underwood, 2017; Swami et al., 2016), the need for control (Sullivan et al., 2010), loss of control (Farhart et al., 2021; van Prooijen & Acker, 2015), powerlessness (Abalakina-Paap et al., 1999), alienation or anomie (Abalakina-Paap et al., 1999; Bruder et al., 2013; McHoskey, 1995), and system identity threat (Federico et al., 2018). Thus, CT belief may help some cope with a threatening, uncertain world.

Social motives encompass the need to protect one’s world view or perception of self and group membership. When a group believes it is being threatened, undervalued, or underprivileged, CTs may present an appealing explanation to maintain positive image by denigrating an out-group (Cichocka et al., 2016) or to strengthen group attachment (Mashuri & Zaduqisti, 2014; van Prooijen & Douglas, 2017). Narcissism (Cichocka et al., 2016), collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala & Federico, 2018; Golec de Zavala & Lantos, 2020; see also Chapter 13), and authoritarianism (Abalakina-Paap et al., 1999; Swami, 2012; see also Chapter 11) have been associated with domestic and international CTs linked to group identity defence. CT belief

has also exacerbated prejudice and violence, particularly concerning anti-Jewish (e.g., Byford & Billig, 2001; Grzesiak-Feldman & Ejsmont, 2008; Kofta & Sędek, 2005; Nefes, 2015a, 2015b; Nyhan & Zeitzoff, 2018; Swami, 2012) and anti-Muslim (Fekete, 2012; Grzesiak-Feldman & Ejsmont, 2008; Swami et al., 2018) CTs. Membership in marginalised, lower-status groups is likely to increase CT belief (Abalakina-Paap et al., 1999; Crocker et al., 1999; Davis et al., 2018) and out-group CTs may be fuelled by unfair treatment, police harassment (Parsons et al., 1999), and racial discrimination (Simmons & Parsons, 2005). Groups may also use CTs to justify their disadvantaged positions (Uscinski & Parent, 2014).

33.3.2 Demographic Factors

CTs are cross-cutting demographically (e.g., Abalakina-Paap et al., 1999; Swami et al., 2010; Uscinski & Parent, 2014). While education level (Douglas et al., 2016; van Prooijen, 2017) may be tied to cognitive and affective skills that enable those higher in education to counterargue or resist CTs, some find opposite effects for motivated reasoning and political knowledge (e.g., Miller et al., 2016). CT belief may be more extensive among those who are male, unmarried, less educated, lower income, unemployed, a member of an ethnic minority group, and have weaker social networks (Freeman & Bentall, 2017) and could be related to class-based alienation (Knight, 2000). Although it is unclear whether elites or the masses are more likely to engage in CT belief, some evidence suggests they engage similarly (Simmons & Parsons, 2005; Uscinski & Parent, 2014).

Cultural context – including cultural cognition – is also related to CT belief, particularly culturally situated masculinity and collectivism (Adam-Troian et al., 2020).

Relatedly, nationality and regionality play a role, as we see research on CT belief emerging from Turkey (Nefes, 2015a, 2015b, 2019), Russia (Yablokov, 2018), Europe (Kofta & Şedek, 2005; Onderco & Stoeckel, 2020), the Middle East (Nyhan & Zeitzoff, 2018; Siddiqui, 2020; Zonis & Joseph, 1994), Latin America (Filer, 2019), Indonesia (Mashuri & Zaduqisti, 2014, 2015), Malaysia (Swami, 2012), Southeast Asia (Greenhill & Oppenheim, 2017), and China (van Prooijen & Song, 2020). Understanding broader contexts of CTs across the globe should allow for the development of more generalised theories and the study of area-specific consequences.

33.3.3 Political Factors

The uncertainty and anxiety of contests for political power activate the psychological motives behind CT belief. People are also driven to believe CTs and (mis)information that impugn their political opposition, more than CTs and misinformation that impugn co-partisans or those who share ideological identification (McCloskey & Chong, 1985; Thorson, 2015). Relatedly, scholars are interested in determining whether there is an asymmetry to CT belief such that one side of the political spectrum is more likely to engage than the other (see also Chapter 26).

First, much of the work connecting CT belief and political factors is tied to motivated reasoning (e.g., Flynn et al., 2017; Kunda, 1990; Lodge & Taber, 2013; see also Chapter 8). People are likely to perceive the world in a manner that aligns with their political world view (e.g., Gaines et al., 2007; Kahan, 2013; Prior et al., 2015). As such, Republicans/conservatives endorse CTs that implicate Democrats/liberals in malevolent plots, and Democrats/liberals endorse CTs that impugn Republicans/conservatives (e.g., Enders & Smallpage, 2019; Enders et al.,

2020; Miller et al., 2016; Nyhan, 2010; Pasek et al., 2015).

Second, regarding political extremism, CT beliefs are more prevalent on the far left and far right (van Prooijen et al., 2015; see also Chapter 41), tied to precursors of terrorism-endorsing beliefs (Bartlett & Miller, 2010). Scholars point to a U-shaped function such that CT belief may be strongest at the extremes, potentially stronger on the political right (Krouwel et al., 2017; van der Linden et al., 2021; van Prooijen et al., 2015). However, others suggest that political independents or those identifying with third parties may have stronger associations with conspiratorial thinking (Uscinski et al., 2016; Uscinski & Parent, 2014).

Third, and connected to the question of political asymmetry, some scholars have failed to find a strong link between partisanship or political ideology and CT belief or conspiratorial thinking (McCloskey & Chong, 1985; Oliver & Wood, 2014a; Uscinski & Parent, 2014). However, others show that those on the political right may be more prone to CT belief (e.g., Edelson et al., 2017; Galliford & Furnham, 2017; Jost et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2016; Pasek et al., 2015; van der Linden et al., 2021; van Prooijen et al., 2015). Some argue that this could be associated with other factors correlated with conservative ideology such as right-wing authoritarianism (Grzesiak-Feldman, 2015; McHoskey, 1995; Wood & Gray, 2019) and social dominance orientation (Bruder et al., 2013; Imhoff & Bruder, 2014; Swami, 2012).

Another explanation for the asymmetry may be tied to when and where the data were collected (Enders & Smallpage, 2019). This situational factor aligns well with Uscinski and Parent (2014) who argue that CTs are more prevalent among political losers. Conspiracy narratives have been used to dispute dominant political and ideological

assumptions (Sapountzis & Condor, 2013; Uscinski, 2019). For those who find themselves among the political minority or who feel they are on the losing side of politics, they may be more likely to endorse CTs that impugn those in political power.

33.4 Consequences: What Does This Mean?

As studies continue to examine the spread, pervasiveness, and significance of CTs, scholars have sought to understand consequences in specific domains. The persistence and prevalence of CTs is concerning because belief is also associated with negative health, social, political, and environmental consequences (e.g., Douglas et al., 2019; Swami et al., 2016).

33.4.1 Spread and Exposure

The exposure to, and spread of, CTs and misinformation online (DeWitt et al., 2019) has raised alarms in recent years (Flynn et al., 2017; Southwell et al., 2018). The study of rumour spread suggests that repeated exposure may encourage belief (DiFonzo et al., 2016) or make it appear more plausible or credible (Berinsky, 2017; Lewandowsky et al., 2012). However, websites that publish factually dubious content (fake news) may be a smaller share of people's online media diets (Guess, Lockett, et al., 2020; Guess, Nyhan, & Reifler, 2020). Challengingly, debunking requires misinformation or CTs to be repeated, leading to potential backlash (Berinsky, 2017; Lewandowsky et al., 2012; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010, 2015) and failure of belief updating, even after learning they were misinformed (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010).

Online, social media creates a space for people to insulate themselves within their often homogeneous and polarised echo chambers

(see Chapter 32). These echo chambers have contributed to the spread of CTs (e.g., Allcott et al., 2019), potentially leading people to be more misinformed and to share factually incorrect information (Anspach & Carlson, 2020). Yet, why people share CTs and misinformation is still an open question, whether it is because they are angry (Klein et al., 2018), raising awareness or sounding an alarm (Uscinski & Parent, 2014), or due to a need for chaos (Miller et al., 2019; Petersen et al., 2018). Work is rapidly developing in this area, but it is clear that more research is needed.

33.4.2 Specific Domains

While an extensive review of all specific CTs is beyond the scope of this chapter, a few examples are briefly highlighted below.

Elections

CT belief, particularly conspiratorial thinking, impacts political behaviour, including reduced electoral behaviour (Uscinski & Parent, 2014). One prominent election CT widely studied is the 'Birther' CT which sought to undermine Barack Obama's legitimacy as US president (Enders, Smallpage, & Lupton, 2020). Birtherism was not only driven by political motives (Berinsky, 2017; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010), but also by racial animus towards Barack Obama (e.g., Appleby & Federico, 2018; Jardina & Traugott, 2019; Pasek et al., 2015), serving as a reminder that underlying racial attitudes co-vary with target-specific CTs.

CTs can also be persuasive political tools (Atkinson & DeWitt, 2019). Electoral contexts inspire CTs impugning political opposition, along with election and voter fraud CTs (e.g., Edelson et al., 2017). These emerge disproportionately among those who identify with the losing side (Karp et al., 2018). During the

2020 US presidential election, President Trump used social media to spread CTs that the election was stolen from him (Pennycook & Rand, 2021). Consequently, this attempt to subvert electoral processes resulted in the violent breach of the US Capitol Building while Congress was certifying the Electoral College vote count, threatening democratic institutions and free and fair elections.

Anti-science

Science and fact have increasingly become more politicised, making efforts to communicate with and convince the general public of the safety and validity of medical and scientific findings more difficult (e.g., Goertzel, 2010; Grimes, 2016; Lewandowsky et al., 2013; Nisbet et al., 2015; Pasek, 2019; Suhay & Druckman, 2015). Scholars have identified a range of scientific CTs from death panels and healthcare reforms (Berinsky, 2015; Nyhan, 2010) and public health and medical CTs (e.g., Bode & Vraga, 2018; Galliford & Furnham, 2017; Oliver & Wood, 2014b; Weigmann, 2018) to global warming and climate change (e.g., Uscinski et al., 2017). Further, scholars have identified the challenge presented when people defer to personal experience over recommendations from scientific experts (Stein et al., 2020). As such, scientific and medical CTs have resulted in serious consequences for environmental policies and public health.

Global Warming and Climate Change Denial

Despite consensus among climate scientists, a portion of the US population denies that climate change is real and anthropogenic (see also Chapter 34). Denial is tied to climate politics, partisanship, and underlying conspiracy thinking (Lewandowsky et al., 2015; for a review, see Uscinski et al., 2017). Moreover, due to the history of elite partisan cues which

trigger motivated reasoning (e.g., Bolsen et al., 2015; Saunders, 2017), statements about climate change are more threatening than those regarding global warming to the political right. Exposure to these CTs decreases pro-environmental behaviour and science acceptance (Jolley & Douglas, 2014a; van der Linden, 2015). Online behaviour has assisted the spread of scepticism and misinformation (Lewandowsky et al., 2015). Yet, Benegal and Scruggs (2018) suggest that the partisan gap may be reduced when Republican elites acknowledge scientific consensus.

Vaccine Scepticism

Vaccine scepticism is multilayered. At the societal level, decreased vaccinations have led to the re-emergence of diseases previously thought to be curbed. At the individual level, people who believe that the public is being misled about the safety and efficacy of vaccines are less likely to vaccinate themselves and/or their own children (Jolley & Douglas, 2014b, 2017). Scholars have identified problematic Dunning-Kruger effects (Motta et al., 2018), media consumption, and low trust in medical experts (Stecula et al., 2020). Politicisation decreases support for vaccines, state immunisation programmes, and confidence in doctors (Fowler & Gollust, 2015).

Related to healthcare discrimination and medical mistrust, vaccine scepticism and hesitancy among Black and African Americans (Quinn et al., 2019) presents an additional challenge for communication strategies to rebuild trust, communicate safety, counteract misinformation and CTs, and increase vaccine uptake. Specific messaging could utilise underlying psychological correlates of vaccine hesitancy (Lunz Trujillo et al., 2020), which may assist in correcting misinformed beliefs and increase vaccine uptake. Although anti-vaccine sentiment is resistant to change (Jolley & Douglas, 2017), a few scholars offer

communication strategies focused on vaccine safety and efficacy (Lyons et al., 2019; Palm et al., 2021).

Disease Spread and Prevention: AIDS, Zika, and COVID-19

The threat and uncertainty associated with outbreaks, epidemics, and pandemics often foster CTs, which can mislead people about how serious the disease really is, the risks they face, and how best to protect themselves.

Many HIV/AIDS CTs stem from historical experience and medical mistreatment of African American and Latinx communities (e.g., the Tuskegee syphilis study; Mays et al., 2012; Thomas & Quinn, 1991; Waters, 1997). Belief that birth control and HIV/AIDS are forms of genocide against African Americans correlates with negative attitudes towards contraception, potentially exposing people to unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (Bogart & Thorburn, 2006; Thorburn & Bogart, 2005). Similar results have been found in South Africa regarding AIDS denialism and other AIDS-related CTs (Nattrass, 2013).

CTs and misinformation have raised concerns during other outbreaks such as Ebola, Zika, and yellow fever (Carey et al., 2020; Spinney, 2019), exacerbated by social media (e.g., Sell et al., 2020; Wood, 2018). To combat mistrust, health officials should discuss with the public the risks of the virus, mechanisms of transmission, and confront science scepticism to reinforce the integrity of the scientists working to gather data and combat infectious diseases, possibly through fact checks (Lyons et al., 2019). However, corrective information may not reduce misperceptions or improve support for control policies and intentions to engage in preventive behaviour (Carey et al., 2020).

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the high degree of politicisation and polarisation about

the virus – in addition to right-leaning media regularly discussing CTs and misinformation – led audiences to see the virus as less dangerous and to be more reluctant to engage in protective behaviours (e.g., Motta et al., 2020; Romer & Jamieson, 2020), more so in the USA than the UK (Pennycook, McPhetres, Bago, & Rand, 2020). The pandemic created a perfect storm that activated the psychological, political, and situational factors underlying CT belief (Miller, 2020a, 2020b). The emergence of COVID-19 CTs has created challenges for controlling the spread of the virus, resistance to both preventive and containment-related behaviours (e.g., Imhoff & Lamberty, 2020; Marinthe et al., 2020), and future vaccination (e.g., Romer & Jamieson, 2020).

Whereas Miller (2020a) finds that COVID-19 CT beliefs form a monological belief system, Enders, Uscinski, Klofstad, and Stoler (2020) distinguish health-related misinformation as a product of distrust in scientists from politicised COVID-19 CTs that track more with political ideology and support for President Trump (see also Romer & Jamieson, 2020). These beliefs appear most prominent among those who feel more stressed, uncertain, anxious, worried, or helpless (e.g., Georgiou et al., 2020; Miller, 2020b), particularly among men (Cassese et al., 2020). These beliefs are also prominent among those who perceive personal risk of harm (Marinthe et al., 2020), hold anger against the state (Jolley & Paterson, 2020), and engage in denialism (Uscinski et al., 2020).

The study of COVID-19 CTs and misinformation has been a moving target, with scholars seeking solutions for policymakers and public health officials. Urging people to think about the accuracy of what they share on social media may reduce the spread of COVID-19 CTs (Pennycook, McPhetres, Zhang, et al., 2020), and promoting collectivism in messaging could improve protective

behaviours (Biddlestone et al., 2020; see also Van Bavel et al., 2020). Regardless, curbing the pandemic will require numerous approaches and interventions at the individual and societal level.

33.5 Conclusion: Where Do We Go from Here?

There are a multitude of directions for new research, stretching from methodological and measurement challenges to successful interventions. To learn more about the antecedents and consequences of CT belief, scholars will need to further investigate variation due to different contexts, and question formats, as well as differences between target-specific CTs and the multiple measures of generalised conspiratorial thinking. Methodological variation is also needed to go beyond observational and correlational studies, such as with experimental methods, longitudinal and panel studies, discourse analysis, content and text analysis, and network analysis, which will support the development of a richer study of CTs.

Second, scholars continue to unpack the influence of corrections and fact-checking (e.g., Swire & Ecker, 2018). Presenting counter-CT information to ‘inoculate’ people may reduce CT belief (Jolley & Douglas, 2017; Roozenbeek et al., 2020) and asking people directly about their beliefs may prompt deeper consideration and weaken and/or reverse the effect of exposure and improve trust (Einstein & Glick, 2015). However, corrections may fade over time (Berinsky, 2017) or backfire (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). Thus, the method and mechanism of the correction is crucial (e.g., presenting graphics instead of text; Nyhan & Reifler, 2019). Fact-checking presents promising results (Poulsen & Young, 2018; Thorson, 2018), holding elites accountable (Nyhan & Reifler, 2015) and improving trust in the media (Thorson, 2015). It may also

be important to address the reasons why people believe CTs in the first place (e.g., improving trust, or reducing anxiety). While there is promising evidence, more research is needed to explore the efficacy, efficiency, scalability, and duration of interventions.

Third, more research is needed on information environments, exposure, and spread, especially related to social media’s influence on political, social, and public health events. The question of social media’s responsibility to reduce the spread, to offer fact-checking, or to hold users accountable is complex. However, social media platforms are beginning to make algorithmic and policy changes to limit the spread of false content and suspend or ban accounts to disincentivise the fomenting of misinformation, CTs, and political violence. Much more work is needed to discern the lasting impacts on individuals, communities, and institutions, particularly among marginalised or disadvantaged groups. It is unlikely that broad weaponisation of CTs or their blaze online will cease in the near future, setting the vast stage for work to come.

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34 Political Psychology and the Climate Crisis

Nathaniel Geiger, Mike Gruszczynski, and Janet K. Swim

34.1 Climate Change as an Issue: An Overview

Climate change is a global environmental issue that requires large-scale policy change and coordinated societal change to virtually all sectors of the current socio-economic system in order to mitigate and adapt to the phenomenon. In fact, rather than a single issue, climate change can be thought of as a set of sub-issues interacting in complex ways that touch on many pre-existing issue domains within broader political and policy systems. Solutions threaten the dominant energy-generating industries worldwide; causes include the emission of carbon from coal-fired power plants, methane and nitrous oxide emissions from agricultural practices, and carbon sink losses from deforestation; affected populations range from those who live and work in Vietnam's Mekong Delta to the wealthy vacation homes situated along the United States' Eastern Seaboard. Solutions, causes, and consequences are related to many other social and environmental problems from spread of diseases, to exacerbating mental health problems, to ocean acidification. Moreover, climate change has important social justice implications, as participating in the development of solutions, contribution to climate change, and impacts are not equally distributed across many groups (Swim & Bloodhart, 2018). With its global reach, high complexity, and uncertainty in solutions, climate change can no doubt be termed a 'wicked' problem (Incropera, 2016; Kazdin, 2009).

In the same way that causes of, impacts of, and solutions to climate change are complex, public responses to climate change are also complex. For one, many of the impacts of climate change, such as harmful increases in extreme weather, are hard for untrained individuals to definitely know whether to attribute to climate change (Weber & Stern, 2011). Though climate change impacts weather, individuals who witness the weather and are not meteorologists (nor climatologists) may be unlikely to recognise subtle long-term shifts in weather patterns caused by climate change (Brulle et al., 2012), in the same way that individuals who are casual birdwatchers – but not ornithologists – may be unlikely to recognise climate impacts on the population numbers of particular species of birds (Rosenberg et al., 2019).

34.1.1 Climate Change Solutions

One driver of policy change is public support for policies to address climate change. Because climate change is so complex and multifaceted, there is not a single 'silver bullet' policy solution that can solve the issue; rather, the issue will require public support among an array of different policies to both mitigate and adapt to the issue. One approach to phasing out the use of fossil fuels is pricing carbon, for example, through a carbon tax or fee-and-dividend (Roberts, 2016). Alternative (or complementary) approaches include direct mandates on

companies (such as requiring electric utilities to produce a certain amount of their electricity through renewable sources), and large-scale government investment in the 'green' sector, such as that proposed by the Green New Deal in the USA (Roberts, 2018). Additionally, addressing climate change will require attending to transportation and housing policies; particularly in high-emission countries such as the USA, addressing climate change may be facilitated by a rethinking of the car-dependent suburban lifestyle (Atkin, 2018). Addressing climate change will also require *adapting* to changes which are already 'baked in' through policies such as relocating low-lying communities. Finally, addressing climate change may mean taking measures to reverse some of the changes that have already occurred, such as sequestering excess carbon through large-scale tree planting and technological means, and potentially even geoengineering the atmosphere to reduce sun exposure (Preston et al., 2011). Although it seems unlikely that *all* of the above measures will be enacted, building the political will to enact many of them, as well as enacting many others not discussed in the present work, will likely prevent some of the worst impacts of climate change (see Hawken, 2017, for more viable solutions).

In addition to policy support, addressing climate change will be facilitated by individuals taking action to address the issue. As a collective challenge, many of the most effective forms of climate action are indirect steps designed to promote system change rather than action directly designed to address the threat itself. For example, many forms of civic and political action, such as protests, voting, and contacting one's elected officials, can encourage elected policymakers to prioritise addressing climate change as a major issue (Thomas & Louis, 2013; see also Chapter 31). Additionally, individuals can pressure private companies to address climate change through

consumer and shareholder activism (Vandenbergh & Gilligan, 2017). One of the most impactful forms of promoting climate action may be simply discussing the topic with others in one's life because discussions can make the issue salient, correct misperceptions of public opinion and reveal that most are concerned about climate change, and can be a pathway towards both personal and collective action (Goldberg et al., 2019; Lawson et al., 2019; Swim et al., 2018).

Steps to personally reduce one's own carbon emissions, though not a panacea to address climate change, are another important movement towards addressing the threat. One particularly impactful behaviour that may be most likely to occur at the individual level may be reducing one's meat consumption, particularly red meat (Hawken, 2017). In contrast, some changes that could have a high impact may be unlikely to occur on a mass scale in the absence of systemic change. For example, a majority of Americans contribute to climate change by driving to work alone. However, Americans' tendency to drive (rather than walk, cycle, or use public transportation) is in part due to zoning laws which prevent most Americans from living close to their workplaces and transportation policy that limits non-car transportation options or makes such options unsafe (Bragg et al., 2003). Thus, enacting change in some carbon-reducing behaviours such as low-carbon transportation may need to coincide with policy changes that facilitate such behaviour, while others, such as dietary habits, may be open to cultural shifts even absent large-scale policy change (Dietz et al., 2009).

34.2 Public Response to Climate Change

Globally, individuals tend to view climate change as a threat. The median percentage of

individuals who viewed climate change as a major or minor threat was 88.5% across 27 countries examined in the 2018 Pew Global Attitudes Survey (Poughter & Castillo, 2019). Of course, this number varies across these countries, with individuals living in advanced democracies (e.g., France, Germany, Sweden, South Korea) typically showing greater concern over climate change, whereas those in less-advanced democracies (Poland, Argentina) and non-democratic (Russia, Nigeria) states exhibited concern at lower rates than the global median. As has been discussed elsewhere (Antonio & Brulle, 2011; Guber, 2013; McCright & Dunlap, 2010), views on the threat posed by climate change in the United States are both substantially lower than peer nations and more similar to countries exhibiting democratic ‘backsliding’ (at the time of writing) such as Brazil, which has long emitted high levels of CO₂ from sources such as deforestation (Rong, 2010).

In an overview of research on climate change attitudes globally since the 1980s, Capstick et al. (2015) note that, for most countries analysed, views that climate change is both an issue and necessitates large-scale policy action became solidified in the first decade of the 2000s. Variability at the intrastate level across many nations is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, public rejection of mainstream scientific views on climate change increased in key Western countries around the end of the 2000s, most notably within the United States, but also in the United Kingdom and several other Anglophone countries including Australia, at least partly due to their corporate capitalism-based economic systems (Clark & York, 2005; Kasser et al., 2007; Painter & Ashe, 2012). Climate change is also politically polarised in some parts of the world; in the United States, for example, Democrats are more likely to support climate change mitigation policies

and see climate change as existentially threatening than Republicans (Jost, 2017; Pew, 2020). Gender and age moderate Republican opposition to climate change policies; the reduced belief and engagement among Republicans is much more common among older Republicans (vs younger Republicans) and Republican men (vs women; Geiger, McLaughlin, & Velez, 2021; Pew, 2020).

There are wide variations in public support for different policies. For example, on average, support is greater for many types of mitigation policies than for many types of adaptation policies (Alló & Loureiro, 2014). However, certain types of adaptation policies, such as disaster and heatwave prevention policies, are quite popular. In contrast, policies which are perceived to involve tampering with nature, such as certain types of geoengineering, are particularly unpopular (Corner et al., 2013; Cummings et al., 2017). Additionally, people tend to prefer policies that rely on incentives rather than disincentives (Attari et al., 2009; Drews & Van den Bergh, 2016). Finally, policy support can be impacted by the location of the proposed changes detailed in the policy; for example, people are more supportive of wind turbines when the proposed turbines are to be built further away from where they live (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010).

Actions also vary widely in the extent to which people are doing them. Possibly reflecting a misunderstanding that overemphasises the importance of recycling in addressing climate change, most Americans recycle, but fewer engage in civic and collective actions to address climate change (American Psychological Association, 2020). Even with relatively low-barrier civic behaviours such as engaging in regular conversation about the topic, fewer than half of Americans regularly do so (Maibach et al., 2016). Perhaps unsurprisingly, even fewer engage in higher-cost civic behaviour, such as calling one’s representative

or participating in a rally, although many suggest that they would be willing to engage in such actions if someone who they respected asked them to do so (Leiserowitz et al., 2019).

34.3 Psychological Processes of Climate (Dis)Engagement

For many, climate change represents an ‘unobtrusive’ issue – an issue that is too complex, diffuse, and/or non-localised to directly perceive (Atwater et al., 1985). Even when individuals do experience the effects of climate change, it may be difficult in many cases to know whether they can be causally attributed to climate change or not. Other examples of typically unobtrusive issues include foreign policy events, natural disasters in other locations, and other public problems that one cannot know about without reading, hearing, or seeing them through communication such as word of mouth or media. In contrast, ‘obtrusive’ issues, which can be witnessed and experienced first-hand, include unemployment, gas prices, and crime in one’s neighbourhood (McCombs, 2004).

With unobtrusive issues, individuals typically learn about them by receiving information from several sources. Many children learn about climate change in school (Choi et al., 2010). After becoming adults, individuals might learn about climate change from media sources, including the news, their weather forecaster, documentaries, and entertainment media (Boykoff & Roberts, 2007). They might also learn about it from engaging in conversations with others (Goldberg et al., 2019; Lawson et al., 2019), or from other public places such as informal science learning centres (e.g., zoos, aquariums, national parks; Geiger, Swim, Fraser, & Flinner, 2017; Schweizer et al., 2013; Swim et al., 2017, 2018), and art exhibits (Roosen et al., 2017; Sommer et al., 2019).

Individuals’ psychological goals influence the way that they engage with climate change information. One possible goal is to accurately understand aspects of the world around them (Fiske, 2009), such as global climate change. Yet, individuals also have other goals that guide their reasoning and may come into conflict with the motive to be accurate (Hornsey & Fielding, 2017; Jost, 2017). One conflicting goal can be epistemic closure, or the motive to reason in a way to reduce anxiety-causing uncertainty (Kruglanski et al., 2010). Another conflicting goal can be relational motives, or the need to reason in a way to build shared understanding with one’s in-group and important others in one’s life, even if that understanding is factually misleading or incorrect (Stern, West, Jost, & Rule, 2014). Finally, individuals are motivated to reason in a way to foster life meaning and purpose (Jost et al., 2017).

The above goals might influence people’s reactions to climate change in several steps of motivated reasoning (see also Chapter 8). First, their goals might influence the extent to which they seek out or attend to climate change information in the first place (i.e., selective exposure to information). Individuals have a good deal of control over their exposure to climate change information, and many, especially those sceptical of mainstream scientific views on climate change, do not seek out information about climate change (Swim & Geiger, 2017), or select information that conforms to one’s own opinions, rather than information that challenges the accuracy of one’s beliefs (Hart et al., 2009). Second, their goals might influence the manner in which they choose to process the information (i.e., goal-directed motivated information processing). Motivated information processing has been documented on a variety of politicised issues, including gun control and affirmative action (Taber & Lodge, 2006). Finally, goals might influence which information they recall when contemplating

about climate change (i.e., motivated recall; Hennes et al., 2016).

The extent to which individuals are likely to engage in goal-directed motivated reasoning at each of the above possible steps can vary based on a variety of individual difference and contextual factors, and previous work hints at how to reduce such motivated reasoning. Because many people may hold a desire for accuracy and other desires at the same time, teaching individuals meta-cognitive strategies to make it easier for them to identify accurate information and increase awareness of biases can reduce climate denial (Cook & Lewandowsky, 2011; Cook et al., 2017a, 2017b; Lewandowsky et al., 2012). Some theoretical perspectives suggest that information-based efforts cannot overcome motivated reasoning because greater education simply enhances one's ability to reason towards one's desired goal (Bolsen & Druckman, 2018; Corner et al., 2012; Hart & Nisbet, 2014; Malka et al., 2009). Yet, combining information-based communication with psychologically grounded efforts to defuse goal-directed motivated reasoning has shown effectiveness at engaging politically diverse US audiences in both lab and field settings (Bales et al., 2015; Geiger, Swim, & Fraser, 2017; Myers et al., 2020; Ranney & Clark, 2016; Swim et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2013).

In Section 34.4, we explore when and why people might be likely to engage in reasoning processes that would lead them towards climate disengagement, and conversely, when and how engagement is more likely to occur.

34.4 Predictors of Climate (Dis)Engagement

34.4.1 Personal Experience

Previous work suggests mixed evidence for the effects of personally experiencing climatic

changes on engagement with the topic. On the one hand, some work suggests that exposure to climatic changes increases concern and engagement with the topic. For example, in New Zealand, proximity to the coast is associated with greater concern about climate change (Milfont et al., 2014). Having experienced climatic disasters is also positively associated with climate policy support (Alló & Loureiro, 2014). In the USA, people lower in socio-economic status (who tend to be more negatively affected by environmental issues) report greater concern about climate change (Schuldt & Pearson, 2016). On the other hand, people can use motivated information processing to interpret potential changes in weather or climate. For example, in one study, farmers who accepted that climate change was happening reported a winter as being warmer than average, while those who did not accept or were not aware of climate change reported the winter as being closer to average (Fosu-Mensah et al., 2012).

34.4.2 Perceived Congruence/Conflict with World View

Individuals are more likely to engage with climate change when such engagement is perceived to be consistent with one's world view. Supporting this perspective, greater education levels, which presumably are associated with greater awareness as to whether or not climate change conflicts with one's world view, are associated with more political polarisation on climate change: education is associated with greater climate change concern among American liberals, but associated with lesser climate change concern among American conservatives (Kahan et al., 2012).

Moral Attitudes

Support for climate action is likely to be greater when individuals view taking action

as a moral imperative (Markowitz & Shariff, 2012; Van Zomeren, 2013; see also Chapter 19). For example, asking individuals to consider the future in their decision-making, such as by asking them to consider the legacy they wish to leave (Hurlstone et al., 2020; Zaval et al., 2015), may also increase the moral relevance of climate change. Consistent with the perspective that some who accept climate science might view inaction as a moral failing, collective guilt for one's groups' contribution to climate change helps explain why acceptance of climate change is correlated with willingness to decrease one's contribution to climate change (Ferguson & Branscombe, 2010). Additionally, despite political differences in support for climate action, values that convey moral imparities to act can reach across political ideologies. For example, when communicating about climate change at aquariums and zoos, framing messages in terms of broadly shared cultural values conveying the importance of responsibly managing resources or protecting future generations can increase climate change engagement within both liberal and conservative audiences (Bales et al., 2015; Geiger, Swim, Fraser, & Flinner, 2017).

One factor contributing to political polarisation of climate change in the USA is that climate change has often been discussed using moral frames that appeal to political liberals, but not conservatives. *Moral foundations theory* argues that liberals (relative to conservatives) tend to be more motivated by the 'individualising' moral foundations of fairness/justice and caring/preventing harm, while conservatives tend to be more motivated by the 'binding' moral foundations of in-group loyalty, respecting legitimate authority, and preserving purity (Graham et al., 2009). Consistent with this theory, work has shown that environmental communication which appeals to binding moral foundations, such

as protecting the purity of nature, increases conservative support for environmental protection and climate action among Americans (Feinberg & Willer, 2013; Feygina et al., 2010; Wolsko, 2017; Wolsko et al., 2016). Interestingly, such communication did not decrease liberal support for environmental action; perhaps because the 'individualising' moral frame of caring for nature is already well established for most people in the USA.

Social Dominance Orientation

Social dominance orientation (SDO) is a tendency to support group-based hierarchies (see Chapter 11). On average, those with greater social status, such as those of dominant ethnic groups (vs minority ethnic groups) and higher-income people (vs lower income people), tend to be higher on SDO, which is argued to be a means of justifying their social advantages (Sidanius et al., 2000). Previous work suggests that SDO is robustly negatively associated with pro-environmental attitudes and support for climate policy (Häkkinen & Akrami, 2014), and consistent with demographics that tend to be high on SDO, higher-income and white Americans report less concern about climate change on average than lower-income or Americans of colour (Pearson et al., 2018). Further, experimental work suggests that decreasing SDO through intergroup contact can increase support for environmental action, even though the experimental manipulation is in another domain (Meleady et al., 2020). Interestingly, longitudinal work suggests that the SDO–climate engagement link is bidirectional, with environmental attitudes leading to lower SDO (Stanley et al., 2019).

Neoliberal Ideology

Neoliberal (or free-market) ideology refers to the belief that market-based economic systems

are the only legitimate form of economic system and that regulation or intrusion by governments and democratic processes should be as limited as possible (Heath & Gifford, 2006). Most proposed solutions to climate change conflict with neoliberal ideology as they propose democratic and/or government intervention into the economy (Campbell & Kay, 2014). Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that such ideology is associated with climate change denial and that the American tendency for political conservatives to endorse neoliberal ideology largely explains the relationship between political conservatism and climate change denial in the USA (Heath & Gifford, 2006; Hennes et al., 2016).

More work is needed to examine whether proposing market-oriented solutions to climate change might be more appealing to American conservatives and, thus, a means of reducing motivated reasoning and polarisation on this issue. Although published work has found support for this notion in laboratory and online experiments (Campbell & Kay, 2014; Kahan et al., 2015), market-oriented solutions to climate change have not been popular among political conservatives when they have been considered in various forms in real-world scenarios in the USA (for example, see Roberts, 2016). Although centre-right economists have long supported market-based solutions (e.g., a revenue-neutral carbon tax) based on their supposed efficiency, these policies have garnered low levels of support among conservative lay individuals when they are proposed (e.g., the failed carbon tax and dividend referendum in Washington State; see Roberts, 2016 for a summary). In contrast, the Green New Deal climate policy framework, which deviates sharply from free-market principles by proposing a massive government investment into green jobs, was popular among both political liberals and conservatives when first proposed (prior to critical

media coverage on conservative media outlets; Gustafson et al., 2019). The fact that some non-free-market solutions might be more popular with many conservatives than many free-market solutions makes more sense in light of evidence suggesting that most political conservatives are not strongly ideologically free-market oriented and many who self-identify as conservative hold progressive, non-free-market-oriented views on many policy issues (Mason, 2018; also see Section 34.4.3). Thus, the extent to which neoliberal ideology is a key barrier to climate engagement among lay individuals is unclear.

Attitude towards System Change

Addressing climate change will likely require major change to many aspects of the socio-economic systems in which people reside. Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that people's attitudes towards the possibility of systemic change predicts their belief in, and engagement with, climate change. Research has examined several aspects of individuals' attitudes towards system change. For example, belief in a just world (and, thus, that no system change is necessary) is associated with motivated recall of anti-climate change information (Hennes et al., 2016). Similarly, individual differences in system justification, which demonstrate a preference for keeping the status quo, are associated with denial of climate change (Feygina et al., 2010). Other work suggests that right-wing authoritarianism, a construct which theoretically describes lack of comfort with change and diversity, is a predictor of climate inaction (Stanley et al., 2019), though this relationship is not always found (Häkkinen & Akrami, 2014). As another example, ascribing secret revolutionary or 'radical leftist' motives to environmentalists has also been associated with reduced concern about climate change among some (Hoffarth

& Hodson, 2016). Thus, it appears that awareness that climate change will likely entail systemic change, in combination with discomfort with the types of changes that are perceived to be necessary, may foster lack of engagement with, and resistance to, climate action.

34.4.3 Social Cues

It is often unclear to know how to react to climate change. Because of this, individuals may look to others to see how to react. The tendency for social cues to guide behaviour in unclear situations has been well documented in basic social psychological research for decades (Darley & Latané, 1968), and a meta-analysis suggests that social influence is a robust influence on pro-environmental behaviour (Abrahamse & Steg, 2013). First, the extent to which others appear to be concerned about a potential threat can provide information about the relevance of the threat. Second, observing the ways in which others are acting can provide information as to what sorts of actions are considered socially acceptable. Below, we consider two sources of social information: elite cues and peer cues.

Elite Cues

When faced with a wicked, complex problem, individuals typically turn to trusted leaders for cues as to whether and how to think about and act on that issue; thus, *who* individuals turn to for guidance is key to understanding what they invariably end up thinking and doing. Theoretically, individuals may be particularly likely to defer to elites' opinions on issues when they are unable or unmotivated to fully understand an issue on their own (Chaiken, 1980; Zaller, 1992). This is particularly the case when attitudes are still fluid on a recent social issue – although American beliefs about climate change appear to have become more

stable and more polarised since the 2010s (Capstick et al., 2015; Chapter 25; but also see Jenkins-Smith et al., 2020). Given that climate change issues are both large scale and, for many, still not recognisable (or at least possible to ignore) within their immediate environment, elite stances on these issues are especially impactful. In the case of an issue such as climate change, which may be obtrusive for those living along a rising coastline but unobtrusive for those in a country's interior, the formation of attitudes related both to the perception of climate change as a problem *and* views on policy options to solving it relies quite heavily on elite behaviour and, in particular, their messaging on climate change as an issue. As such, elite cues act as a 'top-down', or institutional, force on promoting or discouraging climate action (Jacquet et al., 2014).

Political Elites

One source of information about climate change is from political elites from one's own political party. The vast majority of work has examined signals sent by US political elites from the two major US political parties who have increasingly diverged in their signalling around science-oriented issues over the past few decades, particularly with regard to climate change (Antonio & Brulle, 2011). This previous work in the (mostly) US context, though not fully generalisable to other countries, does provide a springboard from which to understand the role of elite messaging in attitude formation among members of the public.

The US two-party system is an example of a pluralist political system, which is characterised by political elites who gain power by assembling coalitions of interests. Within these systems, those political parties that derive power from capitalist enterprises – raw material extraction, manufacturing, and production – have moved from outright

hostility towards pro-environmental policy (for example, under US president Ronald Reagan) to an ‘anti-reflexivity’ stance in more recent years, which is characterised by non-decision-making and sowing public uncertainty in environmental and climate affairs (McCright & Dunlap, 2010). This strategic spread of uncertainty is also a heavily used strategy within right-wing politics (and its media) in the United Kingdom (Painter & Ashe, 2012). Both the USA and the UK exhibit concurrent pushes by both media (Boykoff & Mansfield, 2008; Painter & Ashe, 2012) and political elites (Anderegg & Goldsmith, 2014; Merkley & Stecula, 2018) to either publish and express cynicism about, or outright discount, climate change as a pressing issue. In turn, these elite cues can influence public attitudes and behaviour via several mechanisms, most prominently including the *party over policy* effect (e.g., Cohen, 2003) whereby lay individuals are willing to support policies that go against one’s professed ideological beliefs if informed that elites from one’s own party support the given policy.

Scientific Elites

Scientific elites may provide additional information about the threat of climate change. Many Americans are unaware that over 97% of scientific experts largely agree on the core principles of anthropogenic climate change; the *gateway belief model* argues that communicating about this scientific consensus can open the door to action-promoting perceptions of climate change (van der Linden et al., 2015, 2019), although research is conflicting as to whether this communication can ‘break through’ the political polarisation in the USA or not (Bolsen & Druckman, 2018; Goldberg et al., 2019). Further, although scientists can advocate for policies to address climate change without any loss of credibility (Kotcher et al., 2017), it is less clear that

scientists who are unknown to their audience enjoy any particular persuasive power for convincing others of the merits of specific policies (Geiger, 2020; Geiger, Sarge, & Comfort, 2021). Finally, individuals may also form opinions based on climate scientists’ *actions*: the notion that climate change is a serious and urgent threat may appear more credible when scientific experts who are familiar with the problem appear to have adjusted their personal behaviour in light of their awareness of the issue (Attari et al., 2019; Sparkman & Attari, 2020).

Scientific elites’ power to promote awareness and engagement with climate change may be further limited by their disconnect from the public in many areas of the world. Scientists have low name familiarity: as of 2017, most Americans could not name a single living scientist (Briseno, 2017). Further, in contrast to the 97% of scientists who largely agree on anthropogenic climate change, many news outlets tend to overselect ‘contrarians’ (i.e., individuals portraying themselves as scientific experts who do not endorse mainstream scientific views on climate science; Petersen et al., 2019). This ‘false balance’ (i.e., portraying a false impression of disagreement among climate scientists) is especially common in the United Kingdom and the United States (Brüggemann & Engesser, 2017; Merkley & Stecula, 2018).

Other Elites

Beyond political and scientific elites, other elite voices may also influence climate engagement. For example, Pope Francis can heighten moral beliefs about climate change (Schuldt et al., 2017). Similarly, weather forecasters may also influence beliefs: attending to weather forecasters is associated with awareness of increases in local extreme weather and climate change concern across the political spectrum, particularly when weather forecasters provide

effective messaging about climate change (Bloodhart et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2013).

Peer Cues

When in unfamiliar situations, individuals also look to ‘average’ people around them to determine how to behave and make decisions. Meta-analytic work suggests that various forms of interpersonal influence rank highly among the most effective strategies for pro-environmental behaviour change (Abrahamse & Steg, 2013), and a social network analysis also shows this to be true (in particular, for behaviours which are more likely to be visible to others; Geiger et al., 2019). Additionally, other evidence suggests that individuals are more willing to discuss climate change when they believe that most others around them share their opinion on the topic (Geiger & Swim, 2016). Perceptions of others’ opinions can likewise influence beliefs and policy support (Ballew, Rosenthal, et al., 2020; Mildenerger & Tingley, 2017; Schuldt et al., 2019; Sokoloski et al., 2018).

Conformity can also be driven by norms within specific in-groups. Because political parties and self-described ideologies are relevant in-groups for many (Mason, 2018; Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018), US conservatives and Republicans may avoid climate action when they believe that taking such action is not socially acceptable within their in-group. For example, politically conservative individuals in some cases have a negative automatic reaction to pro-environmental behaviour when political identity is made salient or they believe that they are engaging in more pro-environmental behaviour than other conservatives in their peer groups, even when they have positive attitudes towards the behaviour in general (Geiger et al., 2020). Research indicates that political polarisation is grounded in social identity because cues about whether one’s own party

supports the policy (and the opposition policy does not support it) influences the extent of support for policies (Ehret et al., 2018; see also Chapter 25).

Interestingly, people conform to perceptions of what others are doing and thinking even when such perceptions are inaccurate – a phenomenon known as pluralistic ignorance (Prentice & Miller, 1993). On a variety of issues (Rabinowitz et al., 2016; Stern, West, & Schmitt, 2014), political conservatives tend to overestimate the percentage of people who agree with them (false consensus) and liberals underestimate the percentage of people who agree with them (false uniqueness). Together, these two patterns of misperception tend to create a pattern of pluralistic ignorance (Miller & McFarland, 1987) on issues that liberals are concerned about, whereby people underestimate others’ concern on these topics. Consistent with this notion, pluralistic ignorance has been found on climate change: people tend to underestimate the percentage of others who they perceive to be concerned about climate change (Geiger & Swim, 2016; Leviston et al., 2013). Pluralistic ignorance may be particularly pronounced when individuals estimate the environmental concern of low-income individuals and minorities who rank among the most concerned about environmental issues, but are perceived to be among the least concerned (Ballew, Pearson, et al., 2020; Pearson et al., 2018).

34.5 Conclusion

The current chapter has examined why individuals become (or fail to become) engaged with climate change. Key takeaways are (1) that multiple motives (including but not limited to the desire to be accurate) can influence how individuals engage with information about climate change, (2) that individuals are likely to interpret climate change information

within the context of how it appears to align with their own world view, and (3) that social cues – from both elites and peers – can be key sources of understanding how one should respond to climate change.

Much of this previous work has examined climate change as though it were an issue in isolation, yet, as we noted at the beginning of the chapter, climate change is a ‘wicked problem’ irrevocably intertwined with virtually all other major societal issues. Emerging research is beginning to consider individuals’ reactions to the nexus of climate change and societal issues, such as racial and economic divides (Ballew, Pearson, et al., 2020; Pearson et al., 2018), immigration (Graça, 2020), and public health (Ecker et al., 2020; Myers et al., 2012). As the connections between climate change and other such issues become more unmistakable and better understood by scientists and the public in the coming years, perhaps this work will provide a roadmap for where (some) political psychological research into climate change is headed.

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35 The Political Psychology of Cyberterrorism

Ryan Shandler, Keren L. G. Snider, and Daphna Canetti

35.1 The Dawn of Cyberterrorism

If it weren't for a once-in-a-century pandemic, an acrimonious election, and a pair of presidential impeachments, 2020 would likely have been remembered as the year that a new generation of cyberthreats reared its head. For many years, the threat of cyberterrorism was vastly inflated in the public consciousness. Political and security officials regaled us with predictions of an impending *cyber pearl harbor* and expounded on the vulnerability of our critical infrastructure (Bumiller & Shanker, 2012). These hyperbolic accounts turned out to be premature.

Yet in the last year a string of attacks has reawakened the threat of lethal cyberattacks. First, in April 2020, Iranian hackers succeeded in infiltrating a water plant in Israel where they nearly succeeded in raising the amount of chlorine in the water supply – an attack that would have killed scores of civilians (Heller, 2020). Later, in Germany, an errant ransomware attack on a Düsseldorf hospital left a woman dead after surgeons had to cancel life-saving surgery (Tidy, 2020). Last, in Florida, hackers remotely accessed a water treatment plant and briefly changed the levels of lye in the drinking water (Robles & Perlroth, 2021). Collectively, these attacks herald the dawn of kinetic cyberterrorism, a more restrained era of cyberthreats that cause real – yet limited – physical consequences.

The phenomenon of cyberterrorism raises a series of questions for political psychologists,

most importantly – is cyberterrorism a topic worth researching? This question does not belittle the significance of the concept, but rather probes the extent to which cyberterrorism is a distinct phenomenon with underlying mechanisms that diverge from classical (i.e., physical or kinetic) terrorism. In writing this chapter, we assert an affirmative answer. Cyberterrorism poses a qualitatively new threat to modern society, and the manner that people perceive and respond to the threat is distinctly different from conventional threats of terrorism and political violence. Public polling supports this contention, with surveys revealing mounting trepidation among the public about the destructive capacity of cyberterrorism (McCarthy, 2016; Norman, 2018). This grave perception of the scope of a cyberthreat may or may not resemble an objective reality (see, for example, Lawson, 2019; Valeriano & Maness, 2015), yet the fact that the public views it as such can have tangible political consequences. In short, the nature of terrorism is shifting – our understandings of the effects of new forms of terrorism need to shift, too. In this chapter, we meet this need by mapping a budding collection of theories and empirical research and proposing a consolidated mechanism according to which we can

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understand the psycho-political effects of exposure to cyberterrorism. The essence of our argument can be summarised as follows:

Exposure to cyberterrorism causes shifts in political attitudes through intervening mechanisms comprising emotional distress. Both the emotional intervening variables and the political outcomes will bear similarities to those following exposure to conventional terrorism, although the direction and strength of these effects will vary. This variance reflects the unique features of cyberspace including attribution difficulties, ease of entry, transnational reach, and the abundance of digitally connected targets – and also the significant gap in civilian knowledge regarding cyberspace, which results in widespread misperceptions and inflated emotional distress.

How, though, are we to define cyberterrorism? Dorothy Denning's seminal, yet relatively narrow, understanding of cyberterrorism as the 'convergence of terrorism and cyberspace' remains the best-known and most widely used definition (Denning, 2000, p. 71). Yet we prefer the more recent variants that acknowledge that, like with terrorism, cyberterrorism must be intended to produce physically destructive consequences (Denning, 2007; Egloff, 2020). For example, a widely adopted definition by Lachow (2009, p. 434) views cyberterrorism as 'a computer based attack or threat of attack intended to intimidate or coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are political, religious, or ideological'. Yet importantly, Lachow adds an additional 'physically destructive' requirement, noting that '[t]he attack should be sufficiently destructive or disruptive to generate fear comparable to that from physical acts of terrorism. Attacks that lead to death or bodily injury, extended power outages, plane crashes, water contamination, or major economic losses would be examples ... Attacks

that disrupt nonessential services or that are mainly a costly nuisance would not [be cyberterrorism]' (p. 434). Adopting this definition, we distinguish our analysis from cybercrime, cybervandalism, and information warfare – some of which lack the requisite intent to intimidate and coerce the public in pursuit of political goals, and all of which lack the requisite destructive properties to be cyberterrorism.

Many of the studies reviewed throughout this chapter specifically differentiate *lethal cyberterrorism* from *non-lethal cyberterrorism*. Lethal cyberterrorism refers to cyberterror attacks that cause lethal consequences as a first- or second-degree outcome of the attack. For example, a cyberterror attack that causes a train to derail would be considered lethal cyberterrorism. These kinds of attacks are exceedingly rare and reflect a future-oriented view of what cyberterrorism could be. While scholars have rightly stepped back from an earlier and premature view that envisioned the onset of cyber-Armageddon, this destructive/non-destructive dichotomy of cyberterrorism is still prevalent in the literature. Non-lethal cyberterrorism, by contrast, is taken to mean cyberterror attacks that do not result in lethal consequences. For example, cyberattacks that steal money with the aim of undermining faith in the financial system would be considered non-lethal cyberterrorism.

An additional dilemma in the definitional debate is whether states may be deemed capable of conducting cyberterrorism. The literature is unsettled on this point. Classical typologies of terrorism often require the involvement of non-state actors – '[t]here exists considerable "expert" support for the validity of the proposition that states can indeed engage in cyberterrorism' (Macdonald et al., 2015, p. 62). This is particularly significant, since at this point in

time, the technical and financial challenges of designing physically destructive cyber weaponry require the resources and technical expertise of states.

Positing the existence of a distinct cyberterrorism effect that requires the development of new models is a bold claim. Not every technological breakthrough or novel terror strategy warrants the re-evaluation of psycho-political theories of exposure, which have proven resilient to change. Cyberterrorism tracks a middle ground between technological breakthroughs that constitute tactical developments to which traditional political psychology theories still apply, and new strategic weapons such as nuclear power that so fundamentally altered the nature of the terror threat that it required the development of new theories of escalation, deterrence, and civilian exposure (Nye, 2011). What makes cyberterrorism so different from conventional terrorism are several features unique to cyberspace. The ability of perpetrators to act anonymously, or at least impede attempts at attribution, allows actors to avoid detection in a new manner (Lindsay, 2015). The low barriers to entry enable even under-resourced groups who may otherwise be unable to facilitate attacks to attain destructive capacities that do not require financial or infrastructural resources (Eun & AÖmann, 2016).¹ The borderless nature of cyberspace allows actors to project power globally and instantaneously such that its effects are not geographically constrained. And the ubiquitous presence of cyber outlets enables new avenues to attack both critical infrastructure and civilians in the safety of their own homes.

We note that cyberterrorism has given rise to a broad range of research topics related to political attitudes, human security, and the behaviour and motivations of cyberterror perpetrators. For most of these issues, we

are only beginning to see the first trickle of empirical research to buttress the much more prevalent theoretical conjecture. In an attempt to move the field beyond its initial theoretical base, this chapter will focus on the leading empirical studies that have emerged in recent years – studies that primarily concentrate on civilian exposure to cyberterrorism. We will begin by presenting a consolidated political psychology model of exposure to cyberterrorism that will guide our analysis throughout the remainder of the chapter. We will then apply this model to two political outcomes that recur in the empirical literature – public confidence and trust in institutions, and foreign policy attitudes (see also Chapter 29). Finally, we will pinpoint the key gaps in our understanding of the psycho-political effects of cyberterrorism exposure and propose a research agenda that attempts to account for the evolving nature of the field.

35.2 A Political-Psychology Approach to Cyberterrorism

To understand the political effects of exposure to cyberterrorism, we need to know something about both political systems and human psychology. This dual focus is premised on the idea that people respond to threats in different ways, and only by understanding individual psychological reactions can we make sense of how exposure translates to concrete

¹ We note a prominent critique of the conventional wisdom that low barriers to entry truly exist in cyberspace (Cavelty, 2010; Denning, 2009; Slayton, 2017). According to this critique, organisations attempting to project cyberforce will encounter significant technical and financial challenges seeing as custom-built software requires high-level information technology, skills, and substantial financial and organisational resources that are not easily acquired.

political outcomes. A psycho-political approach is especially applicable for cyberterrorism, since the effects of terror attacks are designed to spark fear and uncertainty in the civilian population. The internal logic of cyberterrorism views the emotional public as the soft underbelly of society through which terrorists can realise wider political objectives. In practical terms, when the public response to a cyberterror incident is dominated by feelings of fear or anxiety, public support should increase for protective policies that would lower their perception of the threat (e.g., strengthened cybersecurity regulations). By contrast, public sentiment characterised by anger would likely lead to demands for aggressive and vengeful counterterrorism responses. Yet reality is rarely so neatly ordered, and we must account for a sophisticated web of conflicting cognitive and affective intervening variables that combine to guide political attitudes and preferences. It is for this reason that we choose to examine cyberterrorism through the lens of political psychology.

Over the last 20 years, especially since the 9/11 attacks, a political psychology approach has enriched our understanding of the political effects of individual-level exposure to conventional (non-cyber) terrorism and political violence. What we have learned, in essence, is that emotional responses to violence are residues of exposure to life events and external shocks which elicit certain coping behaviours (Canetti, 2017). Arousing specific emotions – even those with similarly negative valence (like anger, anxiety, and dread) – causes distinct and often divergent effects on attitudes, behaviour, and decision-making (see Chapter 9). Following from the widespread adoption of these principles, it is now well established that emotional distress explains how exposure to terrorism undermines one's sense of security and feelings of vulnerability (Huddy et al., 2005; Neria et al., 2011; Silver et al., 2002),

fosters a threatening world view and increases support for hard-line policies (Bleich et al., 2003; Bonanno & Jost, 2006), causes a rightward shift on security and privacy issues (Janoff-Bulman & Usoof-Thowfeek, 2009) and leads to increased demands for governments to take strong military action against terror groups (Canetti et al., 2013; McDermott, 2010).

Yet how does this literature on conventional terrorism and political violence translate to cyberterrorism specifically? Scholars have identified several qualities unique to cyberterrorism that activate distinct emotional responses that influence the strength and direction of political outcomes. Gomez and Villar (2018) and Kostyuk and Wayne (2020) persuasively explain how the public's *lack of technical sophistication and unfamiliarity* in dealing with cyberspace ferment feelings of dread, uncertainty, and heightened threat perception. Bada and Nurse (2020) liken this phenomenon to 'learned helplessness' – a process that fosters apathy since people feel they can neither understand nor defend against cyberattacks. Similarly, a collection of research has highlighted how the inherent *anonymity and mystique* of cyberspace influences psychological responses, with invisible and uncontrollable perpetrators viewed as omniscient digital actors (Dunn Cavelti, 2012; Hansen & Nissenbaum, 2009). McDermott (2019) submits that the *speed of the Internet* and the ensuing need for instantaneous decision-making in the context of cyberconflict could increase stress, lower concentration, and compromise decision-making. Still another quality of cyberterrorism that may influence emotional corollaries is its unique depiction in popular media. There is widespread agreement that the *media portrayal of cyberterrorism as an existential threat*, or in other words, the 'cyber-doom narrative', amplifies threat perception and emotional response to a large

degree (Dunn Caveltly, 2019; Jarvis et al., 2017; Lawson, 2019).

Taking these features of cyberterrorism into account, the literature has begun to coalesce around several key intervening psychological variables that mediate between exposure to cyberterrorism and political outcomes. These factors appear in Figure 35.1.

It is worth noting that the two interceding emotional variables that most frequently appear in cyberterrorism research are anxiety and anger. These two emotions form a prominent dualism in the literature on political violence – a fact that has converted smoothly into cyberterrorism research. The political effects of anger and anxiety are grounded in Lerner and Keltner’s (2001) emotional

appraisal model (see also Chapter 9). According to this theory, anxiety is linked to a sense of uncertainty and lack of control, which increases risk aversion and heightens support for low-risk actions. By contrast, anger arises from a desire to rectify perceived injustice and is therefore associated with more aggressive policy outcomes.

So far, the empirical research has produced consistent outcomes with regards to anxiety. Anxiety is a future-oriented emotional state characterised by feelings of apprehension and accompanied by the arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Following Huddy et al. (2005), we refer to anxiety as an umbrella term for fear, anxiety, and worry. Anxiety is a product of monitoring for potential threats – the

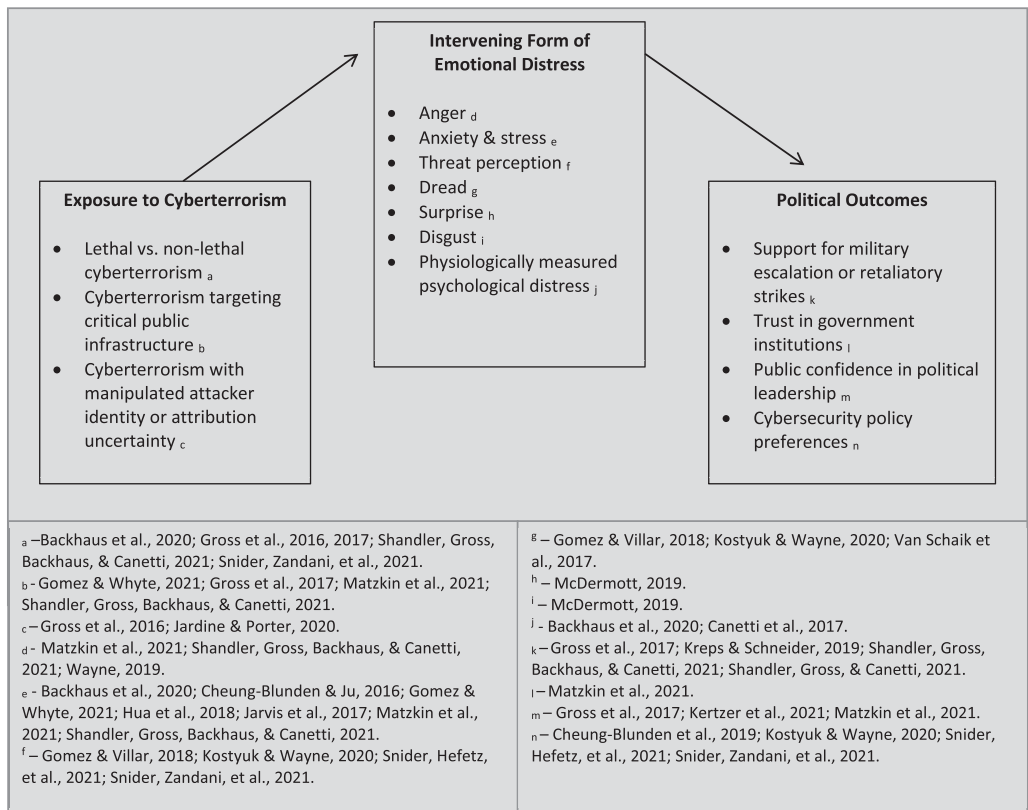


Figure 35.1 Political psychology model of exposure to cyberterrorism

more uncertain the threat, the greater the anxiety. As such, exposure to terrorism elicits anxiety because acts of terrorism are perceived as unpredictable, random, and difficult to counter or avoid (Canetti-Nisim et al., 2009; Slone & Shoshani, 2006). In a series of studies testing whether exposure to cyberterrorism raises anxiety, Gross et al. (2016) confirmed that both lethal and non-lethal cyberterrorism are indeed capable of triggering visceral anxiety. This result was replicated by Backhaus et al. (2020), who measured anxiety via salivary cortisol. Cheung-Blunden et al. (2019) has repeatedly identified the onset of anxiety following cyberattacks, with Cheung-Blunden and Ju (2016) replicating this finding under both naturally and experimentally induced anxiety conditions. We note, however, that Gomez and Whyte (2021) argue that this effect may diminish over time due to the oversaturation of cyber-doom appeals that numb the public. This corresponds with similar findings regarding conventional terrorism, wherein overexposure to terror threats and fearmongering can minimise the salience of the threat.

Anger, too, has featured prominently in the empirical research on cyberterrorism. Exposure to terror events is understandably accompanied by anger, of which the underlying drive is often defined as a desire to correct perceived injustice (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Halperin et al., 2011). Since cyberterrorism directly transgresses norms regarding the use of force, exposure is especially likely to evoke anger and a desire for remedial or retaliatory actions (Gomez, 2021). Recent research suggests that the ‘dominant response of civilian populations to terror threat is not fear and a desire to reduce future personal risk, but rather anger and a desire for vengeance’ (Wayne, 2019, p. 5). This finding was buttressed by Shandler, Gross, Backhaus, and Canetti (2021) whose multi-country study found that only anger – and not anxiety or threat perception – mediated the relationship

between exposure to cyberterrorism and support for militant policies.

While anger and anxiety have naturally comprised the main focus of the psychological mechanisms underlying exposure to cyberterrorism, several innovative studies have incorporated alternative emotional and cognitive variables that relate more directly to the particular qualities of cyberspace. Snider, Zandani, et al. (2021) concluded that *threat perception*, a cognitive discernment of threat posed to physical or symbolic resources, plays an important role in mediating exposure to cyberterrorism and support for cybersecurity policy preferences. Since the scope of the perceived threat is driven by the level of familiarity, we would certainly expect that cyberterrorism would increase threat perception considering its unfamiliar, unpredictable, and indiscriminate nature. Gomez and Villar (2018) have tied the perception of cyberthreats to the feeling of *dread* using the lens of cognitive heuristics, while Van Schaik et al. (2017) has also linked cyberthreat perception and dread. McDermott (2019) has theorised that surprise and disgust are both variables of interest in the realm of cyber conflict. Since cyberattacks are characterised by a great deal of uncertainty and time urgency, the feeling of *surprise* is likely to shape the nature of decision-making and increase the assessment of responsibility (McDermott, 2019). *Disgust*, according to McDermott, would be activated in situations where cyberattacks target critical domestic systems and are linked to demands for aggressive retaliatory responses. Bada and Nurse (2020) and Nurse (2018) have also suggested a role for *apathy* and *shame*.

35.3 The Political Effects of Cyberterrorism

The spectrum of political outcomes associated with exposure to cyberterrorism is practically

boundless. Looking back to conventional terrorism as a guiding force, scholars have examined political outcomes ranging from political ideology and political participation, to radicalisation and support for violence. While many of these studies are valuable, it has been noted that many cybersecurity studies tend to lack methodological rigour and epistemological outlooks, falling into the trap of engaging in purely speculative conjecture with low empirical validity (Valeriano & Gomez, 2020). In this chapter, we choose to focus on two political outcomes that have attracted the most empirical research attention – public confidence and foreign policy attitudes.

We highlight these political phenomena for several reasons. Public confidence is a classic variable in the field of political psychology with a deep well of theories and models from which to draw. It is especially fitting to look at public confidence in the context of cyberterrorism since the twisted logic of terrorism is predicated on provoking a sense of fear and vulnerability in the wider population and undermining confidence in the government. The second political outcome is foreign policy attitudes in general, with a particular focus on support for military retaliation. We examine this topic due to its prominence in the nascent empirical literature on cyberterrorism. Additionally, this topic raises an interesting question about how cyberterrorism, conducted through a non-physical digital realm, can manifest cross-domain political consequences through heightened militancy and support for real-world military action.

35.3.1 Cyberterrorism and Public Confidence

Terrorist attacks are by their very nature designed to erode public confidence and elicit shifts in individual behaviour that disrupt daily life. These attacks are designed to shake

society's trust in the government's ability to function and defend against future attacks. We define public confidence as the subjective assessment of the ability of governments, leaders, and security institutions to prevent attacks and maintain a functioning state (Baldwin et al., 2008). Political psychologists have probed this connection at length and produced sophisticated cognitive and affective models that explain how exposure to terrorism translates to heightened or reduced public confidence. Perhaps counter-intuitively, the majority of studies conclude that exposure to terrorism amplifies public support for government policies and public confidence in government institutions (Chanley, 2002; Huddy et al., 2005), a fact that is not necessarily tied to rational processing of the government's competence in the face of the terror threat, but rather by the need for psychological security due to an environment of fear, uncertainty, anger, and outrage (see Merolla & Zechmeister, 2009; Sunstein, 2009).

We posit that the advent of cyberterrorism upends, and even reverses, these mechanisms. The reason for this is that cyberterrorism possesses qualities that are prone to specifically affect confidence. Foremost among these is the attribution dilemma, or the quality of ambiguity surrounding the identification of cyber perpetrators. This attributional difficulty works in multiple directions. The absence of knowledge about the identity of an attacker can heighten the perception of risk due to the omniscience so often associated with cyber operatives (Dunn Cavely, 2012). Alternatively, the lack of attribution could leave victims perplexed rather than terrorised (Gartzke, 2013). A second quality relates to perceptions about the government's ability to identify the perpetrators. If civilians believe that security forces can't or won't identify major cyberattacks, then this acts as a key point of difference in the confidence equation (see Maschmeyer

et al., 2020 for an analysis of how threat reporting under-represents particular segments of society). Though it is closely related, we must pause and distinguish between information warfare and cyberterrorism. The majority of the literature relating to cyberthreats and public confidence relates to disinformation campaigns against democratic institutions using cyber tools. Though many of the patterns identified recur in the information warfare literature, our designation of cyberterrorism as requiring a physically destructive quality means that a full discussion on this topic lies beyond the remit of this chapter.

Perhaps the central question that should guide our examination of the effect of cyberterrorism on public confidence is *confidence in what or whom?* The obvious response is likely to be confidence in the government. But even this can be broken down by *actor* (confidence in the president; confidence in the national security apparatus; confidence in the government as an institution) or by *means* (confidence in the government's ability to protect the country against security threats; confidence in the government's general effectiveness). A subset of this classification that is often raised when discussing terrorism and public opinion is the 'rally round the flag' effect, which relates to short-term spikes in support for a country's leaders following an international attack. The short-term/long-term focus adds a temporal factor to the connection between exposure and confidence, though it also adds additional risks by conflating support and confidence.

We direct our analysis to consider how cyberterrorism interacts with public confidence in leaders – otherwise known as the rally effect. In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, approval ratings for President George W. Bush soared to 90% (Hetherington & Nelson, 2003). This became the archetypal example of the rally round the flag effect, a phenomenon that had been formally introduced by John Mueller

in the 1970s. The rally round the flag theory identified a sharp (yet short-term) spike in approval and trust in a country's president in circumstances that met specific criteria: a sudden and international event taking place on the international level that is relevant to society as a whole, and that involves the direct participation of the president in solving the problem vis-à-vis a personified 'other'. Political psychology has a clear role to play in these circumstances since in 'instances of sudden, dramatic, and international conflict, the salience and intensity of emotional appraisal, particularly the feelings of anger or anxiety, become the primary bases for evaluating government' (Ojeda, 2016, p. 76). Applying this well-developed theory to the case of cyberterrorism provides an opportunity to explore how the cyber quality of the attacks alters the core theoretical mechanism. Kertzer et al. (2021) sought to do just that by conducting a novel survey experiment and analysing an original dataset of public opinion polls that followed publicly acknowledged cyberattacks against United States targets. The research team theorised that, in contrast to conventional terrorism, cyberthreats would activate higher levels of anxiety due to the difficulty in identifying the attacker and the sense of omniscience surrounding cyber actors. The authors propose an 'uncertainty-distrust mechanism' according to which cyberattacks corrode public confidence – a theory that would upend the typical cohesion effect that underlies the rally phenomenon in the aftermath of conventional terror attacks. The data offered tentative support for this uncertainty mechanism. On the one hand, the results surprisingly revealed the presence of mild rally effects in the aftermath of cyberattacks against the USA. Yet on the other hand, the results also exposed how cyberattacks significantly lower public confidence in the ability of governmental institutions to effectively respond to future cyberthreats.

Looking at public confidence in the government's ability to defend against security threats, we can observe a contrasting trend, indicating a need for additional research. One study by Gross et al. (2017) in Israel compared the self-reported levels of confidence in the government's ability to defend critical infrastructure and protect personal data following simulated conventional-terror or cyberterror attacks launched by Hamas. The results indicated no significant variance in levels of confidence between the conditions, indicating that cyberterrorism and conventional terrorism will have comparable effects on public confidence. Another study by Matzkin et al. (2021) similarly exposed participants to simulated video clips of lethal and non-lethal cyber and conventional terrorism. Once again, the research found no evidence that confidence levels varied across exposure to different forms of terrorism. The authors posited that this uniform response was due to a consistent appraisal of threat in a way that offered a sense of control over the situation.

Both Matzkin and colleagues (2021; which relied on self-reported emotional measures) and Backhaus et al. (2020; which measured anxiety through physiological stress hormones such as cortisol) observed higher levels of anxiety than anger in respondents following exposure to cyberterrorism incidents. This is noteworthy as rally effects and public confidence are typically fuelled by anger. That cyberterrorism is more closely associated with anxiety than anger supports the uncertainty–distrust mechanism proposal that the uncertainty inherent in cyberattacks will reduce support for incumbent leaders and government institutions.

35.3.2 Cyberterrorism and Foreign Policy Attitudes

A key political outcome of interest that is often associated with exposure to terrorism

and political violence is foreign policy attitudes in general, and support for retaliatory strikes in particular. The intuitive nexus between exposure to terrorism and foreign policy attitudes is that civilians who are exposed to political violence adopt attitudes in relation to the attackers – be it a demand for revenge, or a desire to end the violence. According to the shattered assumptions theory, for example, exposure to political violence causes feelings of vulnerability that people seek to overcome via defensive coping attitudes that translate to policy positions (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Building on this theory, the stress-based model of political extremism developed by Canetti et al. (2014) suggested that exposure to violence leads to psychological distress and heightened threat perception, which in turn predicts the adoption of hawkish political attitudes. In relation to cyberterrorism, we propose that a thorough account of the relationship between exposure to cyberterrorism and foreign policy attitudes will integrate contextual, psychological, and political variables. The relevant contextual variables pertain to the type of cyberterror attack that is launched (lethal attacks vs. non-lethal attacks; attributed attacks vs. anonymous attacks), as well as the underlying context of security, digital proficiency, and political efficacy that exposed individuals possess. As yet, two related research directions have emerged that look at exposure to cyberterrorism and foreign policy preferences: (1) exposure to cyberterrorism and support for retaliatory strikes and militant attitudes; and (2) exposure to cyberterrorism and support for the use of cyber weapons specifically. As described below, most of the research reveals that exposure to cyberattacks leads to public demands for aggressive and escalatory responses. It is interesting to note that this diverges from research on the behaviour of elites and security officials who tend to

espouse restraint in the aftermath of cyber-incidents (Schneider, 2017; Valeriano & Jensen, 2019).

Canetti et al. (2017) and Gross et al. (2016, 2017) published a seminal series of papers related to this topic. This was the first set of research that sought to empirically measure the effects of public exposure to cyberterrorism under controlled experimental conditions. The key finding was that exposure to cyberterrorism is sufficient to manifest heightened desire for retaliation, and even for physical military conflagrations. This was a formative discovery since cyberattacks up until then were viewed as more of a nuisance, incapable of inflicting genuine terror or damage, and certainly unable to evoke demands for lethal, military retaliation. These papers laid the foundation to understand three key principles. First, that cyberterrorism was severe enough to generate significant negative emotions at equivalent levels to those of conventional terror acts. Second, that even in democratic societies, such exposure was directly connected to the adoption of militaristic political positions, demands for physical retaliation, and support for intrusive surveillance policies. Third, that a cluster of emotional distress indicators intervene in these pathways, similarly to the way that those factors influence the effects of conventional terrorism.

Building on this foundation, other research has sought to refine a more precise psychopolitical mechanism that distinguished cyberterrorism from conventional terrorism. According to Shandler, Gross, Backhaus, and Canetti's (2021) Cyber Lethality Threshold Theory, only lethal cyberterrorism triggers strong support for retaliation. In this way, we observe a *lethality threshold* for cyberterrorism effects, wherein the outcome of the attack must meet a minimum level of destructiveness to trigger emotional responses and produce political outcomes at levels akin to conventional

terrorism. They explain the lethality threshold by theorising that non-lethal cyberterrorism is more associated with cybercrime due to the fact that the absence of deadly consequences and the absence of an immediately identifiable perpetrator cloud the scope and intent of the attack – both of which are important indicators through which the public perceives an act as terrorism. This research also found that the mechanism underpinning support for retaliation is driven by a mediated model where exposure to terrorism causes anger, which in turn drives the political effects. In this way, cyberterrorism resembles conventional terrorism. This paradoxical discernment of a distinct cyberterrorism effect that operates according to the same psychological mechanism as conventional terrorism reveals the need for additional research to hone the precise elements of similarity and difference.

A second research direction has explored how exposure to cyberterrorism influences support for the use of cyber weapons particularly. Implicit in this thematic direction are questions about cyber-escalation and the principle of retaliatory equivalence. Specifically, will exposure to cyberterrorism trigger heightened support for retaliatory cyberattacks? Is such support predicated on a principle of retaliatory equivalence that has long underlined military and public support for military strikes? Are there particular types of cyberterror attacks that justify different forms of retaliation? Echoing the earlier claim of a distinct cyberterrorism effect, Kreps and Schneider (2019) persuasively argued that cyber domains are qualitatively different from conventional, and even nuclear, military domains such that support for escalation following attacks 'can be defined more by the means used to create effects than the effects themselves' (p. 2). This argument suggests that it is the very nature of a cyberattack that will encourage particular

types of retaliation, and not the consequences of the attack.

Shandler, Gross, and Canetti (2021) extended this topic in a multi-country experiment that offered different forms of retaliatory options to respondents who were exposed to cyber and conventional terror attacks. They found that support for the use of cyber weapons to retaliate against cyberattacks was consistently and significantly higher than support for the use of missiles and other conventional means. What was interesting in this analysis was that the heightened support for the use of cyber weapons dissipated almost entirely if the respondents were exposed to *lethal* cyberattacks. This signifies that support for cyber weapons is predicated on their perception as non-lethal or less threatening military options, and that exposure to destructive cyberattacks undercuts this perception, significantly diminishing its appeal.

A recurring comment in many of these studies is that the identity of the attacker will influence foreign policy preferences by altering the intervening effect of anxiety or anger. Focusing on attacker identity raises several research challenges, as it is often difficult to confidently ascribe a cyberattack to a concrete perpetrator. Even if the attack can be successfully attributed, there is myriad evidence of states subcontracting their cyber operations to proxy groups (Lindsay, 2013; Valeriano & Maness, 2018). Jardine and Porter (2020) have attempted to isolate the effect of attacker provenance through a discrete choice experimental design that manipulates the level of certainty about the identity of an attacker. They conclude that the uncertainty about attacker identity can inhibit public support for aggressive foreign policy options. What is lacking from this and other studies on support for use of cyber weapons is a robust explanation about the psychological mechanisms underlying the support for escalation or cyber-retaliation.

This is the next stage in the development of this line of research.

35.4 Conclusion and Future Directions

The advent of cyberterrorism poses a significant and growing threat to modern society. This chapter asserts that neither individual psychology nor political context alone is sufficient to explain the effects of cyberterrorism, and that a political psychology approach is needed to guide our analyses. Having reviewed the budding empirical literature, we find that individual exposure to cyberterrorism in democratic societies causes shifts in political attitudes through intervening mechanisms comprising emotional distress. Both the emotional intervening variables and the subsequent political outcomes bear similarities to those following exposure to conventional terrorism, although the direction and strength of these effects vary. This variance reflects the unique features of cyberterrorism and affirms the need to adopt new psycho-political models.

Cyberterrorism is still a nascent phenomenon. Only in the last decade have systematic empirical studies begun to explore the political effects of cyberterrorism. In this short time, several robust and empirically tested theories have emerged that can help us understand this phenomenon. Shandler, Gross, Backhaus, and Canetti (2021) confirmed a lethality threshold for cyberterrorism wherein the emotionally driven political effects are only activated when the cyberterror attack causes lethal consequences. Kertzer et al. (2021) introduced an ‘uncertainty–distrust mechanism’ according to which cyberthreats cause public confidence to erode, in contrast to the typically cohesive effect of conventional terror attacks. Kostyuk and Wayne (2020) drew on psychological theories of risk perception to explain public behaviour that is inconsistent with self-reported

concern, while Gomez and Villar (2018) presented a mechanism that explains how uncertainty in the cyber realm activates incorrect cognitive heuristics leading to erroneous decision-making. Yet despite these theoretical advances, the relative youth of the field means that the literature has yet to cover the full spectrum of political effects or emotional variables, nor tap into the full range of methodological tools. With this in mind, we conclude by marking five research foci and methodological instruments that can advance this budding field.

First, the initial empirical research on cyberterrorism has understandably centred on a narrow range of intervening emotional variables that draws from established terrorism models. More than half of all research on cyberterrorism highlights the role of anxiety and anger, with a smaller number of projects pushing the boundaries by exploring the emotions of dread and threat perception. While these findings offer a strong theoretical foundation, we encourage future research to consider additional intervening variables that relate to the specific qualities of cyberterrorism. These include disgust and surprise as persuasively postulated by McDermott (2019), and apathy and shame as suggested by Bada and Nurse (2020) and Nurse (2018). Likewise, the political outcomes are limited to a small number of variables pertaining to foreign policy attitudes and public confidence. The next phase in research should consider additional political outcomes. One possibility is support for government regulation of cyberspace and cybersecurity regulations. Studies by Snider, Zandani, et al. (2021) and Cheung-Blunden et al. (2019) have begun to touch on the topic of cybersecurity preferences in the aftermath of cyberattacks, and in doing so have laid out a strong research agenda. Another promising direction is to consider political *behaviour* in response to cyberterrorism, and not just attitudes.

Second, the vast majority of research up until now has focused on civilian exposure to cyberterrorism. The next steps should focus on the political psychology of perpetrators. We acknowledge that such an endeavour is highly challenging due to the difficulty of access and the inherent violence of terror perpetrators. Initial steps in this direction have been taken by Lee et al. (2021) who adapted space transition theory to the case of cyberterrorists to explain the non-conforming behaviour of terrorists as they transition from a physical space to cyberspace. Holt et al. (2017) and Kruglanski (2019) have begun to consider the correlates of participation in cyberterrorism and the factors that influence individual willingness to conduct attacks.

Third, from a methodological perspective, we encourage future studies to incorporate physiological measurement techniques to gauge emotional states. The use of physiological measures in recent years by researchers such as McDermott and Hatemi (2014) and Canetti et al. (2014) has considerably advanced our understanding of the mechanisms underlying exposure to political violence. While studies measuring salivary cortisol have begun to proliferate in relation to cyberterrorism (Backhaus et al., 2020; Canetti et al., 2017), there is still much work to do to understand the underlying physiological responses to cyberthreats.

Fourth, we urge researchers to consider both theoretical and practical mechanisms that can minimise the negative political effects of cyberterrorism by intervening at the emotional level. 'In times of stress and threat, there is a strong need to reduce uncertainty by creating a comprehensible and coherent environment that provides a meaningful picture of traumatic events' (Canetti, 2017, p. 941). Hua et al. (2018), for example, explore the antecedents of resilience to cyberterror attacks on financial infrastructure and conclude with

concrete strategies to foster resilience. Similarly, Gomez and Villar (2018) propose potential organisational solutions to mitigate feelings of dread. Snider, Hefetz, et al. (2021) have begun to re-evaluate how public support for pervasive state surveillance can mitigate perceived threats in response to cyberattacks. This research radically recasts the age-old debate on security versus liberty for a digital era and is primed to be a central avenue of future research in the field.

Last, we applaud the creativity of researchers who, in the absence of real-world destructive cyberattacks, have introduced a resourceful array of experimental processes such as video-clips and vignettes to simulate cyberterrorism incidents. As the field matures, researchers will need to adopt other robust experimental manipulations such as natural experiments, quasi experiments, and additional controlled randomised experiments that more closely reflect cyberterrorism events. Some early multidimensional research that reflects more sophisticated experimental treatments include war game simulations run by Gomez and Whyte (2020), Jensen and Valeriano (2019), and Schneider (2017), as well as survey experiments by Kreps and Schneider (2019), yet the field would benefit from more multifaceted empirical research.

We conclude with the following message. Cyberterrorism has long been regarded as the next big threat. Though we refrain from echoing the exaggerated predictions of cyber-Armageddon that proliferated in the past, we do anticipate that more limited acts of destructive cyberterrorism are likely to occur in the future. When such attacks do occur, we will need to understand how people will respond. The objective of a political-psychology approach is to recognise the human dimension of cyberterrorism while still considering the larger political effects. Each person possesses

a unique dispositional composition of character traits, resilience, emotional temperaments, and reactivity to negative outcomes. These intervening psychological variables are the key to understanding how exposure translates to political behaviours and attitudes.

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36 Reconciliation in the Aftermath of Collective Violence

Johanna Ray Vollhardt, Hu Young Jeong, and Rezarta Bilali

36.1 Reconciliation in the Aftermath of Collective Violence

In the aftermath of collective violence – such as war (Čorkalo Biruški et al., 2014), genocide (Staub, 2006), political violence (Cárdenas et al., 2015), or colonisation (Licata et al., 2018) – reconciliation is supposed to ensure that violent conflict does not re-erupt after official treaties have brought it to a halt. This requires attention to the psychological processes that were shaped by each group's role as victims or perpetrators of violence, as well as to the sociopolitical context in the aftermath of violence – both of which can create obstacles to (versus facilitate) peace and reconciliation. The literature in political and social psychology on predictors and facets of reconciliation is vast, and an exhaustive review is beyond the scope of this chapter (see Nadler et al., 2008; Nadler & Shnabel, 2015; Staub, 2006). Instead, we focus on five broad categories of psychological processes that are central to this literature, and that obstruct or facilitate reconciliation in the aftermath of collective violence.

36.1.1 Conceptualisations of Reconciliation

There are many different definitions and operationalisations of the term 'reconciliation'. Sometimes it is used interchangeably with intergroup forgiveness (e.g., Noor et al., 2008). In many other cases it refers to a collection of positive intergroup attitudes towards

the former adversary or perpetrator group (e.g., Shnabel et al., 2009). What most definitions have in common is the emphasis on *change*. Most political and social psychologists studying reconciliation focus on a 'changed psychological orientation towards the other' (Staub, 2006, p. 868) involving more positive attitudes towards the former adversary or perpetrator group. In other words, *relational changes* (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015) such as in intergroup trust (Čorkalo Biruški et al., 2014; Nadler & Shnabel, 2015), mutual acceptance and humanising the other (Staub & Bar-Tal, 2003), and willingness to engage in contact with the adversary (Čorkalo Biruški et al., 2014). However, reconciliation also involves change on the intragroup level – specifically, *identity changes* (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015) such as reducing identity threats (Staub, 2006) or changing identity content (Subašić & Reynolds, 2009).

Finally, despite the tendency to focus on individual attitudes in psychological research on reconciliation, several authors also point out the need for *structural change* (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015) that involves transforming power structures and increasing equality between groups (Rouhana, 2018) through institutional (Staub, 2006) and sociocultural change (Bar-Tal, 2000). Accordingly, in addition to focusing on attitudes towards the former adversary group, it is important to examine support for transitional justice mechanisms that aim to hold perpetrators accountable and change power relations through trials

and tribunals (e.g., Li et al., 2018), truth and reconciliation commissions (e.g., Cárdenas et al., 2015), power sharing (e.g., Vollhardt & Bilali, 2015), or reparations and redistribution of wealth (e.g., Berndsen & McGarty, 2010).

To achieve these changes, which are *outcomes* of reconciliation, different *processes* of reconciliation need to occur – including socio-emotional processes to remove the psychological barriers that prevent reconciliation (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015). In the present chapter, we focus on five such socio-emotional barriers to reconciliation (and the corresponding facilitators of reconciliation), which also influence each other: identity, collective memories of collective victimisation, acknowledgement versus denial of collective violence, emotions, and justice (see Figure 36.1). Where available, we discuss interventions based on each process. We focus on findings from the aftermath of collective violence, where direct violence

such as war, genocide, or colonialism has officially ended; and less on intractable conflict or ongoing settler-colonialism (although reconciliation has been examined in this context, too; e.g., see Bar-Tal, 2000; Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2016; Nadler & Shnabel, 2015). We concur with Rouhana (2018) that in these cases, decolonisation and justice are more relevant goals. The risk of ignoring ongoing inequalities, power differences, and impunity exists for post-violence reconciliation as well (Opatow, 2001), especially in cases of asymmetric violence (Penić et al., 2021). We therefore pay particular attention to power and context in the present review.

36.2 Identity and Identity Threats

Considering the importance of social identities in intergroup conflicts, several reconciliation models focus on identity-related processes.

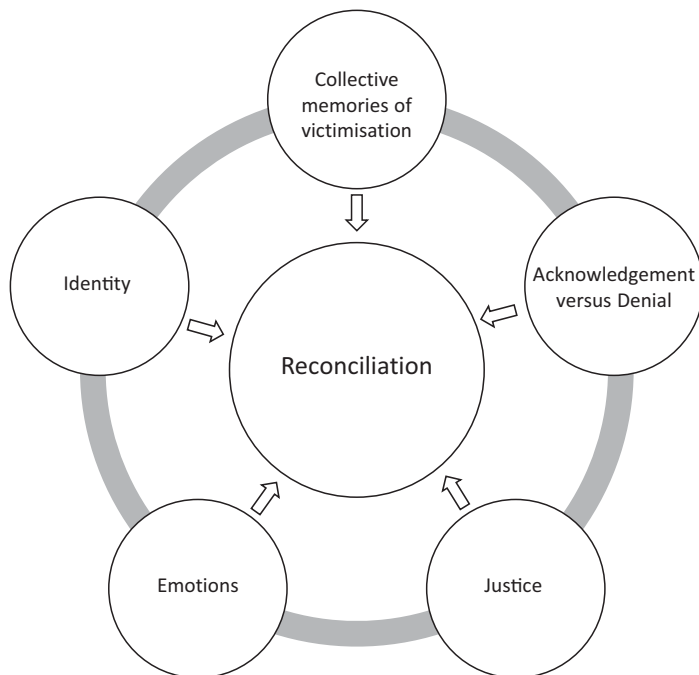


Figure 36.1 Interrelated social psychological influences on reconciliation

First, the *scope and inclusiveness* of identities matter. For instance, the influential Common Ingroup Identification Model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) posits that including former out-groups into a shared, superordinate category increases positive intergroup attitudes. Applying this model to post-conflict settings, some findings suggest that recategorising ethnic, religious, or political out-groups into an inclusive superordinate category such as the national in-group predicts more positive attitudes towards previous adversaries (e.g., Licata et al., 2012; Noor et al., 2008). However, important limitations to this approach have also emerged, especially in contexts of intergroup power differences in the aftermath of violence (Saguy, 2018). For example, in post-genocide Rwanda, where – in the name of promoting reconciliation – referring to ethnic subgroup identities has been outlawed in favour of the superordinate national identity, the superordinate identification as Rwandan was associated with higher support for reconciliation among those who were not members of the victim group than among the victim group (Kanazayire et al., 2014). Qualitative research in this context suggests that the imposed superordinate identity was seen by some members of both groups as denying the groups' different histories, and that people still found ways to stereotype and discriminate against the other group (Moss & Vollhardt, 2016). Moreover, research among White and Indigenous Australians who were asked to read about historical violence against Indigenous children in Australia revealed problematic effects of a superordinate categorisation focusing on shared humanity: among members of the victim group, it increased forgiveness towards perpetrators (i.e., relational reconciliation), but undermined the motivation to participate in collective action against ongoing inequalities (i.e., structural change; see also Chapter 31); among perpetrator group

members, it reduced empathy towards the victim group while increasing expectations of forgiveness (Greenaway et al., 2011, 2012).

The group's identity *content* also affects willingness for reconciliation (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2000). Group identities might incorporate values, norms, and beliefs that perpetuate conflict and undermine reconciliation, such as beliefs that justify violence perpetrated against the out-group, glorify the in-group, or delegitimise the out-group. Reconciliation, therefore, often requires transforming the content of group identities in ways that are more conducive to reconciliation (Subašić & Reynolds, 2009). For example, this can entail acknowledging the historical perpetrator role or ongoing structural violence and inequality in the aftermath of direct violence, and incorporating this recognition into representations of the perpetrator group's identity (Nadler, 2012; Subašić & Reynolds, 2009).

Finally, collective violence gives rise to different *identity threats* to victim and perpetrator groups. Nadler and Shnabel (2015) argue that perpetrating violence threatens the in-group's image and moral identity (i.e., the moral-social dimension of identity), whereas victimisation threatens the in-group's power (i.e., the agency dimension of identity). In response to image and morality threats, the need for a positive identity might lead perpetrator groups to justify violence and delegitimise or dehumanise the out-group (Bandura, 1999). By contrast, members of victim groups may feel disempowered and humiliated, and therefore seek actions to restore their power and dignity. These assumptions underlie the needs-based model of reconciliation, which proposes that reconciliation efforts should address the different identity concerns of perpetrators and victims: by restoring the victim's agency and power through processes such as acknowledgement, empowerment, and justice; and by restoring perpetrator groups' need for a

positive identity through acceptance (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015; Shnabel et al., 2009). Specifically, the needs-based model of reconciliation suggests that reconciliation can be promoted through exchange of reciprocal messages that restore these impaired identity dimensions. For instance, in the contexts of the Holocaust and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, messages of empowerment (allegedly) from the perpetrator group increased victim group members' willingness to reconcile, while messages of acceptance purportedly from the victim group increased perpetrator group members' willingness to reconcile (Shnabel et al., 2009). However, in real-world settings outside of the lab, these messages may not be realistic or trusted, and messages that work best for one group may create backlash among the other group by intensifying the other group's identity threats linked to acknowledging collective victimisation (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019).

36.2.1 Interventions Focused on Identity

Interventions based on the moral exemplar model of reconciliation avoid these risks by targeting identity threats to the perpetrator group using real historical information, while also improving victim groups' attitudes (Čehajić-Clancy & Bilewicz, 2020). This model proposes that learning about moral exemplars (i.e., members of the perpetrator or bystander groups who risked their life during a genocide to save members of the targeted group) can foster intergroup reconciliation. Among the perpetrator group, exposure to *in-group* moral exemplars should reduce the moral identity threat of having committed violence and open up people to relational reconciliation with the victim group. Critically, this same information should also reduce essentialised views of the perpetrator group as immoral among victim group members learning about *out-group*

moral exemplars. Indeed, across several studies in diverse contexts of historical atrocities, reading about *in-group* moral exemplars increased perpetrator group members' openness for contact and positive feelings about the victim group (Witkowska et al., 2019). Additionally, reading about *out-group* moral exemplars increased forgiveness among members of victimised groups (Beneda et al., 2018). Including moral exemplars in existing reconciliation interventions (e.g., intergroup contact interventions, peace education) can also increase their effectiveness and reduce backlash (Bilewicz & Jaworska, 2013; Čehajić-Clancy & Bilewicz, 2017).

36.3 Collective Memories of Collective Victimhood

Collective memories of collective victimhood – that is, the belief that the *in-group* has suffered unjust, destructive, and intentional harm caused by an *out-group* (Bar-Tal et al., 2009) – are also central to identities in the aftermath of violence. Memories of *in-group* victimisation experienced by one generation are passed down to the subsequent generations through family narratives, education, and collective commemoration (Bar-Tal, 2000; Taylor et al., 2020). Collective memories inform how the present is understood and influence expectations for the future, thereby shaping intergroup relations (Bilali & Ross, 2012). Accordingly, how historical victimisation is construed can either hinder or facilitate reconciliation (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Čorkalo Biruški et al., 2014; Vollhardt, 2012a).

Collective victimhood can hinder the reconciliatory process by giving the group a sense of moral entitlement and perceived necessity to defend the *in-group* with excessive force (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Vollhardt, 2012b). This has been observed among high-power groups with histories of collective victimisation that

are currently perpetrating violence against other groups. For example, among Jewish Israelis, perceived historical victimisation of the Jewish people predicted less willingness to compromise, and increased justification for violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Schori-Eyal et al., 2014). Similarly, reminders of past victimisation such as the Holocaust (for Jewish participants) or the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (for participants in the USA) reduced collective guilt for using violence in an unrelated conflict (i.e., against Palestinians or Iraqis, respectively; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008).

However, these effects also depend on how the in-group's victimisation is subjectively construed – that is, on collective victim beliefs (Vollhardt, 2012a). One important distinction is between *exclusive victim beliefs* (Vollhardt, 2012a) that portray the in-group's victimisation as unique or as more severe than other groups' experiences (*competitive victimhood*; Noor et al., 2012) and *inclusive victim beliefs* (Vollhardt, 2012a, 2015) that entail perceived similarities between the in-group's and out-groups' victimhood. Exclusive victim beliefs are often linked to attitudes that hinder reconciliation. For example, in post-genocide Rwanda, post-war Burundi, and in the context of ongoing violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, competitive victimhood predicted negative relational attitudes including social distance from ethnic out-groups, intolerance and distrust, and resistance to structural change (i.e., sharing resources and political power with the out-group; Vollhardt & Bilali, 2015). Similarly, competitive victimhood in post accord Northern Ireland (Cohrs et al., 2015; Noor et al., 2008) and post-conflict Chile (Noor et al., 2008) predicted negative relational outcomes such as less out-group trust, less out-group empathy, increased justification of the in-group's past violence, and less willingness to forgive the out-group.

Conversely, inclusive victim beliefs are often linked to processes that facilitate reconciliation. For example, framing the groups' (i.e., Jews' and Native Canadians') victimisation inclusively as violence committed by humans against other humans – instead of as committed by one group against another – increased willingness to forgive the respective perpetrator group (Wohl & Branscombe, 2005). In Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, inclusive victim beliefs predicted more positive attitudes towards former adversaries or perpetrator groups – specifically, willingness to speak out against injustice against out-groups – and positive attitudes towards structural change – specifically, support for inclusive leaders (Vollhardt & Bilali, 2015).

However, there are several caveats. First, selective inclusive victimhood that only focuses on groups with a similar conflict position may be used to bolster claims of competitive victimhood and impede reconciliation (Cohrs et al., 2015). This is particularly problematic when such claims are used by the high-power group in asymmetric conflicts – which points to the need to focus on power relations involved in inclusive victimhood claims (i.e., who is expressing similarity with whom, and why; McNeill & Vollhardt, 2020). For example, when the perpetrator group claims that 'everyone' suffered – as did the Turkish prime minister Recep Erdoğan by equating the Armenian genocide with losses among all ethnic groups during the First World War – it denies the in-group's responsibility for violence and delegitimises the victim group's quest for justice (McNeill & Vollhardt, 2020). In other words, it promotes impunity and undermines reconciliation (Opatow, 2001). Inclusive victim beliefs expressed by dominant groups claiming similarities with currently disadvantaged groups also ignore present-day inequalities and power differences,

thereby undermining the need for reconciliation to also involve structural change (Subašić & Reynolds, 2009; see also Greenaway et al., 2011, 2012). Therefore, inclusive framings of collective victimisation must avoid being overly inclusive and abstract, and acknowledge not just similarities, but also differences, in groups' experiences (Vollhardt, 2013).

36.3.1 Interventions Addressing Collective Victimhood

Despite these caveats, changing construals of collective victimhood is a potentially promising intervention strategy to promote reconciliation. Two assessments of media-based reconciliation interventions in post-genocide Rwanda (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2013) and post-war Burundi (Bilali et al., 2016) suggest that a fictional radio drama reduced competitive victimhood (in Burundi; in Rwanda the effect was marginally significant) and increased inclusive victim beliefs (in Rwanda, but not in Burundi). The storyline of this long-term intervention portrays cyclical violence between members of two fictional ethnic groups. This may allow listeners to empathise with other groups' experiences of victimisation and process similarities with their own group's experience *without* the reactance or defensiveness that may occur when confronted with real narratives of other groups' suffering, particularly that of the adversary group (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2013; Bilali et al., 2016).

36.4 Acknowledgement versus Denial

One way in which historical victimisation continues to affect reconciliation in the aftermath of violence is through other groups' current reactions to it – specifically, whether it is acknowledged by the perpetrator group, or denied. Acknowledgement of in-group

victimisation by out-groups has been described as a central need in the aftermath of collective violence (Minow, 1998). However, for perpetrator groups, acknowledging responsibility for harm-doing creates a major identity threat in addition to material concerns about accountability and reparations – which is why denial is widespread (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019). Therefore, the acknowledgement of collective violence creates a major conflict between victim and perpetrator groups and is an obstacle to reconciliation in the aftermath of violence.

Acknowledgement and denial take on many forms, ranging from more subtle to more blatant. Cohen (2001) distinguishes between literal, interpretative, or implicatory denial. Literal (or factual) denial is blatant and involves refuting that a violent event occurred at all. Because literal denial is difficult when evidence is available, interpretative denial (i.e., denying the specific meaning of the event, portraying it as something else) is more common. This includes, for example, Turkey referring to the Armenian genocide as 'intercommunal warfare' (Bilali, 2013) or White Americans ignoring or silencing information about the genocide against Native Americans (Fryberg & Eason, 2017), or atrocities against Black Americans when teaching about Black History Month (Salter & Adams, 2016). Acknowledgement can also take on several forms that build on each other (Twali et al., 2020). The basic level is factual acknowledgement, which addresses who was targeted and what happened, from the victim group's perspective (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019). Empathic acknowledgement validates the victim group's suffering, which often continues into the present (Starzyk & Ross, 2008). The next, psychologically more challenging step involves the perpetrator group's acknowledgement of responsibility – which is very rare (Leach et al., 2013). Nadler (2012; see also Twali

et al., 2020) suggested that the most complete form of acknowledgement occurs when perpetrators not only acknowledge responsibility for the violence, but also incorporate this knowledge into their collective identity. However, this poses an obvious identity threat. Therefore, even in rare cases like post-war Germany where this has been achieved to some extent due to external pressures, it often creates backlash (Imhoff et al., 2013).

36.4.1 Victim Groups' Perspectives

Acknowledgement has positive effects on people's willingness to reconcile with the perpetrator group. Among Jewish Americans and Armenian Americans, reading about instances of the perpetrator group's *factual acknowledgement* of the in-group's victimisation increased willingness to reconcile with the perpetrator group compared to reading about denial by members of the perpetrator group or a control condition (Vollhardt et al., 2014). Among Palestinians in the West Bank, perceived *empathic acknowledgement* of Palestinian suffering by Israeli Jews predicted endorsing the belief that a reconciled future was possible (Hameiri & Nadler, 2017). In another study, Bangladeshis read about the mass atrocities committed by the Pakistani military against Bangladeshis during the independence war. When they also received information that Pakistani citizens generally acknowledged responsibility for the atrocities, they expressed more positive attitudes towards Pakistanis compared to participants who read about widespread denial in Pakistan (Iqbal & Bilali, 2018): Specifically, they expressed more willingness for contact with members of the perpetrator group, and less animosity. These effects were partially explained by a decreased sense of injustice and anger when reading about widespread acknowledgement among the perpetrator group. Conversely, reading

about Pakistanis' denial of responsibility for the mass atrocities decreased Bangladeshis' willingness for contact and increased animosity towards Pakistanis, in part due to increased anger.

36.4.2 Perpetrator Groups' Perspectives

When confronted with the in-group's harming, members of perpetrator groups either adopt defensive strategies such as denying the violence and dehumanising the victims, or constructive strategies such as acknowledgement and support for policies to restore the harm done (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019). Which strategy is adopted depends on the structural and political consequences of acknowledgement, and on the psychological resources that group members have for coping with the moral identity threats. Defensive strategies are the most common response to atrocities committed by the in-group (Leach et al., 2013). Historical defensiveness is a key barrier to reconciliation (Bilewicz, 2016): it predicts less support for justice, such as reparations (Bilali, 2013) and greater legitimisation of policies that maintain inequalities between groups (Sibley et al., 2008).

Group members sometimes do acknowledge the in-group's past atrocities. This is more likely when they can restore the in-group's moral status (Gausel et al., 2012). For instance, among US samples, reducing lay dispositionist beliefs that a group that committed a transgression is inherently immoral increased the belief that groups can change (i.e., perceived group malleability), which in turn increased acknowledgement of the US government's responsibility for supporting a coup d'état and atrocities in Guatemala (Bilali et al., 2019). Similarly, when Australians were informed that reparations for violence the in-group committed against its Indigenous peoples were feasible, it increased their

willingness to acknowledge the in-group's responsibility for violence committed against indigenous Australian children (Berndsen & McGarty, 2010). Overall, these studies suggest that providing group members with strategies to cope with the moral threat constructively through self-reform and redress can reduce defensive reactions to past in-group harm-doing (Gausel et al., 2012), which otherwise pose obstacles to reconciliation.

36.4.3 Interventions to Increase Acknowledgement

There are different strategies to address denial of past injustices among perpetrator groups (Bilali et al., 2020). These include confrontational strategies that challenge people directly, such as introducing factual information about atrocities committed by the in-group (Leone & Sarrica, 2014), as well as non-confrontational strategies that are more subtle (e.g., shifting lay beliefs about groups and group-based violence: Bilali et al., 2019; self-affirmation strategies: Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011). However, because these strategies have not been implemented in real-world interventions, their effectiveness outside the lab is unclear.

Civil society groups have also developed history education interventions to transform conflict narratives with the goal of promoting reconciliation (Bilali & Mahmoud, 2017). These interventions use different approaches to increase acknowledgement of past violence committed by the in-group – for example, developing historical thinking and multiperspectivity (i.e., thinking as a historian and learning to analyse historical events from different perspectives) or a dual narrative approach that exposes group members to each group's conflict narratives. Some studies on these interventions show a promising impact, but also backlash among some group members in contexts such as Northern Ireland (Barton

& McCully, 2012) or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Bar-On & Adwan, 2006).

36.5 Emotions

Changes in or regulation of negative emotions regarding an intergroup conflict are considered crucial for reconciliation (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2016). Like identity threats and needs, emotional responses to collective violence also differ for victim and perpetrator groups and create unique obstacles to, or facilitators of, reconciliation.

36.5.1 Emotions among Perpetrator Group Members

The sense of threat to the in-group's moral image that perpetrator groups experience could result in the emotions of shame, guilt, or regret (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015). However, a substantial body of work suggests that members of perpetrator groups do not often feel such self-critical emotions. For example, a review of empirical evidence suggests that people from several European countries that colonised other countries generally felt low levels of guilt and shame for their historical crimes committed in Indonesia, Australia, and various African countries (Leach et al., 2013). Similarly, only low-to-moderate levels of guilt or shame were observed among Hutu prisoners convicted of participating in the Rwandan genocide (Kanyangara et al., 2007), among Serbs concerning the Bosnian genocide (Brown & Čehajić, 2008), or among Norwegians confronted with their historical genocide against the Romani population (Gausel & Brown, 2012). Low levels of guilt and shame tend to predict denial of responsibility and lower support for reparations (Leach et al., 2013), thereby impeding reconciliation.

36.5.2 Emotions among Victim Groups

Collective violence against the in-group is associated with a host of negative emotions such as anger, fear, sadness (e.g., Kanyangara et al., 2007), humiliation (Jogdand et al., 2020), or resentment (e.g., Jeong & Vollhardt, 2021). According to the appraisal theory approach to collective victimisation (Leach, 2020), different appraisals of collective victimisation evoke specific emotions which correspond to different ways of coping. Anger and resentment towards the perpetrator group in the aftermath of violence are significant obstacles to reconciliation. For example, among Armenians and Armenian Americans, resentment towards Turks predicted less willingness for forgiveness and reconciliation (Ulug et al., 2021).

Denial of the in-group's victimisation also elicits anger and resentment. For example, among Bangladeshis exposed to Pakistanis' denial of responsibility for the mass violence committed by the Pakistani military against Bangladeshis in the 1971 war, anger mediated the effects of denial on reduced willingness for intergroup contact (Iqbal & Bilali, 2018). Similarly, Armenian and Jewish Americans reported more anger and resentment when reading about the perpetrator groups' denial or lack of acknowledgement, and more positive affect when reading about acknowledgement of the Armenian genocide or the Kielce pogrom and the Holocaust, respectively (Vollhardt et al., 2014). South Koreans' perception of historical victimhood (through the Japanese colonisation of Korea) and Japan's denial of this history also predicted resentment and, in turn, greater desire for retribution against the Japanese (Jeong & Vollhardt, 2020).

Overall, anger and resentment among the victim group could be viewed as obstacles to reconciliation – when reconciliation is understood in relational terms. However, anger also

predicts collective action for social change in the context of ongoing inequality and injustice in the aftermath of collective violence (e.g., Hasan-Aslih et al., 2019; see also Chapter 31) – and structural change is also an important aspect of reconciliation. Therefore, anger might drive victim group members' demands for acknowledgement and justice, which ultimately will contribute to reconciliation.

36.5.3 Interventions Addressing Emotions

In contexts of ongoing conflicts, one intervention strategy entails down-regulating or up-regulating emotions through reappraisal trainings to achieve conciliatory outcomes (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2016). However, to our knowledge, these interventions have not been studied in the aftermath of violence. Interventions targeting emotions involve increasing emotions that facilitate reconciliation and decreasing emotions that inhibit reconciliation. For instance, among perpetrator groups, some interventions focus on facilitating self-critical emotions such as collective guilt, which may increase acknowledgement of in-group harm-doing and desire for redress. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Čehajić-Clancy et al. (2011) showed that self-affirmation (i.e., the opportunity to affirm one's personal moral values) increased collective guilt among Serbs and, in turn, acknowledgement of harm committed by the in-group. However, these strategies can also be problematic – for example, when it comes to down-regulating anger (Halperin, 2013). In contexts of ongoing impunity or inequality, attempts to reduce victim groups' anger and resentment seem ethically problematic – especially considering that suppressing anger may also demobilise collective action against injustice (Vollhardt & Twali, 2016).

36.6 Justice

Reconciliation is often promoted prematurely in contexts of ongoing impunity and unequal power relations, and many scholars and practitioners urge that justice needs to be a central part of reconciliation (e.g., Opatow, 2001; Rouhana, 2018). By holding perpetrators accountable and documenting the crimes committed, justice mechanisms such as trials and tribunals also contribute to acknowledgement of the in-group's victimisation – which, in itself, affects reconciliation (as discussed in Section 36.4). In the Serbian and US-Iranian context, participants who learned about an international tribunal that held the perpetrators accountable were less likely to demand punishment of the perpetrators and were more willing to reconcile than participants who learned about the perpetrators' impunity (Li et al., 2018). However, this link between support for justice and support for reconciliation also depends on the context. In large-scale surveys conducted across war-affected countries in the former Yugoslavia, the relationship between support for justice (specifically, supporting the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and support for international human rights) and support for reconciliation was only positive in communities affected by symmetric violence – that is, violence that affects all groups similarly (Penić et al., 2021). Conversely, in communities affected by asymmetric violence, where violence disproportionately affects one group (e.g., genocide and ethnic cleansing), support for justice predicted less willingness for reconciliation across groups. This may be because in contexts where violence was committed primarily by one group, the justice process will bring primarily members of one group to justice, which can fuel resentment and fear among the perpetrator group, and anger among the victim group when the perpetrator group

continues to deny responsibility or undermine the justice process. Thus, in these contexts, justice is likely to further contribute to negative attitudes and affect between former adversaries (Penić et al., 2021).

For this reason, restorative justice (such as practised in truth and reconciliation commissions) has become increasingly popular. As opposed to (just) the punishment of the perpetrators found in retributive justice, restorative justice focuses on the victim, as well as the relationship between victim and perpetrator. Like attitudes towards reconciliation more generally, preference for retributive versus restorative justice is shaped by identity processes: for example, among Serbs and Americans, in-group glorification predicted support for retributive justice against the perpetrators of in-group victimisation (Li et al., 2018). And in the context of mass atrocities committed by the Pakistani army against Bangladeshis during the independence war, identity centrality predicted support for restorative justice among Bangladeshis (Iqbal & Bilali, 2018).

36.6.1 Interventions Focused on Justice

In a sense, justice mechanisms such as international trials and local truth and reconciliation commissions can be viewed as large-scale societal interventions aimed at promoting reconciliation through justice and accountability. These justice mechanisms also independently affect other psychological processes discussed in this chapter. Several field experiments and correlational studies examine the impact of justice mechanisms on reconciliation and other outcomes. Their effects, however, have been mixed. For example, participation in the community-based Gacaca tribunals in Rwanda was linked to negative emotions (sadness, fear, disgust, anxiety, and shame) among survivors (Kanyangara et al.,

2007; Rimé et al., 2011), but also to decreased guilt among the survivors and increased guilt among prisoners (Kanyangara et al., 2014). However, survivors who participated in the Gacaca also reported less trust in the perpetrators' apologies, less forgiveness, less intention for intergroup contact, and more vengefulness – in other words, lower levels of relational reconciliation (Kanyangara et al., 2014). Similarly, while the truth and reconciliation commissions in the aftermath of political violence in Chile had positive effects on perceptions of truth and on the emotional climate, those who were directly affected by the violence had more negative views of the justice process (Cárdenas et al., 2015). Restorative justice measures might be perceived by the victim group as insufficient – especially when they are proposed as a substitute to retributive justice, which is often what survivors or descendants of victims demand (e.g., Iqbal & Bilali, 2018). Paradoxically, although restorative justice mechanisms are meant to centre on the needs of the victims, they may actually have more negative mental health effects on this group (at least in the short term; see also Brounéus, 2010), and a negative effect on reconciliation if they are perceived as impeding justice.

36.7 Conclusion

In sum, the five categories of social psychological processes we discussed are fundamental to understanding what makes individuals more (versus less) likely to support reconciliation in its various forms, including support for structural change. This review is not exhaustive. There are additional processes that are relevant for the reconciliation process, such as political ideology, that were beyond the scope of this chapter. As we briefly indicated throughout the chapter, all the processes we discussed are interrelated (see Figure 36.1).

For example, identity threats, collective memories of collective victimhood, acknowledgement versus denial, and justice not only influence reconciliation, but also all give rise to specific emotions – which, in turn, also influence reconciliation. Different forms of identity and identity content also shape how collective victimhood, denial, and the justice process are experienced. Thus, interventions aimed at promoting reconciliation need to consider multiple influences and how they interact instead of focusing on just one of these processes at a time.

Additionally, research in social and political psychology could do more to account for how the social structure interacts with and influences individual-level processes involved in reconciliation. For example, attitudes towards reconciliation are also influenced by existing power relations in the present, the nature of the violence that occurred, current political and societal arrangements such as segregation, and international third-party influence such as third parties' acknowledgement or denial of the atrocities. This more contextualised approach would help avoid generalising models of reconciliation and findings to contexts where they may not make sense, or could even cause a backlash (Penić et al., 2021; Vollhardt & Twali, 2016). Similarly, most research on reconciliation in social and political psychology focuses on relational reconciliation, which tends to benefit the dominant group (Saguy, 2018). It is therefore crucial to follow the lead of scholars and practitioners in other fields such as conflict resolution who take a broader approach to reconciliation (e.g., Rouhana, 2018), and also centre support for, and participation in, justice, equality, and structural change.

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Part IV

Diversifying Perspectives in Political Psychology

37 Political Psychology in the Global South

Collective Memory, Intergroup Relations, Ideology,
and Political Participation

Eduardo J. Rivera Pichardo, Salvador Vargas Salfate, and John T. Jost

As in many other areas of behavioural science, most research in political psychology has focused more or less exclusively on citizens of Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (so-called WEIRD) countries (Henrich et al., 2010). This goes on despite the fact that historical, cultural, and economic contexts are known to matter a great deal when it comes to shaping human behaviour (e.g., Brady et al., 2018; Gergen, 1973; Rad et al., 2018; Tajfel, 1972; Van Bavel et al., 2016). To mitigate this problem – and to make progress on the understanding of social and political behaviour in non-WEIRD contexts – we have reviewed studies of political psychology carried out in the Global South, which we defined in geopolitical terms (Levander & Mignolo, 2011). Our review had two main objectives. First, we sought to demonstrate that there are relevant and important contributions to the research literature outside of Europe and North America. Second, we sought to deepen the analysis of social-contextual factors that shape political attitudes and behaviour.

We started by dividing the Global South into four regions: Latin America, Africa, Asia/Pacific, and the Middle East. In some cases, we included studies conducted in the Global North, but only if they illuminated political psychological phenomena in the Global South. For instance, in our review of the Asian literature we incorporated research from Taiwan and Hong Kong (considered Global North) to the extent that it spoke to

issues of regional immigration in Singapore and attitudes towards China. In the Middle East we included studies conducted in Israel (considered Global North) when they were directly related to the experiences of Palestinians regarding the territorial conflict.

For all four regions, we used the APA search engine *PsycNet* by entering the name of each country in the region along with the keywords of *politics*, *political psychology*, and *ideology*. Based on the authors' prior knowledge, we also included articles and journals not covered in *PsycNet*. We focused on studies that involved research samples from countries in the four regions, including cross-cultural studies only when there were direct references made to specific contextual factors. Next, for the purposes of this chapter we classified the topics of research from each region into several broad categories and decided to review only those studies that could be categorised according to our scheme (see Table 37.1). This means that we have omitted contributions on specific topics that could not be classified in terms of the main categories identified. Clearly, this omission is a limitation of our chapter that should be remedied in subsequent literature reviews.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. First, we summarise research from Latin America, where political participation, collective memory, intergroup relations, and ideology were the main topics, with a special focus on their connection to historical processes such as the legacies of 20th-century

Table 37.1. *Citations to studies reviewed as a function of region and topic*

	Political Participation	Collective Memory	Intergroup Relations	Ideology	Political Islam
Latin America	Brussino et al. (2009, 2013, 2019) Coe et al. (2012) Delfino et al. (2013) Martínez et al. (2012) Mendiburo-Seguel et al. (2017) Varela et al. (2015) Vázquez et al. (2008)	Arnosó et al. (2015) Arnosó & da Costa (2015) Cardenas et al. (2016) Espinosa et al. (2015) Martín-Beristain et al. (2010) Muller et al. (2016) Sosa et al. (2016) Techio et al. (2010)	Carvacho et al. (2013) Clealand (2013) Espinosa et al. (2007) Rottenbacher de Rojas et al. (2011) Sawyer et al. (2004) Thomas (2018)	Bahamondes-Correa (2016) Brussino et al. (2019) da Costa Silva et al. (2017) Delfino & Zubieta (2011) dos Santos (2019) Etchezahar (2012) Etchezahar & Brussino (2015) Etchezahar et al. (2016) Henry & Saul (2006) Rivera Pichardo et al. (2021) Solano Silva (2018) Vargas Salfate (2019) Vilanova et al. (2020)	Anum et al. (2018) Durrheim et al. (2014) Epstein et al. (2013) Gibson & Gouws (2000) Heaven et al. (1994) Sidanius et al. (2019)
Africa	Bulled (2017) Carlson (2016) Doherty & Schraeder (2018) Finkel et al. (2012) Gibson (2008) Grabe (2015) Ifeagwazi et al. (2015) Mvukiyehé (2018) Neto et al. (2013)	Adonis (2015) Bou Zeineddine & Qumseya (2020) Cabecinhas et al. (2011) Kpanake & Mullet (2011) Licata et al. (2018) Mukashema & Mullet (2015)	Beber et al. (2014) Duckitt & Mphuthing (1998) Durrheim & Dixon (2010) Gibson (2009) Kasara (2013) Mynhardt (2013)		

Asia	<p>Cheung et al. (2017) Clark et al. (1993) Fair et al. (2014) Jasko et al. (2020) Kanas & Martinovic (2017) Khan & Smith (2003) Li et al. (2019) Mohd Hed & Grasso (2019) Montiel & Shah (2008) Saad & Salman (2013) Webber et al. (2018)</p>	<p>de Guzman & Montiel (2012) Hakim et al. (2015) Khan et al. (2017) Liu et al. (2002, 2014)</p>	<p>Cowling & Anderson (2019) Dalisay (2014) Dietrich et al. (2018) Ho et al. (2003) Hu (2020) Huang (2007, 2009) Owuamalam & Matos (2019) Ramsay & Pang (2017) Reilly (2016) Schaller & Abeysinghe (2006) van Leeuwen & Mashuri (2013)</p>	<p>Annalakshmi et al. (2018) Dirilen-Gumus (2017) Hsu et al. (2019) Li et al. (2019) Liang et al. (2018) Liu et al. (2019) Montiel & Uyheng (2020) Owuamalam et al. (2016) Stockmann et al. (2018) Tan et al. (2016, 2017) Xu et al. (2020)</p>	
Middle East	<p>Adam-Troian et al. (2020) Adra et al. (2019) Davis et al. (2017) Demirdağ & Hasta (2019) Odağ et al. (2016) Saab et al. (2016) Stewart et al. (2019) Uluğ & Acar (2018)</p>		<p>Albzour et al. (2019) Ekmekei (2011) Henry & Hardin (2006) Kaynak Malatyali et al. (2017) Mertan (2011) Saab et al. (2017) Saguy et al. (2019) Smeekees et al. (2017) Uluğ & Cohrs (2017)</p>	<p>Badaan et al. (2020) Henry et al. (2005) Levin et al. (2003) Ucar et al. (2019)</p>	<p>Achilov & Sen (2017) Ginges et al. (2009) Haddad & Khashan (2002) Hoffman & Nugent (2017) Scull et al. (2019) Toros (2010)</p>

Note: Some citations refer to contributions that apply to multiple topics; in these cases, we have listed them according to the topic that we judged to be most central.

dictatorships. Second, we review literature from Africa, where special attention has been given to political participation and collective action, collective memories of colonialism, and attitudes towards foreign interventions. Third, we review research from Asia, which includes work on mainstream political psychological concepts such as right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), social dominance orientation (SDO), and system justification,¹ as well as attitudes towards nationalist and separatist social movements. Fourth, we summarise work conducted in the Middle East, which has focused on political participation, collective action, intergroup relations, political and religious ideologies, and the special role of Islam in this region. The chapter closes with a brief set of conclusions that may help to facilitate global explorations of political psychological phenomena.

37.1 Latin America

Studies conducted in Latin America have focused on four major themes, namely political participation, collective memory, intergroup relations, and political ideology. Some results clearly replicate patterns observed in Western countries. For instance, political interest was found to predict the intention to vote in

Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Chile (Vázquez et al., 2008), and self-efficacy predicted protest activity in Argentina (Brussino et al., 2009). Qualitative studies have emphasised the role of social identification processes when it comes to participation in collective action in Ecuador, Peru, and Chile (Coe et al., 2012; Martínez et al., 2012).

Research in Chile suggested that political disparagement humour against politicians reduced trust in politicians in the short term – but not the long term (Mendiburo-Seguel et al., 2017). And despite low rates of involvement in institutional politics among citizens of Chile and Argentina, especially among the youth, they tend to participate in politics in other ways, not all of which are considered to be normative. For example, many non-voters support political activism in their local communities (Delfino et al., 2013; Varela et al., 2015).

Research in Latin America has also explored collective memory, which is, by definition, historically and culturally specific. One focus has been on attitudes towards dictatorships and the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions that were created to deal with their aftermath (see also Chapter 36). Citizens in Argentina, Chile, and Peru were more enthusiastic about these commissions to the extent that they saw them as promoting justice, creating an inclusive history, and revealing the truth about past victimisation (Cardenas et al., 2016). People in Uruguay, however, were more sceptical and distrusting (Arnosó & da Costa, 2015). Active participation in commemorative rituals increased public confidence in the commission in Paraguay (Arnosó et al., 2015) and support for peaceful forms of conflict resolution in Peru (Espinosa et al., 2015). Most optimistically, an analysis based on 16 different Latin American countries suggested that transitional justice rituals carried out in the 1980s and 1990s, including commissions and public

¹ Right-wing authoritarianism has been studied as a personality syndrome (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1998) and an attitudinal system (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). It is typically conceptualised in terms of three behavioural dimensions: submission to authority figures and their dictates; preference for conventional values and practices; and aggression directed at those who deviate from established social norms. Social dominance orientation refers to a related preference for group-based dominance and the imposition of a hierarchical social order (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). System justification refers to the motivated tendency to defend, bolster, and justify the societal status quo, whether or not it materially benefits the individual or group that engages in it (Jost, 2020).

trials, increased overall levels of respect for human rights in these countries (Martín-Beristain et al., 2010; see also Chapter 22).

Studies conducted in Argentina, Brazil, and Peru highlighted the existence of pro-European and North American biases in social representations of certain historical events (Techio et al., 2010). For example, citizens in these countries regarded the political significance of Napoleon, John F. Kennedy, and George W. Bush, on one hand, to be greater than that of Mao Zedong, Nelson Mandela, and Saddam Hussein, on the other. Likewise, they perceived the creation of the European Union and the World Trade Center attacks of 11 September 2001 to be more important than the Vietnam War and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In other contexts there are stark left–right ideological differences when it comes to collective memory. In Argentina, leftists and rightists diverged in their evaluations of major figures in world history such as Christopher Columbus, Benito Mussolini, and George W. Bush, as well as influential leaders in Latin America such as Fidel Castro and Che Guevara (Sosa et al., 2016). In another study, rightists who reported distant collective memories of the Argentinian Military Junta of 1976 were more likely to offer positive accounts of the Junta and to state that they did not know about human rights violations (Muller et al., 2016). As in many other countries (Jost, 2021), leftists in Argentina prioritise equality and social justice (Delfino & Zubieta, 2011), but there are other historical associations with leftism that may be considered to be less favourable (Brussino et al., 2019). A study involving respondents from eight Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay) demonstrated that resistance to change was positively correlated with right-wing orientation in all eight countries, and

the correlations were statistically significant in six of those countries. However, attitudes about inequality – measured indirectly with the value of ‘self-promotion’ – were not as reliably linked to political orientation (Solano Silva, 2018).

As in many other countries (Nilsson & Jost, 2020), authoritarianism is positively associated with religiosity, political conservatism, and support for right-wing political candidates in Argentina (Brussino et al., 2013; Etchezahar, 2012; Etchezahar & Brussino, 2015).² RWA and SDO are correlated with anti-gay prejudice, hostile sexism, and ethnic bias in Argentina and Peru (Espinosa et al., 2007; Etchezahar et al., 2016; Rottenbacher de Rojas et al., 2011). Members of the working class in Chile exhibited more out-group prejudice than members of the middle and upper classes, and the effect was mediated by SDO (Carvacho et al., 2013, Study 4).

Specific political contexts may, however, alter the usual state of affairs. In Cuba, for instance, patriotism was negatively associated with anti-Black racism; this was different from the pattern observed in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic (Sawyer et al., 2004). The researchers attributed the Cuban result to the strength of egalitarian ideology as officially promoted by the national in-group. A different explanation was proposed by Clealand (2013), who found that Blacks in Cuba experienced a considerable amount of racial discrimination, which subsequently increased their racial consciousness.

Some studies in Latin America have explored other theories of social and political psychology developed in Western contexts

² Vilanova et al. (2020) found that a four-factor solution fit the data better than the usual three-factor solution for RWA in the case of Brazil, with some authoritarians deferring to established authority figures and others challenging them.

such as just world theory (Lerner, 1980) and system justification theory (Jost, 2020). Brazilian adolescents who were more privileged in terms of family income and educational background were found to score higher on measures of personal belief in a just world and perceived legitimacy of legal authorities, but they scored lower than others on the general belief in a just world (Thomas, 2018). In the same country, people who scored higher on the belief in a just world were more likely to justify the use of police violence against Black suspects (da Costa Silva et al., 2017).

With respect to system justification theory, a study conducted in Bolivia revealed that indigenous children endorsed the legitimacy of the (non-indigenous) government more than did non-indigenous children (Henry & Saul, 2006). A dissertation in Brazil employed a system justification framework to analyse the various manifestations of the so-called *mongel complex*, defined by the celebrated journalist Nelson Rodrigues in the 1950s as ‘a kind of inferiority that Brazilians feel, voluntarily, when compared with the rest of the world’ (see dos Santos, 2019). Research in Puerto Rico demonstrated that internalisation of inferiority and colonial system justification predicted support for the continuation of US hegemonic rule in Puerto Rico, as well as the rejection of national independence (Rivera Pichardo et al., 2021). As in other countries (Jost, 2020), the endorsement of system-justifying beliefs was positively associated with subjective well-being among members of low-status groups in Chile (Bahamondes-Correa, 2016) and, relatedly, a sense of personal control in Peru (Vargas Salfate, 2019).

37.2 Africa

Most political psychology research conducted in Africa has focused on political participation, collective memory, intergroup relations,

and political ideology. In general, the antecedents of civic political engagement are similar to those observed in WEIRD contexts. In Tunisia, for instance, having friends who participated in a revolutionary movement was a significant predictor of protest behaviour (Doherty & Schraeder, 2018). In Uganda, which is a highly diverse, multi-ethnic nation, social exposure and ethnic priming increased electoral participation (Carlson, 2016). In rural South Africa, women’s personal experiences with water insecurity was associated with emotional distress, which, in turn, predicted active citizen engagement and the demand that the nation state provide safe drinking water for its citizens (Bulled, 2017). A study of Maasai women in Tanzania showed that women who owned land experienced more personal agency than those who did not, and, consequently, were more likely to participate in political meetings (Grabe, 2015). In general, trust and satisfaction with the government appears to be high in Tanzania among both Muslims and Christians (Epstein et al., 2013).

Ifeagwazi et al. (2015) measured social, economic, and political forms of alienation, including feelings of helplessness and powerlessness, and concluded that alienation exacerbated psychological distress and undermined civic participation in Nigeria. Other studies have investigated the impact of foreign interventions aimed at increasing civic engagement. In Kenya, civic education programmes funded by foreign investments produced long-term increases in civic competence and political engagement (Finkel et al., 2012). In Liberia, a peacebuilding operation sponsored by the United Nations appears to have successfully promoted political interest, political self-efficacy, and participation in national politics (Mvukiyehe, 2018).

Some studies have focused on perceptions of the legitimacy of foreign interventions. Citizens of Angola and Mozambique felt that

foreign interventions were justifiable if they prevented massacres (Neto et al., 2013). In Mozambique – where a full-scale UN intervention had taken place in the past – people were more supportive of foreign involvement than citizens of Angola, where no such intervention had taken place.

In terms of collective memory, a scenario study in Rwanda suggested that Hutus continued to blame those Tutsis who were active participants in genocidal attacks nearly two decades later, but they did not blame the children or grandchildren of those participants (Mukashema & Mullet, 2015; see also Chapter 36). Qualitative research involving descendants of apartheid victims in South Africa hinted that generational forgiveness is possible, but only if persistent problems of poverty and inequality are addressed (Adonis, 2015).

With respect to social representations of history, a study involving university students from six African countries – Burundi, Congo, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau – suggested that the students exhibited a Western-centric bias in their perception of world history (Cabecinhas et al., 2011). Events related to Europe and North America were regarded as especially important – as Techio et al. (2010) also observed in Latin America. Themes pertaining to colonialism and liberation were more prominent in the historical narratives of students living in former Portuguese colonies, such as Angola, Cape Verde, and Guinea-Bissau, compared to the narratives of students living in former Belgian colonies (Cabecinhas et al., 2011).

In Egypt and Morocco, local and national events featured more prominently in collective memory than Western and global historical events (Bou Zeineddine & Qumseya, 2020). Two major themes were present. One focused on the countries' foundational histories, including the last era of colonisation in

Morocco from 1912 to 1956, which was associated with the endorsement of system-justifying attitudes. The other, which was especially strong in Egypt, focused on recent and contemporary history, such as the overthrow of President Mubarak in 2011.

Another study among young people living in Africa and Europe today revealed, perhaps surprisingly, that Africans espoused *less* negative views of European colonialism than did Europeans. Africans were also more likely than Europeans to emphasise issues of social development and de-emphasise issues of exploitation (Licata et al., 2018). These findings, as well as others from Latin America (Techio et al., 2010) and Mozambique (Neto et al., 2013), may be consistent with a theoretical analysis in terms of colonial system justification and the internalisation of Western ideologies (Rivera Pichardo et al., 2021). At the same time, African respondents in this study expressed high expectations concerning Europeans' sense of collective guilt and willingness to make reparations.

Considerable emphasis has been placed on questions of transitional justice in the case of South Africa. Both Duckitt and Mphuthing's (1998) and Durrheim and Dixon's (2010) work on stability and change in the attitudes of Blacks and Whites following the transition from apartheid to democratic society looms especially large in this area. So, too, does Gibson's (2008, 2009) research, which stressed procedural justice as a determination of the perceived legitimacy of governmental actions, including the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Because these contributions are already quite well known, we devote our limited space to studies that have not garnered as much attention.

Ethnic composition and social contact with out-group members played key roles in the development of intergroup attitudes in Kenya. More specifically, people who lived in

ethnically diverse areas were more trusting of members of other ethnic groups than those who were more residentially segregated (Kasara, 2013). When intergroup violence and separatist movements are afoot, however, results may be very different. In Sudan, for instance, exposure to rioting was associated with negative intergroup attitudes and the desire for group segregation (Beber, Roessler, & Scacco, 2014). In Togo, people were supportive of granting amnesty to former opposition leaders – but only if they offered sincere apologies and contributed to truth-seeking efforts (Kpanake & Mullet, 2011).

Consistent with left–right ideological differences observed throughout the West (Jost, 2021), South African university students who prioritised equality and international harmony supported leftist political parties, including Nelson Mandela’s African National Congress in the early 1990s (Heaven et al., 1994). Much has been written about the concept of a ‘Rainbow Nation’ in South Africa: the ideal of a tolerant, multicultural, liberal-democratic system designed to supersede the apartheid system. However, it has been difficult to attain truly egalitarian outcomes in practice. An historical analysis covering a 37-year period showed that attitudes towards out-groups improved among English Whites, Afrikaans Whites, and Indian, Coloured, and Black South Africans immediately following the process of democratisation, but Black–White divides still persist (Mynhardt, 2013). In South Africa today, Blacks are more strongly identified with the country than are White and Coloured people (Sidanius et al., 2019). There is some reason to worry that the maintenance of strong ethnic subgroup identities threatens the consolidation of democratic norms, because in-group identification is positively associated with antipathy towards out-group members and political opponents (Gibson & Gouws, 2000).

In terms of sex-role ideology, female university students held more traditional gender attitudes than male students in Ghana and Nigeria. Less surprisingly, perhaps, male and female students in these countries held more traditional attitudes than did students in the USA (Anum et al., 2018). There was no evidence, however, that the endorsement of traditional sex-role ideology was associated with lower self-esteem in women in any of the three countries. An analysis of interview transcripts involving women who were domestic workers in South Africa vividly illustrated system justification processes, including the perception that the women were ‘equal participants in a mutually advantageous relationship’ rather than suffering from ‘an exploitative institution . . . in which [they] perform menial tasks, work long hours, and face unfair, or even illegal treatment, usually for paltry wages’ (Durrheim et al., 2014, pp. 160–161).

37.3 Asia

As in other regions of the Global South, research in Asia has focused largely on political participation, collective memory, intergroup relations, and ideology. For decades, women in Taiwan have been active in politics, seemingly because they found it easier than women in other Asian countries to challenge traditional gender roles (Clark et al., 1993). In India, sensitivity to economic, racial, and gender inequality was linked to political alienation, but an ideological commitment to egalitarianism was associated with less alienation (Annalakshmi et al., 2018). Young people in Malaysia are not as involved in electoral politics as their elders (Mohd Hed & Grasso, 2019), but – as in other contexts – those who are high in trust and political self-efficacy and low in cynicism are more likely to participate (Saad & Salman, 2013).

Antecedents of collective action include social identification and group-based emotions

(see Chapter 31), no less in Asia than in other regions (van Zomeren et al., 2018). In Hong Kong, nostalgia for the country's past, as well as anger – but not contempt – directed at the mainland Chinese government, predicted support for the Umbrella movement in 2014 (Cheung et al., 2017). In mainland China, anger on behalf of the local community predicted support for protest – but only among the middle and upper classes (Li et al., 2019). Lower-class individuals were reluctant to protest under any circumstances. In Indonesia, both religious and national forms of group identification influenced Muslims' and Christians' attitudes towards protest and inter-group conflict (Kanas & Martinovic, 2017). Research in neighbouring countries found that members of low-status groups – Muslims in the Philippines and Christians in Malaysia – were more supportive of political violence when it was attributed to 'freedom fighters' (vs. terrorists), whereas members of high-status groups – Christians in the Philippines and Muslims in Malaysia – were not (Montiel & Shah, 2008).

Other studies in Asia have focused on radicalism, religious fundamentalism, and support for political violence. Field research in Sri Lanka and the Philippines, for example, suggested that feelings of shame, humiliation, and insignificance were associated with a heightened need for cognitive closure and, relatedly, an affinity for ideological extremism, including (in some cases) participation in terrorist organisations (Webber et al., 2018). In a related research programme, ideological extremism strengthened the empirical connection between the 'quest for significance' and the endorsement of political violence among those who identified with the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and with Islamist and Jihadist causes in Indonesia and Morocco, respectively (Jasko et al., 2020).

In Pakistan, people who were focused on individual autonomy, success, and hierarchical

competition were more likely to justify political violence compared to those who focused more on family and community (Khan & Smith, 2003). A survey of 6,000 Pakistani respondents revealed the endorsement of democratic values was associated with *increased* support for Islamist militants – especially among Muslims who believed that their group's sovereignty was being violated in Kashmir (Fair et al., 2014). The authors attributed this counter-intuitive result to the specific political context in Pakistan, where 'many militant groups use the principle of *azadi* (i.e., freedom and self-determination) to justify their actions' (p. 743).

Political speeches by leaders in Singapore, Malaysia, and South Africa were content-analysed and found to contain more cooperative language than speeches from Australia, Canada, and the UK (Dirilen-Gumus, 2017). With respect to research on collective memory, there was considerable consensus about the meaning and significance of major historical events among the Malays, Chinese, and Indians in Singapore and Malaysia (Liu et al., 2002). Likewise, Indonesians from two provinces (Yogyakarta and Surakarta) shared a perception of historical continuity between monarchies ruled by sultans (or kings) and modern democratic forms of government (Hakim et al., 2015). However, respondents in Yogyakarta expressed more favourable attitudes towards the monarchy than in Surakarta. This is consistent with the current status quo of each province. Even today, the Yogyakarta Sultanate has retained its monarchy and a special provincial status within Indonesia, whereas Surakarta lost its sultanate in the 1950s (Hakim et al., 2015).

Some objects of collective memory are more contentious – or contested – than others. A qualitative analysis of interviews and group discussions in the Philippines on the topic of Western foreign aid suggested that two

seemingly contrasting social representations existed. On one hand, foreign aid was seen by many as a valuable resource for social and economic development; on the other hand, it was also viewed as a form of profiteering that furthered the financial interests of powerful groups (de Guzman & Montiel, 2012). It was not entirely clear from this study whether contrasting social representations were held by different segments of society or, alternatively, the citizenry was genuinely ambivalent about receiving foreign assistance.

Thematic analysis of texts promoting the Hindu nationalist movement in India in the early 20th century highlighted the social construction of an 'essentialising' historical narrative that systematically excluded members of certain ethnic and religious groups from being considered Hindu (Khan et al., 2017). These fault lines continue to play a defining role in far-right politics among Hindus in India today. Automated text analysis of Facebook pages that were supportive versus critical of the government of Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines revealed that the pro-government website contained language conveying hope and euphoria, whereas the anti-government site contained language associated with fear, scepticism, and 'vindictive contempt' (Montiel & Uyheng, 2020).

According to a survey conducted two years before the transfer of control from British to Chinese authorities in 1997, Hong Kong residents held more favourable attitudes and were more trusting of, and identified more strongly with, Hong Kong than with mainland China, although many identified with both (Ho et al., 2003). High school students in China were found to be more trusting of government representatives who spoke the officially sanctioned language than their own local dialects (Hu, 2020). This result may reflect out-group favouritism – the tendency for members of disadvantaged groups to

evaluate members of other, more advantaged groups more positively than members of their own group (Jost, 2020).

In Sri Lanka, Sinhalese students who were reminded of their numerical minority status in the broader region were less conciliatory and ascribed more malevolence and agency to the out-group of Tamils, compared to a situation in which they were reminded of their majority status in the local context (Schaller & Abeysinghe, 2006). This suggests that people who regard their own group as threatened by the dominant majority – while also possessing a local advantage – may be defensively hostile in relation to the out-group (see also Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991). In Indonesia, members of the majority group worried that separatism posed a threat to the stability and integrity of their national identity (van Leeuwen & Mashuri, 2013).

When university students in China were asked to read three pages of news articles emphasising the ways in which the US government threatened China's legitimacy and stability in political, economic, and military terms, they expressed more authoritarian and nationalistic concerns than did those assigned to a control condition (Reilly, 2016). This is broadly consistent with evidence from the West, where system-level threats often elicit conservative, authoritarian, and system-justifying responses (Jost, 2020; Jost et al., 2017). In Guam, a high proportion of survey respondents expressed *colonial debt* – a sense of obligation or indebtedness to colonial powers and form of internalised colonisation – which was associated with support for ongoing US military presence in Guam (Dalisyay, 2014). Reminding people in Bangladesh about American support for a healthcare programme there improved perceptions of the USA and confidence in local governmental authorities (Dietrich et al., 2018). Thus, in Guam and Bangladesh – unlike China – the involvement of the USA was regarded as legitimate.

Research in Singapore found that, as in many Western contexts, people who perceived various immigrant groups as threatening in symbolic and/or material terms were more likely to express prejudice against them (Ramsay & Pang, 2017). Singaporeans viewed the target group of Chinese immigrants most negatively and as most threatening, followed by South Asians and Filipinos. However, they held relatively favourable attitudes towards Western immigrants, apparently because they were perceived as less threatening. It is possible that this result, too, reflects out-group favouritism (Jost, 2020).

An experiment by Owuamalam and Matos (2019) in Malaysia provided fairly clear evidence of out-group favouritism benefitting a high-status group. Malaysian university students expressed more compassion and desire to help a fellow student who was experiencing difficulties when the student was described as a British national, rather than a Malaysian or Nigerian national. People who scored low (vs. high) in SDO showed more compassion for the troubled student in general, but even those who were low in SDO favoured the British student under some circumstances. Other work in Malaysia found that Muslims were more prejudiced against asylum seekers than Christians, but that both Muslims and Christians were more prejudiced against asylum seekers whose religion did not match their own (Cowling & Anderson, 2019).

In Taiwan, people who scored higher on RWA and SDO were found to be more supportive of Chinese hegemony and less supportive of Taiwanese independence (Huang, 2009).³ An experiment found that group-specific emotional historical accounts increased levels of Taiwanese national identification, but not support for Taiwanese national independence over reunification with China (Liu et al., 2014). In China, RWA was positively correlated with subjective well-being

(Liu et al., 2019), and both RWA and SDO were associated with tolerance of corruption and decreased moral outrage (Tan et al., 2016).

Several studies have focused on system justification in China. One programme of research focused on the effects of unethical behaviour on self-esteem as a function of individual differences in general (or diffuse) system justification (Liang et al., 2018). Thinking about committing bribery or cheating was negatively associated with self-esteem – but only for high system-justifiers. For low system-justifiers, thinking about unethical behaviour apparently increased self-esteem, possibly because it confirmed suspicions about the untrustworthiness of the social system.

Research in China found that lower-class individuals – based on occupation – scored higher on general system justification than upper-class individuals (Xu et al., 2020). At the same time, upper-class respondents who endorsed system-justifying beliefs were more likely to feel a sense of personal entitlement, compared to those who did not. Interestingly, lower-class respondents who *rejected* system-justifying beliefs reported a stronger sense of entitlement than did those who endorsed them, consistent with system justification theory (Jost, 2020).⁴

In a nationally representative sample of urban residents of mainland China ($N = 509$), Beattie and colleagues (2021) observed that

³ Although political uses of the terms ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ are not very common in Taiwan, supporters of unification with China exhibited more conservative moral concerns, whereas supporters of Taiwanese independence exhibited more liberal moral concerns (Hsu et al., 2019).

⁴ The researchers conducted a follow-up experiment (Xu et al., 2020, Study 2), but there is reason to believe that there was a failure of random assignment, so the results are inconclusive (see Vargas-Salfate, 2020).

general system justification was associated with leftist political orientation and support for the Communist status quo. Leftists in China also scored higher than rightists on authoritarianism, need for cognitive closure, intolerance of ambiguity, and personal needs for security, but they also scored higher on personality traits of openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Perhaps surprisingly, leftists in China also scored higher than rightists in need for cognitive reflection and lower in ‘bullshit receptivity’.

Three studies investigated the palliative function of system justification in China (Li et al., 2020). In large samples of adults ($N = 10,196$) and adolescents ($N = 4,037$), respondents who were lower in objective social class, measured in terms of income and education, and higher in subjective social class, measured in terms of self-placement on a ‘social ladder’ question, scored higher on general system justification. System justification, in turn, was positively associated with life satisfaction, even after adjusting for subjective and objective social class. In an experimental follow-up, participants were asked to write about political, economic, or cultural practices in China that either (a) worked so well that other countries should emulate them (high system justification condition) or (b) did not work well and should not be emulated (low system justification). Participants assigned to the high system justification condition perceived more individual

opportunity for upward mobility in the country and more life satisfaction, in comparison with participants who were assigned to the low system justification condition. The perception of individual mobility mediated the effect of system justification on life satisfaction, consistent with findings from the West.⁵

37.4 Middle East

A key topic of research in the Middle East is collective action (see also Chapter 38). As in many other contexts, a sense of relative deprivation fuelled political unrest in Egypt and Jordan (Davis et al., 2017). Feelings of injustice, along with social identification and collective efficacy, predicted support for the Gezi Park demonstrations in Turkey (Odağ et al., 2016), as did left-wing political orientation (Stewart et al., 2019). Although the protests may have facilitated social change to some degree, they also left some people feeling demoralised and distraught about the degree of conflict and polarisation in society (Uluğ & Acar, 2018). Both supporters and opponents of the Gezi Park protests reported feeling threatened and victimised by their political adversaries (Demirdağ & Hasta, 2019).

Fear of repression, it seems, played a key role in motivating protest in Lebanon (Adra et al., 2019). A sense of anomia, which is characterised by feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, self-estrangement, social isolation, and a breakdown of social norms, predicted support for political violence in Turkey, Brazil, Belgium, and France (Adam-Troian et al., 2020). Research in Gaza and the West Bank suggested that people who perceived peaceful collective action to be ineffective were more likely to support violent collective action, presumably because they felt they had nothing to lose (Saab et al., 2016).

Turks and Kurds who had close friends who were out-group members were more

⁵ Studies conducted in Malaysia, Australia, and Germany suggested that group identification and system justification relate to each other in very complicated ways for members of high- and low-status groups, as a function of reputational concerns, audience composition, opportunities for out-group devaluation, long-term status stability, group identity salience, hope for future group status, and anger, among other factors (Owuamalam et al., 2016). These and related studies are discussed in more detail by Jost (2019).

supportive of peaceful reconciliation in Turkey than those who did not. At the same time, Kurds who were close friends with Turks were not as supportive of the Kurdish cause as those who were not (Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017). This fits with other research conducted in Lebanon and the USA, which suggested that friendly contact benefits members of high-status groups more than members of low-status groups (Henry & Hardin, 2006; see also Dixon et al., 2012). In Lebanon, positive interactions between Syrian refugees and Lebanese nationals were associated with out-group liking and reduced support for peaceful as well as violent forms of collective action on behalf of the refugees (Saab et al., 2017). For Palestinians living in the West Bank, positive contact with Israelis was linked to decreased motivation for resistance and increased support for controversial plans to normalise relations between Palestinians and Israelis (Albזור et al., 2019).

For young Druze living in Israel, a perceived loss of identity – a type of alienation arising from unfulfilled promises of integration and inclusion – predicted support for political violence (Saguy et al., 2019). In Cyprus, perceptions of out-group threat were associated with starkly divergent historical narratives for Cypriots of Greek and Turkish descent. For both groups, however, these narratives contributed to a sense of stability and continuity with respect to social identity (Smeekes et al., 2017). Unlike members of many other disadvantaged groups, Turkish-Cypriot children exhibited in-group favouritism and intense disliking of Greek-Cypriots (but not Irish or Dutch people), apparently because of the high salience and intensity of intergroup conflict between Greeks and Turks (Mertan, 2011). In Turkey, Kurdish support for (vs. opposition to) ethno-nationalism was closely tied to religion and ideology: those who favoured ethno-nationalist parties were disproportionately secular, leftist,

and politically dissatisfied with the status quo (Ekmekei, 2011).

Some studies have explored the role of SDO in the Middle East. In Turkey, men who scored higher on the SDO scale embraced hostile sexism and were more approving of marriages involving child brides (Kaynak Malatyali et al., 2017). In Lebanon, Christian and Muslim university students who were higher in SDO distanced themselves from the group of Arabs, and this distancing was associated with a lack of support for political violence against the West (Levin et al., 2003). These findings were conceptually replicated by Henry et al. (2005), who observed that Lebanese students who scored higher in RWA were more supportive of anti-Western aggression. In the USA, both SDO and RWA were positively associated with support for anti-Arab violence.

Consistent with the aforementioned results from Peru (Vargas Salfate, 2019) and China (Li et al., 2019), a study in Turkey found that the belief in a just world was positively associated with life satisfaction, and the association was mediated by perceived control and feelings of hopefulness (Ucar et al., 2019). A nationally representative survey of 500 Lebanese residents in 2016 focused on the role of ideology and system justification processes. Results revealed that poorer respondents scored lower than wealthier respondents on general system justification, but they scored higher on economic system justification. High scorers on measures of general and economic system justification were more right wing and more enthusiastic about the legitimacy of the sectarian political system in Lebanon. Those who scored higher on economic system justification were also more religious and more supportive of the neoliberal, pro-capitalist political alliance, in comparison with the socialist-leaning alternative alliance (Badaan et al., 2020).

A topic of research that was unique to the Middle Eastern context was the politics of Islam and its relation to the justification of violence. A few studies indicated that Islamic identification was associated with approval of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 among Lebanese citizens (Haddad & Khashan, 2002), as well as support for Al-Qaeda and ISIS among citizens of Kuwait (Scull et al., 2019). However, other research provides a more nuanced picture. In Turkey, for instance, Islamic and liberal-democratic values appear to coexist (Toros, 2010). A survey involving 13 Middle Eastern countries suggested that religious Muslims preferred moderate – rather than extreme – interpretations of political Islam (Achilov & Sen, 2017). Some authors have argued that religious values themselves do not promote violence, but some group-based identities that are confounded with religiosity in specific social contexts do (Ginges et al., 2009; Hoffman & Nugent, 2017).

37.5 Conclusion

Our review of the research literature in political psychology conducted in the Global South led us to identify political participation, collective memory, intergroup relations, and ideology as the most common research topics in recent years. Despite the fact that these topics were relatively popular in all four regions we investigated – Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East – there were also some differences between regions. The clearest example is the Middle East, where political Islam acquired relevance as a unique, context-specific topic. Naturally, research on collective memory and social representations of history also pertained to culturally specific events, such as past experiences of colonial domination and ethnic or religious conflict.

To a considerable degree, the antecedents and consequences of political participation,

including collective action, and the dynamics of intergroup relations and ideology were similar in the Global South to what is typically observed in WEIRD contexts. However, there are some differences at the margins. In Brazil, for instance, some right-wing authoritarians are rebellious rather than deferential to established political authorities (Vilanova et al., 2020). In Africa, the long history of European colonialism in the region has contributed to a wide range of current opinion about foreign intervention (Mvukiyehe, 2018; Neto et al., 2013). In Asia, special attention has been paid to separatist movements, revealing complex patterns of ethno-nationalism that are largely unique to the region (Hsu et al., 2019). Finally, the analysis of repressive political systems in the Middle East has led researchers to identify emotional antecedents of collective action – such as fear – that appear to be context-specific (Adra et al., 2019).

Our goal in this fairly brief chapter was to provide a stimulating and accessible introduction to the study of political psychology in the Global South. As noted at the outset, we did not cover all of the potentially relevant social scientific research from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East (for additional discussion, see Chapter 38). There were some topics that we did not survey, because studies were too few and far between. Instead, we focused on the most popular themes, namely political participation, collective memory, intergroup relations, and ideology. For the sake of increasing geographical diversity and inclusion in political psychology and highlighting the effects of social context on human behaviour – especially when it comes to historical, cultural, political, and economic forces, we can only hope that other, more capacious literature reviews focusing on the Global South will follow this one in the years to come.

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38 Political Psychology in the Arab Region

A Commentary on Navigating Research in Unstable Contexts

Diala R. Hawi, Fouad Bou Zeineddine, Rim Saab,
Arin H. Ayanian, and Charles Harb

The Arab region consists of 22 countries, most of which gained some form of independence from different forms of colonial rule between the 1920s and 1970s. Many of these countries have experienced deep social, political, and psychological struggle and transformations (Gelvin, 2016). These include war, mass migration, military occupation, political schisms, and other ‘rapid societal changes’ (Smith et al., 2019). This has, in turn, introduced, instability and insecurity, as well as domestic and international polarisation and reactionary conservatism to the region. We argue that these characteristics stem from legacies of colonialism and imperialism and have led to ongoing domestic-international power struggles, authoritarianism, and politicisation of religion in modern times (Harb, 2016; Pratto et al., 2014). The Arab region has attracted the attention of the media, as well as scholars of history (Khalidi, 1991), sociology (Hanafi, 2012), political science (Jamal & Tessler, 2008), anthropology (Deeb & Winegar, 2015), and other disciplines. However, social psychological analyses of the Arab region remain scarce. Perhaps more importantly, a modern political psychology of the Arab region has been slow to attract local students interested in pursuing topics of justice, conflict, and politics in the region.

In this chapter we provide a brief overview of the historical context, present, and future directions of political psychology in the Arab region. We reflexively recognise our positions as Lebanese academics trained in Western

institutions and working in English, and acknowledge that the following therefore possibly represents a limited perspective on the topic, although every effort has been made to counterbalance our reflexive viewpoints with those of researchers in other positions.

38.1 A Brief History and Review of Political Psychology in the Region

Exploration of political psychological topics in the Arab region can be traced back to the 14th century at least, in Ibn Khaldun’s (1377) systematic investigation of social cohesion, intergroup conflict, and their interactions with sedentary versus nomadic lifestyles. Such works continue to inform contemporary Arab social science, but they are often over-emphasised and applied uncritically due to the relative dearth of contemporary social research (see Hanafi, 2018; Hanafi & Arvanitis, 2014, 2015).

Precolonial, non-academic, and non-psychological works of relevance to political psychology are beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is worth mentioning that theorising on the questions political psychology poses as a field has a long and rich history in the Arab region. We note works of political psychological significance from outside the academy (e.g., social identity and violence by Amin Maalouf in 1998), and a substantial portion of current studies on the Arab world consists of grey literature, such as unpublished theses and reports published by development

organisations and think tanks (e.g., Harb, 2010; Harb & Saab, 2014). This is likely due to a greater emphasis on and funding for applied and development-related work in these nations. Moreover, a larger research body from other disciplines (e.g., anthropology, political science) examines political psychological topics, although interdisciplinary collaborations with psychologists are limited (El-Amine, 2009; Zebian et al., 2007).

Psychology as a formal discipline first emerged in the Arab world in Egypt, in the early 20th century (Ibrahim, 2013). Early research focused on psychoanalysis, education, and learning (Prothro & Melikian, 1955). The mid-20th century saw rising interest in political psychological topics, based primarily on psychoanalysis (El-Rawy, 1947) or sociology (Prothro & Melikian, 1953; Shuval, 1956; Tannous, 1942). The first earnest social/political psychological literature relating to Arabs may have appeared in the 1949 edition of the *Egyptian Journal of Psychology*, where three separate articles discussed various aspects of war, peace, and the warrior (Cazeneuve, 1949; Chafe'i, 1949; Ibrahim, 1949). Then, in the mid-1950s, Terry Prothro, based at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon, published a series of papers on stereotypes in the 'Near East' (e.g., Prothro, 1954; Prothro & Melikian, 1954), out-group attitudes (Prothro, 1955), social/political attitudes (Prothro & Keehn, 1956), stereotypes (Prothro & Keehn, 1957), and chosen goals (political or otherwise; Melikian & Prothro, 1957). Additional work was published on political attitudes (Keehn, 1955), authoritarianism and prejudice (Diab, 1959), nationalism (MacLeod, 1959), group affiliations (Melikian & Diab, 1959), and stereotypes and immigration (De La Roque, 1960). Some reviews (e.g., Malika, 1965–1994; Sanchez-Sosa & Riveros, 2007; Zebian et al., 2007) have shown that the amount of (social) psychological research on the Arab region

produced in Arabic or other languages (English or French) is limited. A preliminary search on the PsycInfo database¹ found approximately 300 publications related to political psychology on the Arab region from 1960 until mid-2020.² More recently, a selective review of literature between 2000 and 2015 found that out of 144 social psychological articles published in Arabic and on the Arab world, a small minority were related to political psychology (Saab et al., 2020).

Unsurprisingly, a large body of work conducted in unstable regions with ongoing conflict, such as the Arab world, has focused on issues of mental health and well-being, particularly examining the link between conflict and trauma (e.g., Hammad & Tribe, 2020; Jabbar & Zaza, 2019; Khamis, 2019; Kira et al., 2019). Political psychological research published in international journals has covered social, national, and religious identity (Alfadhli et al., 2019; Kreidie & Monroe, 2002), intergroup relations/conflict (Djeriouat & Mullet, 2013; Kelman & Cohen, 1976; Levin et al., 2013), authoritarianism (Brandt & Henry, 2012; Kira et al., 2017; Sadowski et al., 2019), support for or engagement in political violence (Jasko et al., 2020; Levin et al., 2016; Scull et al., 2020), collective action (Ayanian & Tausch, 2016; Saab et al., 2017), social dominance (Henry et al., 2005; Stewart et al., 2016), and issues pertaining to refugees (Masterson & Lehmann, 2020; Saab et al., 2017). However, the published research in

¹ The search included keywords such as social, political psychology, conflict, and intergroup, among other related terms, as well as a listing of all 22 Arab nations.

² A significant number of these papers have been authored by scholars from fields outside of psychology, particularly political science (e.g., Jamal & Tessler, 2008), and/or work on topics related to the field, such as military psychology (e.g., Mironova, 2019).

any one of these areas is insufficient. The majority of these studies have focused on a select number of countries only,³ most likely corresponding to the presence of social/political psychologists based there and the differential emphasis on basic research of multiple different academic systems and languages (e.g., American, French).

This is not to say that the study of Arab populations in general is uncommon; on the contrary, we would likely find double the amount of papers on or related to Arabs or the Arab region outside the region itself (e.g., Kteily et al., 2016; Kteily & Bruneau, 2017). Most of this research examines Arabs as immigrants/refugees in Western countries, and generally in relation to a narrow range of topics such as political violence, integration, and gender, with an over-emphasis on Islam, terrorism, and the war of civilisations world view, or attitudes towards and perceptions of Arabs. For instance, numerous papers have examined American and other Western attitudes towards the Iraq invasion (e.g., Crowson, 2009; McFarland, 2005), but hardly any have examined attitudes and perceptions of Iraqis themselves on the US invasion of Iraq (see Fischer et al., 2008 for exceptions). As another example, the presence of refugees and immigrants in the West has attracted a wide range of scholarly interest examining trauma, adaptation/acclulturation, threat perceptions, and other issues, among both migrant and host communities (e.g., Berry, 2015; Louis et al., 2013; Reijerse et al., 2013). But most of the world's refugees and immigrants reside in non-Western countries (United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2017), and these groups remain largely understudied.

Studying the political psychology of Arab peoples living in the Arab region would not only be beneficial to the development of Arab societies in the long term, and help produce and enrich indigenous knowledge of the area, but might also lead to the discovery of theoretical and empirical innovations, limitations, and extensions to the culturally bound (e.g., Rad et al., 2018) Western political psychology. For Arab scholars, reclaiming psychological research foci from Western-based agendas and coloniality would better serve the region and would further enrich the discipline's corpus and better assist the field and communities facing similar problems across the Global South. This can be achieved by challenging modern disciplinary structures that deter attempts at equalising and decolonising the field (Bou Zeineddine et al, 2021).

38.2 Epistemological and Theoretical Challenges

The conventional approach to research today is to rely on existing literature to build new hypotheses and research procedures. This endeavour becomes difficult when the literature pertaining to specific contexts is scarce. In some cases, researchers could rely on work done on the region (or similar contexts) by other disciplines, but some more nuanced topics are directly tied to political psychology and may not exist outside the subfield. More often than not, however, the field has witnessed an almost 'uncritical acceptance of theories and findings from mainstream psychology' (Zebian et al., 2007, p. 114) that often-times present theoretical frameworks that are not culturally grounded. In a sense, this reflects the continued impact of the West on regional academia (Vora, 2018), despite its formal withdrawal as coloniser.

³ The PsycInfo review mentioned above shows that most research has been conducted in the Levant (Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq), and English publications were especially concentrated in Lebanon (see also Saab et al., 2020).

Simply applying Western literature and perspectives to contexts that do not match in demographic, cultural, or psychological characteristics (Boyden, 2001; Burgess & Steenkamp, 2006) may lead to output that is not particularly relevant to the region or that does not expand on existing literature or do much in the way of informing the field (Abou-Hatab, 1997; Galioun, 1997). On the other hand, scholars who are aware of the misfit may find themselves struggling to develop a cohesive research or theoretical trajectory from the ground up, in the absence of foundational literature, interdisciplinary collaboration, and satisfactory training (especially in inductive and exploratory methods, which are not typically prioritised in most Western psychology programmes). It is even more challenging to get recognition and awareness of such novel indigenously-produced research in international mainstream publications (Bou Zeineddine et al., 2021).

Additionally, some topics that are highly relevant to Arab countries remain severely undertheorised. Topics around corruption, sectarianism, repressive governance, and modern slavery are particularly salient in this region (e.g., Bou Zeineddine et al., 2021), and yet receive relatively little attention in mainstream political psychology. Taking the case of corruption as an example, research shows that countries in the West suffer from a great degree of oligarchic and other forms of corrupt influence on politics, most of which is formalised within those political systems (legal lobbying, campaign financing rules, etc., e.g., Gilens & Page, 2014). Such corruption often escapes adequate analysis and interpretation, as legalised modes of special interest influence are neither systematically investigated nor included in measures such as the commonly used Corruption Perceptions Index. Without examining variations across very different polities, such as those in the

Arab world, we could not systematically investigate the roles of factors such as structural institutional permissiveness, or the normative and moral-psychological implications of legalised versus proscribed political influence practices.

Another example is that of collective action, where past literature had examined normative action in developed countries, overlooking non-normative action in authoritarian and repressive contexts (for exceptions, see Ayanian & Tausch, 2016; Ayanian et al., 2021). Different factors than those typically researched (e.g., perceived risks, repressive regimes, party loyalty) could significantly shape motivations for engagement and consequences of such participation. Such gaps in the literature could be better filled with greater attention to the comparative politics of different nations, whereby research would be enriched and validated through broader conceptualisation and operationalisation of the phenomena that encompass a variety of contexts.

Failures of generalisation of commonly researched topics and well-established theories is another problem stemming from the relatively little attention paid to the political psychology of Arab nations. Studies have repeatedly shown that hegemonic psychology based on Western, educated, industrialised, and democratic (WEIRD) samples by WEIRD authors often fails to generalise due to contextual and cultural differences (Henrich et al., 2010; Rad et al., 2018). This is a problem for political psychology specifically, when nuanced analysis of contexts' political systems, structures, institutions, and norms is essential to proper design and interpretation of research (Bou Zeineddine & Pratto, 2017).

For instance, most studies on acculturation (Berry, 1997) – including those who have looked at Arab immigrants as subjects of

study – assume that the possibility of permanent settlement for migrant communities exists (e.g., Sayegh & Lasry, 1993). In the Arab world, however, acquiring citizenship or permanent residency is incredibly rare, and therefore questions of belongingness, social cohesion, integration, or assimilation take on a different meaning for Arab migrant populations within the region, some of whom may be third-generation residents/refugees in another Arab and culturally similar state (Andreouli & Figgou, 2019; Fargues, 2011). An examination of migrant processes at this level would thus require a deep revision of dominant theory on acculturation to include the diversity and heterogeneity of the experiences of migration. Interdisciplinary collaboration, greater attention to political psychological data and theory from beyond the formal academic field in the region, greater reliance on critical comparative research within the Arab region, the Global South, and globally, and more effective indigenous research production, distribution, and application, would all help address these challenges. However, beginning to address the epistemological and theoretical challenges in Arab political psychology is also necessarily contingent on methodological and social, political, and cultural constraints.

38.3 Challenges in Research Production

The scant number of academic programmes in social/political psychology in Arab countries is one reason for the low number of local scholars specialising in the field or students hoping to train in it.⁴ Compounding this problem, many Western institutions have begun offshoring their campuses in the Middle East, and hiring mostly Western faculty for their programmes (Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011). Moreover, the instability of the region, and its relative lack of development, mean that researchers face lack of recognition as well as concerns about their safety, financial and career security, and civil liberties. Thus, brain drain, through the emigration of researchers to Western nations (e.g., Shabana, 2020), also impacts the potential for local research production. Furthermore, those few scholars residing in the Arab region face methodological constraints that severely handicap their work, including difficulties in acquiring samples (described later in this section), coping with the probability of dramatic and rapid sociopolitical change when designing and implementing research studies, research assistantship (RA) support, regional collaborators, funding, and advanced research training.

Many topics that would be particularly novel, salient, or generative to study in the Arab world require elaborate approaches and methods⁵ like in-depth analyses, qualitative work, numerous pilot studies, translations, and a combination of mixed methods that allow for more culturally sensitive research (Moghaddam et al., 2003). Unfortunately, and based on our personal experiences with conducting sensitive research in these contexts, these designs take more time and resources than most scholars have, in an era that demands multiple studies in publications to be deemed worthwhile (e.g., Adams et al., 2018).

⁴ Although exact numbers are unavailable, the authors estimate the presence of under 50 Arab social psychologists working in/on the region, only a portion of which are researching topics related to political psychology (see Saab et al., 2020, for an estimate of psychologists publishing in the Arabic language).

⁵ In a study examining relations between refugees and host communities in Lebanon, researchers have relied on a review of multiple previous data reports published by UNHCR and other organisations that work with Syrian refugees in Lebanon (e.g., VASYR, 2017), to compensate for the scarce academic research.

Moreover, regional instability requires flexibility and a certain amount of comfort with uncertainty. In October 2019, Lebanon witnessed a popular uprising against corrupt political leadership and the country's economic deterioration (Amnesty International, 2020). Several ongoing projects on intergroup relations had to pause work and reassess their questions and goals. During the long periods needed to develop studies, sudden shifts in political and social conditions would either inhibit/interrupt access to the researched population or freedom to conduct the research (e.g., activists imprisoned, explosions, populations displaced, scholars threatened or attacked) or invalidate the concepts or scales included in the study. Such challenges hinder the development of strong (or any) research institutions, infrastructure, or local personnel that can promote long-term research in the area.

Furthermore, most Arab academic institutions are teaching-focused, and across all Arab states, only seven universities offer master's degrees and four offer doctoral degrees in social psychology (Saab et al., 2020). This translates to less institutional support for research, particularly ones involving intricate theories, methodologies, and analyses, in terms of funding, time, incentives, or RAs, while still pushing scholars to publish (preferably in international outlets). In many cases scholars resort to collaborative, cross-cultural projects, which oftentimes allow for little input from on-site local collaborators. More importantly, they rely on direct translations of survey measures that have been set by central international teams. These collaborative projects can be useful but are often exploitative and hegemonic in their approach and organisation (e.g., Hanafi & Arvanitis, 2014) and cannot stand alone as primary sources of literature on the region.

Reliance on college samples or online sampling portals (e.g., Mechanical Turk), despite

the shortcomings of each methodology (Henrich et al., 2010; Sheehan, 2018), has aided researchers in obtaining large samples of data quickly and inexpensively for decades. However, most online sampling portals do not service the Arab world and, to the best of our knowledge, many Arab universities do not provide institutional forms of encouragement (e.g., course credit) for student participation – thus rendering even these 'convenient' sampling techniques unattainable.

On the one hand, these difficulties could lead to the opportune reliance on more diverse and representative samples, outside student and online communities, to achieve closer approximations of the pulse of a society (e.g., Alfadhli et al., 2019; Ayanian & Tausch, 2016). On the other hand, accessing a wider range of individuals presents its own set of challenges, starting with the logistics of collecting representative data (Harb, 2016). Certain communities are almost impossible to access, either due to their geographic or living conditions (e.g., low-skilled migrant workers in Gulf countries; Joshi et al., 2011) or due to the presence of violence (Ford et al., 2009). Some countries do not possess updated population data or may not be willing to part with census information, thereby preventing a proper procedure of random sampling. In nationally diverse regions, such as the Gulf, where some residents are not proficient in English or Arabic, researchers must also assess the feasibility of translating measures into multiple languages or foregoing certain groups altogether. Snowballing techniques or other forms of convenience sampling are also not always effective, particularly in communities that place little value on the usefulness of academic studies or are wary of their intentions. Under these sampling constraints, building new theories that typically rely on appropriate samples becomes more difficult (Sue, 1993), especially in countries with heavy-handed measures of

population control and monitoring, in the absence of appropriate support and funding, and with reviewers applying different standards regarding sampling for Western versus non-Western studies (e.g., Bou Zeineddine et al., 2021).

Furthermore, in attempting to reach community members representing various backgrounds, social strata, and perspectives, the need for culturally valid measures becomes more crucial. Merely translating scales developed with WEIRD societies in mind is not sufficient. According to Zebian et al. (2007), many Arab-based studies included non-college students, while over half the measures used were originally developed with non-Arab – and student – samples in mind. Of course, there is sometimes quite a bit to be gained from pre-existing scales (Kennedy, 2005), but direct or literal translations that falsely assume constructs and phrases are universally understood in similar ways neglect cultural variations and the need for more culturally appropriate adaptations (Werner & Campbell, 2001). Current recommendations include incorporating qualitative methods into the measurement process, focusing on more culturally appropriate translations, and ending the sole reliance on post-hoc psychometric assessments of measures (Kennedy, 2005). This process requires time and resources from researchers, however. Moreover, aside from the possibility that non-student samples (of varying age, socio-economic status, literacy, and background) may not share similar experiences (especially in political psychology), they are also less likely to have had much experience or familiarity with participating in studies, thereby impacting how they understand and react to instruments, how much trust they

place in the objectivity and confidentiality of studies, how safe they feel about engaging in sensitive topics, and consequently, how candidly they respond (Sultana, 2007). Reaching larger samples in many countries requires community, government, and participant support and cooperation, which are particularly difficult to attain when it comes to questions perceived to threaten the political status quo. We elaborate on this next.

38.4 Social, Political, and Ethical Challenges

Research on human participants, particularly members of vulnerable populations, requires a long list of ethical considerations, including privacy, confidentiality, and the protection of participants (Sales & Folkman, 2000). Research in unstable and conflict-ridden settings brings about additional considerations beyond those of institutional ethical boards (see Moss et al., 2019). This includes genuine efforts to collaborate locally, engage continuously with communities, and ensure that the research benefits communities, directly or indirectly (Ford et al., 2009; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2013).

In some cases, institutionally approved studies may still be delayed or prohibited by governments or local parties, who are not obligated to cite their reasons (Warwick, 1993). For example, in a multi-year media study in the region, one measure assesses levels of trust in media outlets. This question was permitted (or at least slipped under the radar) in Egypt in 2015 but was not allowed to be asked again in 2019.⁶ In another example, a survey assessing political attitudes of Egyptians residing in the Gulf towards their home country caught the attention of the Egyptian embassy, who reached out to the main researcher and asked them to modify the survey if they wished to continue collecting data. In Lebanon, one of

⁶ Media Use in the Middle East (<http://www.mideastmedia.org>).

the authors was advised to remove certain questions to avoid catching the attention – and ire – of certain political parties in the country. These restrictions occur often enough to hinder the process of data collection on questions of varying political sensitivity (Harb, 2016). Additionally, legalised religious and cultural sensitivities mean that, in some countries, many topics (e.g., homosexuality, regime repression) cannot even be mentioned as examples (e.g., in instruments assessing support for minority rights), much less be the primary topic of examination. Conducting such studies (e.g., on underground sexual minority communities) directly and seriously jeopardises participants' as well as researchers' security and freedoms. Researchers have noted that inequities in the systems of knowledge production are not just lingering modern-colonial hegemony or issues with material resource deprivations, but also are intimately connected to the authoritarian and illiberal regimes found in most of this region's countries, and the tight norms they foster (e.g., Hanafi, 2018).

The problems with sensitive questions in a politically unstable region go beyond institutional (and non-institutional) sensitivities and support, however. Participant perception and apprehension about studies' possible purposes interfere heavily with the quality and validity of data. Outside WEIRD 'overstudied' populations, the norms of data collection – confidentiality, anonymity, expectations of candidness, proper interpretation of measures – are not familiar to the average (or target) underrepresented participant (Zebian et al., 2007). Specifically, reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality may not sufficiently persuade individuals to engage with questions about their loyalty or support for regimes, political ideologies, or sectarian groups, or about controversial opinions (Sue, 1993). Participant fears range from ostracisation to

deportation, imprisonment, or worse, on accounts of incitement. At the very least, we would expect higher rates of socially desirable responses, similar to what is documented among ethnic minority groups and within countries of relatively lower affluence (Johnson & Van de Vijver, 2003). Furthermore, project affiliations or sources of funding could also trigger suspicion and evasion by target communities. Relatedly, non-local researchers could be perceived as modern proxies of colonialism – another means to influence the region into fulfilling a certain agenda – or carriers of misguided and misinformed racist perceptions about communities they know little about (Warwick, 1993).

Furthermore, in societies heavily divided by sectarianism, factionalism, and political ideology, even local researchers could be perceived as 'the other side' or pushing their personal agendas, and/or untrustworthy with potentially incriminating information. On the other hand, participants may be right to question how researchers' power, positionality, and socially constructed biases might shape what and how questions are asked, responded to, and interpreted (Binns, 2006; Kram, 1988). Particular communities that are subjected to heavier research (e.g., those in refugee camps) have grown weary of engaging with questions more relevant to Western academia than the community's actual concerns, and disappointment when promises of social change go unfulfilled (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2013). Arab scholars must be aware of how their socio-economic status, education, cultural, religious, and political influences and personal goals colour their own perceptions as well as the community's hesitation to cooperate. Addressing these issues requires critical, sensitive, reflexive, and inclusive approaches to research.

A notable observation of the PsycInfo search previously mentioned is that an almost

equal number of publications (on Palestinian samples mostly) has emerged from Israeli scholars alone compared to all other Arab publications. While some might argue that data emerging from these endeavours can enrich our understanding of a group that would have otherwise been severely understudied, it remains problematic in several ways. First, there is the practical and very controversial question of whether this is considered *research within Arab regions*, when this is in reality a settler-colonial context, in a land occupied by Israelis (Beinin & Stein, 2006). Second, the Arab-Israeli conflict has shaped attitudes and perceptions between the two groups for almost a century (Lesch, 2018). Although some Israeli academics have expressed support for the Arab/Palestinian cause, some even explicitly protesting the occupation, they still likely carry some of their society's perspectives and biases, which would inevitably shape research design and interpretation, while leaving Palestinian voices outside the conversation (Binns, 2006). This power imbalance between researcher and subject must be counterpoised by more contributions from within the Arab academic community.

Finally, as an issue of moral responsibility, many Arab scholars abide by the boycott of Israeli academic institutions complicit in violations of Palestinian rights (Hermez & Soukarieh, 2013). Additionally, collaboration with Israeli institutions and travel to Israel are prohibited for most Arab citizens. Hence, multinational projects including Israeli collaborations and international conferences held in Israel effectively exclude Arab scholars.

38.5 The Future of Political Psychology in the Arab Region

The concern over the potential harm that Western biases could cause has sometimes led to the drastic solution of avoiding research

endeavours in the Global South altogether (Sultana, 2007). This is an unfortunate choice, particularly when properly conducted research can potentially inform advocacy and policy change (Ford et al., 2009). The challenges presented in this chapter are not meant to be discouraging, but rather cautionary. Perhaps best practice does not have to incorporate an all-or-nothing approach, but one that recognises cultural and political sensitivities, inequalities, and the positionality and role of researchers (Bhatia, 2019). And despite the challenges in conducting political psychological research in the Arab region, there are promising signs of progress.

It is worth reminding that the region is overflowing with academic and public policy groups that tackle violence, politics, and security studies from various disciplines, although psychological perspectives are often excluded from the discourse. The primary responsibility to bridge this gap and include political psychology in the conversation falls on political psychologists themselves. Local scholars must collaborate and reach out to other academic and policy groups to create a well-rounded understanding of the region. International scholars must understand the challenges that unstable, conservative, and authoritarian contexts pose, while encouraging and appreciating innovative and unconventional approaches to research in the region. The growing recognition of the roles of critical, indigenous, discursive, and liberation psychology in challenging traditional approaches and navigating diverse contexts is a positive move in that direction (Andreouli & Figgou, 2019; Bhatia, 2019; Nesbitt-Larking & Kinnvall, 2012).

Another positive development to this end is the rapidly growing number of Arab and Arab-based social/political psychologists, particularly in the past two decades. The authors are also aware of (or are contributing to) various ongoing projects examining a wide range

of topics, such as collective action, social dominance and resistance, collective memory, norms, gender, region-based migrant and refugee communities, as well as changes in political attitudes and values over time (e.g., Adra et al., 2019; Albzour et al., 2019; Ayanian et al., 2021; Badaan et al., 2020; Bou Zeineddine & Qumseya, 2020).

Furthermore, political psychologists have begun seeking out several large-scale survey projects emerging from other disciplines. The Arab Barometer (2006–present), the Arab Opinion Index (2011–present), and the Media Use in the Middle East survey (2013–present) focus on political opinion and/or media polling, across up to 12 Arab countries each.⁷ Additionally, some Arab countries have participated in international studies like the World Values Survey (2010–present), which includes various social-political measures.⁸ These data are valuable, but until recently, have been underutilised, particularly in exploring processes and models that are relevant to the field.

Nevertheless, the road ahead remains long and hard. The field should take a step back, avoid the blind adoption of constructs and theories based on Western samples and contexts, invest in the gradual growth of critical indigenous psychology, and reform the systems of knowledge production it relies on (Bou Zeineddine et al., 2021). Arab political psychologists need breathing room to work, political space within which they can examine their own societies critically. But until international relations and domestic politics align to allow this, Arab scholars need to innovate, adapt, and collaborate with regional and international scholars on potentially arduous approaches to research.

A certain degree of hybridity (Hanafi & Arvanitis, 2014) entails fluency in both local and ‘international’ research concerns, practices, and ideas, and flexible use of this larger

toolbox. Such hybridity can be difficult to maintain, especially for researchers living in diaspora, working in foreign languages, or unable to return to their countries. It can be equally difficult for scholars isolated from the international mainstream literature (e.g., through linguistic barriers). Leveraging the small numbers of researchers in the field to forge strong professional networks across national and linguistic boundaries could be an adequate approach to maintaining hybridity, but is contingent on there being at least *some* local political psychologists, a fact that is not true in many Arab countries, and a precarious and potentially ephemeral reality in others. Importing Western faculty is not the answer in the long term (Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011). Training more Arab political psychologists, setting up a regional political psychology working group or association, expanding Arab psychology programmes so psychologists can work locally and begin training others in turn, and engaging in political activism in favour of freedom of speech and academic freedom and good governance, are all essential, if difficult, avenues political psychologists must take.

Both international and Arab researchers must also recognise the richness and value of the context and prioritise topics that are most pressing for the region, even if potentially disruptive of the field. The cultural and political diversity in the region, and the limitations in Western theories and perspectives, demand a wide range of political psychological research that comes from listening to the concerns and needs of the community itself (Chatty et al., 2005) and reflecting in nuanced and systematic

⁷ <http://www.arabbarometer.org>; <https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/ProgramsAndProjects/Pages/programDetailedpage.aspx?PageId=4>; <http://www.mideastmedia.org/>

⁸ <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp/>

ways on what this community can teach all of us about the diversity of human experiences.

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39 Critical Perspectives in Political Psychology

Cristian Tileagă and Martha Augoustinos

This chapter explores some of the most important links between critical psychology and political psychology. In view of the range of work that now exists on critical psychology, it is impossible to provide a comprehensive account of academic critical perspectives in political psychology in a single chapter. We begin by discussing the particular background of critical psychology within the discipline of psychology. We then turn to a discussion of some of the most significant features of critical perspectives in political psychology by highlighting the importance of historical awareness and critique, and the pursuit of social justice. In the remainder of the chapter we focus specifically on the ways in which the discursive turn in psychology has advanced our understanding of two key topics of interest to political psychologists: prejudice and political discourse. We close the chapter with a discussion of how alternative ways of advancing intellectual critique can drive new political psychology projects on the most pressing social problems of our age.

39.1 Understanding the Particular Background of Critical Psychology

Critical psychology is one of the areas of psychology that has seen an extraordinary development in the last 35 years. As Parker

(1999a) argues, critical psychology has developed through an engagement with debates ‘inside’, as well as ‘outside’, psychology. Some branches of critical psychology have developed against dominant traditions in Anglo-American psychology and methodological orthodoxies, whereas the development of other strands was driven by engagements with streams of thought from outside the discipline of psychology: social theory, cultural studies, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, feminist theories, post-modernism, psychoanalysis.

Foundational critical psychology texts level a robust critique of psychology’s assumptions, ontologies, and epistemologies.¹ Engagements with structuralism (Harré & Secord, 1972), post-structuralism (Parker & Shotter, 1990; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell, 1998), social constructionism (Gergen, 1985), post-modernism (Kvale, 1992), and critical realism (Willig, 1999) have opened the door for the creation of critical perspectives in many of psychology’s subfields. Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (Edwards & Potter, 1992), feminist theories (Burman, 1989, 1998; Gavey, 1989; Wilkinson, 1986), cultural studies and ideology critique (Simons & Billig, 1994), dialogical approaches (Marková, 2009), classical rhetoric (Billig, 1987; Billig et al., 1988), narrative (Sarbin, 1986), or psychoanalysis (Billig, 1999) were all, at different moments in critical psychology’s development, recruited for a renewed critique of psychology’s fundamental assumptions about human behaviour and people.

¹ See Parker (1999a) for a history of ‘radical debates’ in psychology.

Out of foundational critical psychology narratives emerged new paradigms for the study of selfhood (Henriques et al., 1984), personal and collective identities (Bhavnani & Phoenix, 1994), LGBTQI+ identities (Brown, 1989), gender (Gergen & Davis, 1997), women's stories and psychology of women (Fine, 1980; Gergen, 1990), experience and memory (Danziger, 2008; Middleton & Brown, 2005), attitudes (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), cognition (Edwards, 1997), prejudice and discrimination (Wetherell & Potter, 1992), race and racism (Durrheim et al., 2009), common sense (Billig, 1987; Moscovici, 1988), the nature of scientific knowledge (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1986; Hollway, 1989).

Critical psychology textbooks and handbooks (e.g., Fox et al., 2009; Hepburn, 2003) chart the breadth and depth of critical scholarship. The history of critical psychology is itself a matter of interest (Billig, 2008). Virtually every subdiscipline in psychology can now claim its own set of critical perspectives – critical educational psychology (Williams et al., 2016), critical health psychology (Lyons & Chamberlain, 2017; Murray, 2014), critical community psychology (Kagan et al., 2011), critical developmental psychology (Broughton, 1987), critical clinical psychology (Cromby et al., 2013; Parker, 1999b), or critical organisational psychology (Islam & Zyphur, 2009).

Critical psychologists draw inspiration from established critical fields in social sciences: critical anthropology (Tileagă, 2015), social theory (Brown & Stenner, 2009), postcolonial theory (Hook, 2012), critical policy and legal studies (Arrigo & Fox, 2009), and critical race theory (Salter & Adams, 2013). In other words, subdisciplines that 'refuse to accept the celebratory way that their mainstream disciplines portray themselves' (Billig, 2008, p. 19). In doing so, they reposition psychology as a social science and reveal the political

nature of psychological sciences. Critical psychology is now practised by colleagues across national boundaries and intellectual traditions.

We are an (inter)disciplinary field – critical psychology – that can speak across lives and history; political economy, ideology, and the human spirit; we can narrate the complexities in a biography and the dynamics across groups, organizations, and movements. We refuse to be satisfied at the level of the individual or the social; the present or the history; we take context seriously and try to stretch our theorizing across place. (Fine, 2018, pp. 439–440)

Irrespective of flavour, critical perspectives in psychology share core motivations about the need to unearth unspoken assumptions and power relations in the discipline and debunk the relations of domination that are being reproduced by mainstream psychological science. Critical race psychologists Phia Salter and Glenn Adams argue this point cogently:

Like other perspectives of critical psychology, we propose that CRP [critical race psychology] perspectives emphasize an application of intellectual tools in a reflexive manner to examine ways in which the everyday work of psychological science serves to reproduce relations of domination. The potential contribution of CRP perspectives is the application of identity-conscious knowledge – based on the epistemological perspective of people from racially oppressed groups – as a tool to reveal the typically obscured, racial positioning of conventional wisdom in mainstream psychological science. (Salter & Adams, 2013, p. 789)

39.2 Directions for a Critical Political Psychology

Critical psychology has moved beyond the old caricature of a field that is 'undisciplined' (Billig, 2008), 'contradictory' (Parker, 1999a),

or ‘paradoxical’ (Fine, 1980). Its reconstructive work in the social sciences has extended to many of psychology’s subfields, although it is yet to make a long-lasting impact in political psychology.

With regularity, the question of ‘Where do we go from here in political psychology?’ is being asked.

Where do we go from here in political psychology? Predicting the future is hazardous; prescribing the future is a doomed exercise. Attempting either, we invariably produce a picture of our current knowledge and preoccupations, projecting mainly ‘more of the same’ into the future . . . so the purpose of considering ‘where do we go from here?’ must be critical reflection. I argue that in our still-developing field there are three useful goals for this: seeking integrated perspectives, considering how new tools for research will change the field, and how to make effective use of current critiques and perceived gaps. (Haste, 2012, p. 1)

Critical psychology has been used, more or less effectively, as a way to embed critiques and fill gaps within political psychology. Although there have been several systematic attempts to reorient the field under the aegis of critical approaches (e.g., Fine, 2018; Hammack, 2018; Tileagă, 2013), political psychology has not yet seen its full ‘critical turn’.

The main tenets of critical psychology itself have been seldom, if at all, discussed by critical political psychologists. We argue here that one cannot appropriately discuss the relationship between critical and political psychology without some kind of an attempt to (re)define critical psychology for political psychologists. This is not the place to discuss the history of critical psychology – there are better texts for that purpose (see Billig, 2008; Teo, 2015). We discuss here those features of critical psychology that, we argue, can constitute robust foundations for a dialogue with strands of scholarship in political psychology. We

explore some of the most significant features of critical perspectives in political psychology by highlighting the importance of historical awareness and critique, and the pursuit of social justice.

39.2.1 Historical Awareness and Critique

Political psychology is multivalent and historically rich. Yet, like social psychology, it ‘never really wished to take the risk of recognizing the real diversities in its past’ (Moscovici & Marková, 2006, p. 28). The task of making effective use of current critiques and perceived gaps that Haste (2012) was proposing assumes a repositioning of the importance of temporal and cultural contexts in defining research questions in political psychology. That project is already underway (see Billig, 2003; Condor et al., 2013; Nesbitt-Larking & Kinnvall, 2012).

Political psychology will need to look back at its past before it considers its future. Although there are many psychologies underlying political psychology, political psychology has only opened itself to some, but has closed itself from other fields and approaches. The contextual analysis of complex human behaviour ‘demands a historical awareness’ (Billig, 2008, p. 9). Historical awareness informs a political psychology that addresses societal dilemmas, tensions, and contradictions.

Early forms of critique: post-empiricist, ideological, and post-structuralist (Gergen, 1994) are starting to acquire new critical meanings for political psychologists. Whereas the boundaries of early forms of critique were, sometimes, too strictly enforced especially as the reputation of critical approaches was gaining traction in academic departments in the UK and USA particularly, more critical work is now advanced without a concern for the precise label one gives to critique. Instead,

the focus is societal – critical analyses take the form of cultural analyses of society, its presuppositions, repertoires, discursive and social practices, that transform the worth of individuals and communities. Critical-societal analyses are analyses of contradictory social mixtures; they are synchronic, as well as diachronic.² There are serious downsides to what Gergen called ‘pure critique’, that is, critique that works within a previously assigned pigeonhole. Critique need not establish ‘a form of binary’ (Gergen, 1994) as so many early critical psychological approaches have done in the past.

Critical psychologists no longer need to fight the battle against psychology’s canon alone: the alliances and the reputation that they built in conversation with cognate fields over time are now an asset in the continuing intellectual conversation about psychology’s place in the social sciences (see, for example, Tileagă & Byford, 2014 on interdisciplinary conversations between history and psychology). Political psychology has already entered that key conversation with critical psychology and has started to accommodate critical approaches and embed them more into its research programmes (Fine, 2018; Tileagă, 2018).

39.2.2 Social Justice

Political psychology has been described in the past as largely apolitical and acritical, although, as a discipline, it did not shy away from discussing the value as well as drawbacks of a politicised psychology – see, for example, the contributions of Tetlock (1994) and Sears (1994). As Montero argued, ‘willingly or not, mainstream political psychology colludes with those interests by not challenging political structures and by remaining silent on alternative power arrangements’ (Montero, 1997, p. 236). Montero’s critique was not a widespread critique at the time. However, it did

discuss some of the obvious gaps in the field, especially those related to power, domination, and emancipation. Political psychology is no longer silent on issues of power, domination, and emancipation. Social justice is the most fertile ground where critical and political psychology meet (see Fine, 2018; Hammack, 2018). Lesbian and gay (Clarke et al., 2010), postcolonial (Hook, 2012), and race (Salter & Adams, 2013), as well as many other alternative psychologies, are invaluable resources for political psychologists who are keen to reorient the field towards issues of oppression and emancipation.

In so many of psychology’s subfields (e.g., education, health), psychologists have moved on from the phase of early radical debates (Parker, 1999a) towards scholarship that engages with societal themes related to inequalities and social justice. In political psychology, concerns with social justice are bringing critical and political psychologists together. However, this critical project in political psychology is far from complete. As psychologists in pursuit of social justice, we need to concern ourselves more with exploring the paradoxes lodged at the heart of liberal democracies. We must endeavour to interpret society as cultural and historical reality, which generates its own social processes and mechanisms of assigning moral significance to others (Tileagă, 2015).

² Gergen was cautioning against the dream of pure and all-conquering critique: ‘a mammoth arsenal of critical weaponry at our disposal. . . . Everywhere now in the academic world the capitalist exploiters, male chauvinistic pigs, cultural imperialists, warmongers, WASP bigots, wimp liberals and scientific dogmatists are on the run’ (1994, p. 59). What Gergen was arguing for in 1994 is relevant today: ‘sober reflection seems essential on the forms of our interrogations – their intelligibility, coherence and societal effects’ (p. 60).

When we look for approaches that might support the contextual analysis of social issues and social problems, as is often the case in political psychology, we are sensitive to new critical approaches while sometimes ignoring promising, as well as established, contributions in our field. For example, intersectional approaches are taking hold across many disciplines in the social sciences and offer a more democratic platform for intellectual debate on social problems and social justice. However, we should not let novel critical approaches displace promising, as well as established, contributions of psychology to political philosophy and political theory (Lane, 2003), cultural and cross-cultural (Renshon & Duckitt, 2000; see also Chapters 37 and 38, this volume), and neuro/evolutionary political psychology (Sidanius & Kurzban, 2003; see also Chapters 2 and 4, this volume).

Brown and Stenner (2009) make the case for abandoning the idea that psychology needs new foundations posited on biological, discursive, or cognitive paradigms. They argue, convincingly, that the psychological is not narrowly confined to any one aspect of human experience; it is quite literally everywhere. The same could be argued of political psychology. We ought to abandon the idea that political psychology needs new foundations (biological, discursive, or cognitive) – we need a discipline that is defined more by the *issues* and *problems* it researches rather than the paradigms it uses.

39.3 A Critical Discursive Turn In Psychology

Despite the recent call to abandon paradigms and foundations, the paradigmatic ‘turn to language’ in the social sciences in the 1980s was central to the proliferation of new ways of doing psychology *critically* which led to a ‘quiet revolution’ in social psychology

(Augoustinos & Tileagă, 2012; Edwards, 2012; Potter, 2012; Tileagă & Stokoe, 2015). Its central concern was the study of situated *discourse* (both written text and talk) and its role in constructing social reality. This new paradigm emphasised a radically different epistemology challenging dominant positivist and realist traditions in psychology. In the last 30 years, discursive approaches have proliferated generating a significant body of scholarship (Billig, 2012) that has fundamentally reworked psychological topics such as self and identity, attributions, attitudes, social influence, and emotion. In the next subsections, we illustrate how this discursive tradition advances our understanding of two key issues of interest to political psychologists: prejudice and political discourse.

39.3.1 The Language of Prejudice

Prejudice has been a core topic within psychology propelled by the publication of key texts in the 1950s such as Allport’s *Nature of Prejudice* (Allport, 1954) and Adorno et al.’s *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al., 1950; see also Chapter 11, this volume). We do not have space here to discuss the trajectory and impact of these two key texts; rather, our goal is to contrast them to critical approaches that emphasise the limitations of psychology’s dominant positivist epistemology and ontology which have contributed to constructing prejudice as an individual and psychological problem rather than a societal problem shaped by inequitable power and social relations that requires political change. As Henriques et al. (1984) argued, by conceptualising prejudice primarily as an individual state of mind requiring attitudinal rehabilitation, psychology has obscured the political need for societal and structural change. Here, we provide a selective review of critical discursive research which has shifted the focus away from treating prejudice

as an internal psychological problem to shared collective practices that are enacted every day in discourse and interaction that justify and legitimate existing social inequalities. It is through such everyday practices, in both formal and informal talk, that relations of power, dominance, and exploitation become reproduced and legitimated. The analytic site for critical discursive work is how everyday talk and discourse is put together to construct different social and racial realities, and to provide accounts that legitimate these as 'real' and 'natural'.

The turn of the 21st century has witnessed a resurgence of debates and controversies on race, prejudice, multiculturalism, nationalism, and immigration (e.g., see Chapters 14, 12, 37, 20, and 21, respectively in this volume). What is said, argued, and discussed in such debates has been the focus of critical discursive psychology. This has included analysing not only everyday talk and conversation, but also formal institutional talk and media communication. Collectively, this research has found that the language of prejudice is flexible, contradictory, and ambivalent combining conflicting social values in ways that function to deny attributions of prejudice, but at the same time construct minorities negatively, thwarting their political aspirations (Augoustinos & Every, 2007). In the first large-scale critical discursive study of this kind, Wetherell and Potter (1992) document how the categories of 'race' and 'culture' were used by Pākehā (the white majority) in New Zealand as contrastive categories to define Māori (the indigenous peoples of New Zealand) as a distinct biological group of people who shared particular traits and characteristics. These categories were used predominantly to contrast the Māori minority with the Pākehā majority. The white majority was represented as the 'norm' of New Zealand society representing civilisation, progress, and modernism. In

contrast, Māori were viewed as the repository of 'culture', exotic and distinct. Although many Pākehā spoke favourably of a Māori cultural identity, ultimately this identity was viewed as secondary to a homogeneous and unifying 'national' identity (see also Sibley & Osborne, 2016). The category of 'nation' was used to limit and constrain Māori aspirations, which were seen to undermine and threaten national unity. Wetherell and Potter called this a 'togetherness repertoire' that emphasised the need to minimise group differences and instead highlight commonalities. For example,

I think everybody should be free to follow their culture as part of (mmhm) their heritage. But, uh, I think it's also important that we recognize that we are in fact New Zealanders (mmhm). And we should be tending to become more one rather than separately developing (right, yeah). (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 145)

As many critical psychologists have found, appealing to the nationalist moral imperative to identify collectively at the level of the nation state is a ubiquitous feature of contemporary 'race' talk. Indeed, the category of 'nation' is increasingly taking over from 'race' in legitimating negative sentiments about minority groups (see also Chapter 20, this volume), a practice which has been called discursive deracialisation (Reeves, 1983).

Wetherell and Potter's (1992) detailed discursive analysis of racial prejudice in New Zealand also documented how talk was organised rhetorically around the proficient use of a range of liberal and egalitarian arguments that drew on principles of freedom, fairness, individual rights, and equal opportunity. These also functioned to deny attributions of racism and, further, to legitimate and justify existing inequitable social relations. Wetherell and Potter identified 10 common, 'rhetorically self-sufficient' or 'clinching' arguments that were routinely used by respondents to this

effect. Some of these arguments included: everybody should be treated equally, you have to be practical, present generations should not be blamed for mistakes of past generations, and minority opinion should not carry more weight than majority opinion. These clinching arguments were described as common-sense maxims, that provide a basic accountability that was beyond question and functioned like a toolkit of liberal practical politics (Augoustinos & Every, 2007). Such commonplace arguments have also been documented in talk on gender (Speer, 2005), heterosexism (Speer & Potter, 2000), and disability rights (Jingree & Finlay, 2008).

Critical discursive research in Australia has found similar discursive patterns of accounting for racial inequality between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. Augoustinos et al. (1999) documented how history was used as a rhetorical resource to account for contemporary social problems faced by indigenous people, more specifically, an imperialist narrative of Australia's colonial past. Aboriginal problems were represented largely in Social-Darwinist terms as problems of 'fit' and of 'adaptation' to a superior culture that was introduced by the British. Aboriginal people's failure to fit into, or 'gel' with, the dominant culture was viewed as preventing indigenous people from improving their status through upward social mobility. In this way, indigenous people were constructed as culturally inferior, as failing to survive in a superior culture, and thus, accountable for their own social and economic disadvantage.

Immigration and multiculturalism have increasingly become widespread concerns in the 21st century (see also Chapters 21 and 37, respectively, in this volume). Verkuyten's (2005) work in the Netherlands analysed how categories of immigrants are constructed by the ethnic Dutch majority and how these category definitions are bound up with

conflicting ideologies about multiculturalism: specifically, whether immigrants should assimilate to the dominant Dutch culture or be allowed to maintain their own cultural practices. Verkuyten found that participants drew upon two different categories of immigrants that produced different evaluative accounts of multiculturalism: immigrants who chose to live in the Netherlands were contrasted to refugees who were forced to flee their homelands and guest workers who were recruited by the Dutch to meet labour force needs. These interpretative repertoires of personal choice/no choice were tied to different evaluations of multiculturalism: in the former, migrants were positioned as having a moral responsibility to adapt and assimilate to Dutch culture, whereas those who had no choice but to flee to the Netherlands were allowed more freedom to maintain their own cultural practices. There were, however, important caveats to this support of cultural diversity: it should be restricted to the private sphere and not prevent immigrants from integrating into society. This distinction between the public and private spheres allowed Dutch participants to negotiate a sensitive ideological dilemma: not denying immigrants their rights to cultural expression but at the same time obliging them to become more like the majority Dutch (see also Verkuyten, 2001). We can see a participant negotiating this sensitive topic in the following extract.

INT: What's your opinion on the increasing multicultural aspect of Dutch society?

RUUD: Er, um, that, that, er, is, er, a tricky one. Up to a point I think it's good, a good thing, certainly, er, certainly because of course there, that, er, that it's also out of sheer necessity that people come here, people who have no, er, option or

brought over here like with those migrant workers. So I, er, think it's a good thing that Holland provides, er, shelter for them, but, er, you were asking my personal opinion?

INT: Yes, what exactly do you mean by a good thing?

RUUD: Er, well that, in any case, there, er, a kind of from a humanitarian point of view that you can't simply let people rot but can provide shelter for them. But, er, well there's so many different aspects to it, I mean this, er, to the fact that, yes, there are various different cultures. Because well, er, I do think like, this is The Netherlands and it should stay that way. So there's that too, apart from the multicultural thing, so to my mind, er, people from other cultures that decide to come and live in our culture, that's why, er, that's why I do think that, er, as far as that goes, there'd be nothing wrong with those people adapting to The Netherlands for a change.

(Extract from Verkuyten, 2005, pp. 232–233)

As Verkuyten notes, the hesitations, self-corrections, and false starts of the speaker are typical features of talk that is recognised as potentially sensitive. The speaker counterbalances the humanitarian need to provide shelter for those in need with the need to preserve Dutch culture, illustrating Billig's (1987) thesis that people's opinions and attitudes are embedded rhetorically in arguments and their counterarguments.

A common repertoire that unites these critical discursive studies thus far, whether in post-colonial societies like Australia and New Zealand or Western Europe, is how majority

groups place limits on cultural diversity or multiculturalism. The need for minority groups to adhere to the moral order proscribed by the majority was also a strong feature of everyday discourse about the Romany/Gypsies in Romania, a group that has experienced systematic racism and persecution across Europe for several centuries. Tileagă's (2005, 2007) research has demonstrated how Romanies are constructed negatively as 'unadaptable', failing to integrate, provocative, and lacking 'civilisation'. Romanies were viewed as transgressing the boundaries of moral acceptability and blamed for the rising interethnic tensions between them and the Romanian majority. This essentialist representation of the Romanies was used to justify their social exclusion not only within the context of the Romanian moral order, but also other so-called civilised countries. References to their lack of a 'homeland', a proper place that can secure their identity in the international space of nation states, reinforced this depiction of them as abject, 'out of place', belonging nowhere. This extreme negative talk of the Romany was articulated not only by those supporting extremist political views in Romania, but also those who opposed such views, thus demonstrating the widely shared negative representation of this minority.

More recent critical discursive research has focused specifically on everyday discourse on asylum seekers and refugees. Recent international crises such as the war in Syria have led to the displacement of unprecedented numbers of people seeking refuge in Europe and elsewhere. The response by governments and their citizens to those seeking asylum and refuge has been polarised, making their resettlement a highly politicised issue that has divided host communities. The politics of border control and the treatment of asylum seekers has thus dominated international politics and public discourse so much so that this

issue has been seen as contributing to the rise of right-wing extremism in Europe and, in particular, Britain's recent exit from the European Union (Brexit). As Kirkwood et al. (2016) argue, the use of specific categories and terms to reference asylum seekers and their right to seek asylum is central to understanding how their relationship with members of the host country are developed and understood. Media reporting of what has become an increasingly contentious and polarised issue worldwide is central to how public debates about asylum seekers are framed and understood. The very categories used by the media to reference asylum seekers and refugees work to represent this group as deviant and criminal, specifically by reference to their supposed unlawfulness. Categories such as 'illegal immigrants', 'illegals', or 'queue jumpers' have been found to be ubiquitous in Australian media reporting and everyday talk (O'Doherty & LeCouteur, 2007). Asylum seekers have also been constructed as 'bogus' and therefore not genuine refugees but rather economic migrants who are circumventing legitimate channels of entry. Differentiating between genuine and bogus refugees can be effective in opposing those seeking asylum, while simultaneously appearing reasonable and sympathetic towards their plight (Goodman & Burke, 2011). As critical psychologists have argued, these negative terms function to undermine the legitimacy of the status of asylum seekers as people who are genuinely escaping from threat and persecution. In this way, asylum seekers are frequently recast as threats to a nation's sovereignty over its borders. Such representations arguably dehumanise asylum seekers and serve to legitimise restrictive border protection policies that deny them rights and entitlements to belong (Augoustinos et al., 2018; Goodman & Burke, 2011; Goodman et al., 2017).

As we will demonstrate in Section 39.3.2, these discursive patterns are not restricted to

everyday talk and sense-making by ordinary people: political discourse, too, is replete with similar patterns of accounting. It is to this we now turn.

39.3.2 Political Discourse

Language and communication are central, if not essential, to politics. As Tileagă (2013, p. x) argues:

Discourse is the site where social and political representations, political knowledge, interpretative repertoires and other social and discursive resources come together to build political worldviews, of cooperation or antagonism, fair or unequal distribution of power and resources, morality or immorality, security or insecurity, and so on.

Despite this, political and social psychology has rarely made political discourse itself a topic of sustained and systematic examination: how it is mobilised in situ to sway the hearts and minds of the people. In contrast, discursive psychologists have generated a significant body of research that pays close attention to how language is articulated in the cut and thrust of political debate, communication, and decision-making. This work, largely inspired by discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992) and, in particular, Billig's (1987) rhetorical psychology, has examined a wide range of controversial political issues that have polarised the wider polity: issues such as race, immigration, refugee policy, climate change, Brexit, the Iraq War, and gender and misogyny. While we do not have space to consider the breadth of this work here, our focus will be primarily on how social and political categories are used flexibly in argumentation to accomplish social actions such as mobilising in-group identification and justifying policy.

Simple collective categories such as 'we' and 'us' are powerful rhetorical tools, especially

when they are contrasted to a specified or unspecified 'them' (Billig, 1995). These markers of identity and belonging are routinely used by political leaders to invoke in-group identification and solidarity with an audience. Defining the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion as to 'who belongs' to these categories is a complex social practice that sometimes requires careful management: it can be achieved in subtle and banal ways that are taken for granted and go unnoticed. Such banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) is common in mainstream political discourse in contrast to right-wing discourse where explicit national, racial, or ethnic categories of inclusion and exclusion are mobilised. For example, in 2001, Australian Prime Minister John Howard justified his government's restrictive policies towards asylum seekers by declaring: 'We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come.' In this declaration, which became a popular slogan in the 2001 Australian federal election, the nation is invoked by the collective 'we' and those within its borders are represented as occupying a privileged position of entitlement to a national will in deciding who belongs to 'this country'. This, too, is an example of deracialisation (discussed in Section 39.3.1) in nationalist tropes that are typically used by parties of the centre in political discourse (Wodak & van Dijk, 2000).

The use of the collective 'we', 'us', and 'our country' can also be seen in these words of a speech given by Theresa May to the 2015 Conservative Party Conference as home secretary: 'While we must fulfil our moral duty to help people in desperate need we must also have an immigration system that allows us to control who comes to our country.' While May attends to Britain's moral obligations to help desperate people, she simultaneously extols a restrictive immigration system. A language of reason and rationality is thus combined with everyday collective categories

of belonging ('we,', 'us', 'our country') to justify a contentious immigration policy. Appealing to reason, rationality, and common sense are also common tropes in political discourse that position speakers' views as grounded in the world and not in their individual psychology (Billig et al., 1988). As Edwards and Potter (1992) emphasise, stake and interest are always live concerns for speakers and attending to these, especially in political discourse, is central to accountability.

Reicher and Hopkins (2001) demonstrate how political persuasion is accomplished by speakers by constructing a shared identity with that of their audience. While traditional psychology typically treats this process of identification as an internal cognitive process, discursive psychology views it as a dynamic and fluid rhetorical project that is achieved through the occasioned definitions and categories used by speakers. In one of the earliest studies analysing a set piece of political rhetoric, Rapley (1998, p. 331) demonstrates how Pauline Hanson, leader of the right-wing populist party One Nation, built an identity for herself as an 'ordinary Australian' in contrast to 'polished politicians' who are derisively depicted as out of touch with the concerns and interests of most Australians.

Pauline Hanson's Maiden Speech to the Australian Parliament, 1998

Mister Acting Speaker, in making my first speech in this place,

I congratulate you on your election and wish to say how proud I am to be here as the independent member for Oxley. I come here not as a polished politician but as a woman who has had her fair share of life's knocks. My view on issues is based on common sense, and my experience as a mother of four children, as a

sole parent, and as a businesswoman running a fish and chip shop . . .

Rapley's analysis demonstrates how Hanson strategically builds an in-group identity that appeals to her very 'ordinariness': categories such as a 'woman who has had her fair share of life's knocks', 'a mother of four children', 'a sole parent', and 'a businesswoman running a fish and chip shop' position her as someone who is grounded in the 'real world' unlike the 'polished politicians' of the parliament. She bolsters this identity by claiming that her political views are predicated on 'common sense', presumably unlike those of other politicians. This allows Hanson to strategically represent her contentious views on multiculturalism, immigration, and indigenous Australians as representing those of other ordinary Australians like herself whose voices she purports are being denied by the political elites. Rapley's analysis thus demonstrates how Hanson builds her identity as someone who is championing the views of the disenfranchised and voiceless.

As Haslam et al. (2012) suggest, political leaders must be 'entrepreneurs of identity' and proactively work towards constructing an identity that represents the group that they wish to influence and mobilise. This is true for leaders of minority parties like Hanson above, but also for leaders who seek to appeal to the wider majority. Recent discursive research has examined how national leaders from minority backgrounds such as black candidates and women face special challenges in mobilising widespread social identification and political support from the wider polity. Using a discursive and rhetorical approach, Augoustinos and DeGaris (2012) examined how the first African American president of the United States, Barack Obama, attended to his minority group membership in his political discourse and discursively managed the category of 'race'. Obama's mixed racial heritage made it essential for him to craft an identity that appealed not only to both white and

black America, both of whom had expressed reservations about 'who he was', but also to an increasingly culturally diverse America – a diversity that he himself embodied. In his now famous speech, 'A More Perfect Union' (which came to be known as the 'Race Speech'), Obama explicitly attended to his racial identity during the 2008 presidential campaign.

A More Perfect Union, 18 March 2008

I am the son of a black man from Kenya and, er, a white woman from Kansas. I was raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in Patton's Army during World War Two and a white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas. I've gone to some of the best schools in America and lived in one of the world's poorest nations. I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slaveowners, an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters. I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles, and cousins of every race and every hue scattered across three continents and for as long as I live I will never forget that in no other country on earth is my story even possible. It's a story that hasn't made me the most conventional of candidates but it is a story that has seared into my genetic make-up the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts, that out of many we are truly one.

In this speech, Obama makes explicit references to his mixed racial background, categorising his father as 'a black man from Kenya' and his mother 'a white woman from Kansas'. At the same time, Obama references a wide range of social and historical experiences to emphasise the *diversity* of his background: his white grandparents survived the Depression and life in America during the Second World War; he attended some of the best schools in America while also having lived in one of the

world's poorest nations, and he has family members 'of every race and every hue scattered across three continents'. While Obama explicitly recognises that he is an unconventional candidate (and, thus, an unconventional American), rather than minimising or discounting his difference, Obama represents it here as a strength: 'out of many we are truly one'. Thus, although Obama's multiracial identity presented him with various dilemmas about how to represent himself, the complexity of his social identity also provided him with the rhetorical resources to appeal to an increasingly socially and culturally diverse constituency in the USA. He was also able to personify himself as the very embodiment of the 'American Dream'.

The critical discursive turn in psychology, whether applied to the understanding of prejudice or political discourse, has been the basis for the development of some of the most influential strands of critical approaches in psychology. The critical discursive turn in psychology should not be equated with the development of discursive approaches (e.g., discursive psychology). Over the years, the critical discursive turn in psychology has done more than situate new approaches as challenges to psychology: it has contributed to broader foundational debates about the status of psychology as a science and the nature of psychological categories. The fundamental reworking of psychological topics is providing renewed impetus to critical psychologies across the many subfields of psychology.

39.4 Conclusion

It is impossible to do justice to the wealth of critical psychologies that engage with political psychology within the confines of a single chapter. We acknowledge the omission of a discussion of other promising critical psychologies in political psychology, especially those

based on feminist and gender theories. We believe that, because of their importance, these should be discussed separately.

The metaphor of the clash between centre (traditional paradigms) versus periphery (critical paradigms) is at the best of times an unhelpful way to advance intellectual critique. The argument of incommensurability of paradigms is weakened by calls for reconciliation in the name of interdisciplinarity and internationalisation. Inter- and transdisciplinarity is becoming the norm in this field, whereas the increased internationalisation of political psychology has led to the democratisation of world views and paradigms.

Modern science is bringing paradigms together rather than keeping them apart. We are now more willing to work with others across disciplinary and paradigmatic boundaries than we have ever been. The early critical nonconformists are respected – their early rebellious work is still read and cited – but contemporary critical psychologists are not fighting the same battles. However, they are taking critique seriously. As their predecessors, they still oppose 'totalizing discourse' (Gergen, 1994), especially discourse that 'systematically reduce[s] the array of voices that can speak to any issue or state of affairs' (p. 67). As Haste suggested in 2012, political psychology should make more 'effective use of current critiques' (p. 1). For that to happen, political psychology must recognise its critical 'Other' and embed it more clearly into its central narrative.

As this handbook amply shows, political psychology is far from reluctant to engage with the role and mission of psychological scholarship in 'revolting times' (Fine, 2018). In this context, it is likely that the need to align psychology with approaches and movements for justice and resistance will be met with approval. However, approval will not be enough. The development of a critical political psychology lies in what Gergen called an

‘appreciative recognition of multiple, non-competing frameworks or perspectives’ (2018, p. 447).

As political psychologists, we may find that it is actually easier to reach a consensus on the question of ‘whether it is possible to criticize fundamentally the society in which we live’ (Simons & Billig, 1994, p. 1) than on any other issues. We should let the issues, the struggles, and social problems of our societies, rather than our paradigms, guide our inquiries.

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40 Rethinking Group Dynamics

The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited

Alex Mintz and Kasey Barr

40.1 Introduction

What is the essence of group decision-making? How do group dynamics affect policy outcomes? Graham Allison's seminal works (Allison, 1969; Allison & Zelikow, 1971, 1999) introduced three models of decision: the Rational Actor, Organizational Politics, and Bureaucratic Politics models. He applied these models to US decisions in the Cuban Missile Crisis. In this chapter we advance a comparative *group* dynamic perspective. Specifically, we examine three models of group decision-making: groupthink (Janis, 1972), polythink, and con-div (Mintz & Wayne, 2016), and apply each model to the same decision: the Kennedy administration's decision to impose a naval blockade during the Cuban Missile Crisis. We claim that applying different group decision-making models to real-world cases presents a new way of explaining governmental decisions. Our analysis shows that, consistent with prior investigation of this crisis, evidence supports the claim that the decision-making group largely avoided groupthink and engaged in a thoughtful, methodical process. However, based on our comparative analysis of the three models, we find that the con-div model performs best in explaining the naval blockade decision.

Allison and Zelikow (1999) argued that analysts and policymakers 'think about problems of foreign and military policy in terms of largely implicit conceptual models that have significant consequences for the content of their

thought' (p. x). Allison and Zelikow creatively demonstrated that the same questions could be answered in different ways, depending upon the researcher's choice of an analytical model. They applied these three models to questions of the Cuban Missile Crisis, thus offering multiple angles to the analysis of the same crisis.

In contrast to Allison, the point of departure in our research is represented by models of *group* decision-making. Specifically, we examine the influence of group dynamics on foreign policy and national security decision-making, while introducing different conceptual lenses. Consequently, we apply to the blockade decision three leading models that represent the full spectrum of group dynamics – from completely cohesive (groupthink) to completely fragmented (polythink), with the con-div model in the centre of the continuum, representing the convergence and divergence of members' views in relative balance. These three models are presented in the *group decision-making continuum* framework of Mintz and Wayne (2016). Comparatively analysing group processes and dynamics to explain how presidents and their advisors make national security and foreign policy decisions offers a new analytical perspective to the analysis of real-world decisions.

Despite broad support and praise of Allison's models, scholars have argued that analysts should judge the comparative value of each model and explain 'how to put together the varied findings of different theory-driven models' (Bernstein, 2000, p. 139). We argue

that the group decision-making models and continuum provide an excellent and supplementary means for the comparative analysis of *real-world decisions and situations*. We utilise these three models to examine a key tactical decision in the Cuban Missile Crisis: the decision to impose a blockade.

40.1.1 The Importance of Group Dynamics

The importance of accounting for advisory group psychology and processes in presidential decision-making is well established by the works of leading academics over the last half-century. Scholars have examined intragroup dynamics in explanations of foreign policy fiascos (Janis, 1972, 1982), arms control (Garrison, 2001), use of force (Mintz & Wayne, 2016; Redd, 2005), non-use of force (Mintz & Schneiderman, 2018), counterterrorism policy (Mintz & Wayne, 2016), major foreign policy change (Barr & Mintz, 2018a), and more. The group decision-making continuum provides an analytic and visual way to understand polythink, places groupthink within a much-needed context, and demonstrates that optimal decision-making typically lies within the balanced middle, con-div, where the convergence and divergence of group members' viewpoints are more or less balanced and in equilibrium (Mintz & Wayne, 2016). 'Good decisions' typically happen when neither groupthink nor polythink dominate (Mintz & Wayne, 2016).

What is new in our chapter is the analysis of how the three models of group decisions explain the same decision. Parallel to Allison's three models of decisions, we present three models at the group level of analysis. Next we provide background to these models and present the causes, symptoms, and outcomes associated with each, as applied to the blockade decision in the Cuban Missile Crisis. First we discuss the elements of each model.

Model 1: Groupthink

Janis (1972) incorporated the study of group psychology into research on foreign policy decision-making. Janis (1982) defines groupthink as 'a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action' (p. 9). Janis delineated specific antecedents, symptoms, and outcomes. Symptoms include overestimation of the group's power and morality, stereotyped views, selective bias in processing information, an incomplete survey of alternatives and objectives, and failure to reappraise initially rejected alternatives, rationalisation to discount warnings and examine risks emanating from the preferred choice, failure to reappraise initially rejected alternatives, pressure towards uniformity such as self-censorship and the presence of self-appointed mind-guards, and the illusion of unanimity. Causes include high level of group cohesion, insulation, lack of procedural norms, group homogeneity, high stress from external threat, low self-esteem among decision makers, and lack of leader impartiality. Outcomes associated with groupthink include rushed decisions, incomplete survey of ideas, and failure to work out contingency plans.

Critics of the model have pointed to multiple studies that challenge the assumptions of groupthink by demonstrating conflicting findings. These findings prompted scholars Fuller and Aldag to express astonishment at groupthink's 'continuing appeal in the face of non-confirming evidence' (1997, p. 56). Yet that non-confirming evidence simply pointed to the complexity of group dynamics and to the dysfunctional polar opposite that is succinctly captured in the polythink model (Mintz et al., 2005; Mintz & Wayne, 2016).

Model 2: Polythink

According to Mintz and Wayne (2016), ‘Polythink is a plurality of opinions and views that lead to disagreement among group members . . . [and] is thus essentially the opposite of groupthink on a continuum of decision-making’ (p. 11). The greater the intensity of polythink in a group, the greater the likelihood that it ‘becomes virtually impossible for group members to reach a common interpretation of reality and common policy goals’ (Mintz & Wayne, 2016, p. 11). This type of dynamic within a decision group is characterised by specific symptoms which include a greater likelihood of intragroup conflict, leaks, confusion and lack of communication, framing effects, adoption of lowest common denominator positions, decision paralysis, a limited review of policy options, and no room for reappraisal of previously rejected policy options (Mintz & Wayne, 2016, pp. 12–13). Mintz and colleagues introduced the polythink model of group dynamics as an alternative explanation of suboptimal foreign policy decision-making. If groupthink represents the excess of group cohesion, polythink represents its deficiency. Causes of polythink include institutional agendas and turf wars, political and coalitionary considerations, normative differences in world views, an expert versus novice divide, and a hands-off leader.

Model 3: Con-Div

Mintz and Wayne (2016) explain that ‘good’ decision-making processes typically lie

towards the middle of the groupthink–polythink continuum, and defective decision-making processing fall closer to one of two extremes – the conformity of groupthink or the disunity of polythink. Con-div represents the centre of the group decision-making continuum. Rather than the dichotomous view of group interactions as ‘good versus groupthink’ and optimal decision-making as the opposite of groupthink (McCauley, 1998) or the ‘inverse of groupthink’ (Schafer & Crichlow, 2017), Con-div represents the balance between the two opposite and destructive group dynamics.

Mintz and Wayne (2016) present the causes of con-div: a poor or defective decision outcome in a previous important case, a leader as an involved mediator who sets a clear policy direction while allowing debate over the means and ways, electoral defeat or the fear of such defeat, and commissions of inquiry into a fiasco (p. 28). Symptoms of con-div include a clearer policy direction than in polythink with little or no confusion over the policy direction, fewer group information-processing biases than in groupthink, less likelihood of ignoring critical information than in groupthink, operating as one voice, and too much harmony that may hinder real debate. Outcomes associated with con-div are less likelihood of a rushed decision than in groupthink, less likelihood of decision delay or paralysis than in polythink, and a greater likelihood of a ‘good’ decision compared with groupthink or polythink (Mintz & Wayne, 2016).

Case Study: Applying Group Models of Decision-Making to the Blockade Decision in the Cuban Missile Crisis

(A) *The Decision Unit*

President Kennedy established (by memorandum) a core decision group on 22 October. He named himself as chairman. The group included Vice President Lyndon Johnson, Dean Rusk (Secretary of

State), Robert McNamara (Secretary of Defense), Douglas Dillon (Secretary of the Treasury), Robert Kennedy (Attorney General), John McCone (Director of Central Intelligence), General Maxwell Taylor (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff), Llewellyn Thompson (Ambassador-at-Large), Theodore Sorensen (Special Counsel), and McGeorge Bundy (Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs).

Kennedy broadened the group to include many others – some on occasion and others in nearly every meeting. These individuals included George Ball (Undersecretary of State), Roswell Gilpatric (Deputy Secretary of Defense), Paul Nitze (Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs), Adlai Stevenson (US Ambassador to the United Nations), John McCloy (Chairman of the Coordinating Committee), Edwin Martin (Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs), Edward R. Murrow (Director of the US Information Agency), Donald Wilson (Deputy Director of the US Information Agency), Kenneth O'Donnell (Special Assistant to the President), Pierre Salinger (White House Press Secretary), U. Alexis Johnson (Deputy Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs), Harlan Cleveland (Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs), Sterling Cottrell (Coordinator for Cuban Affairs), Robert Manning (Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs), Arthur Sylvester (Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs), William C. Foster (Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency), Dean Acheson (former Secretary of State), Joseph Charyk (Undersecretary of the Air Force), Lincoln Gordon (US Ambassador to Brazil), Chester Bowles (President's Special Representative and Adviser on African, Asian, and Latin American Affairs), and William Tyler (Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs).

(B) Rationale for the Comparative Analysis of the Three Models

'Well, I guess Homer Capewhart is the Winston Churchill of our generation', mused Kennedy after he and his national security team chose the option of blockading Cuba (Kaysen, 1964), despite the fact that the solution had been proposed by a political rival. Representative Capewhart (R-Ind) was a strong and early advocate of blockading Cuba in light of clear arms shipments into it. This was well before offensive weapons were discovered by the U-2 overflights. Once President Kennedy was given the intelligence that the Soviets had indeed placed offensive nuclear weapons in Cuba, he first decided that some kind of coercive action was required to eliminate the missile threat (Allison & Zelikow, 1999). To implement his strategic decision, the president asked his advisors for consideration of all possible forms of coercion. These are the group deliberations we evaluate in this chapter. After days of deliberations, President Kennedy and his group of advisors chose, from a variety of alternatives, to initiate and enforce a type of blockade. This case study explores which model of group dynamics best explains this decision, and how and why.

The blockade decision is well studied and has, through the years, become enshrined as a model case for effective group decision-making (Hansen, 2013; Janis, 1982; Kellerman, 1983; McCauley, 1989). Janis (1982) argues that the deliberations of the executive committee (ExCom), a group of foreign policy advisors President Kennedy selected to deal with the missile crisis, are an example of group decision-making done right in every parameter of vigilant decision-making. McCauley (1989) praises the Kennedy administration for 'groupthink avoided'. We re-examine the blockade decision applying *three* models – groupthink, con-div, and polythink – the latter two for the first time. We expect the groupthink model will offer a poor explanation of the blockade decision – in line with prior research. We are interested in the comparative fit of these three models. Thus far, the polythink model has not been applied to the Cuban Missile Crisis decision-making. This is, in large part, because scholars of dynamics in group decision-making often view dynamics as binary: good versus groupthink. Janis

(1982) wrote, 'The main characteristics of the Executive Committee's deliberations are at the opposite pole from the symptoms of groupthink' and 'successfully avoided succumbing to groupthink tendencies' (pp. 157–158).

According to the framework represented by the group decision-making continuum, group deliberations at the opposite pole from groupthink are not associated with quality decision-making, but rather the conflictive dynamic of polythink. The question then becomes, did ExCom successfully avoid succumbing to polythink syndrome? We answer this in our polythink model analysis. We then evaluate the blockade decision by overlaying the schema of the con-div model. We expect this group dynamic of balanced decision-making found between the two extremes of groupthink and polythink to perform better than the two other models in explaining the blockade decision. We are interested in knowing how well the symptoms of con-div explain the decision, as well as the fit of outcomes associated with con-div to the real case. The analysis of these models of group dynamics allows us to determine the comparative degree that each group dynamic model explains the blockade decision.

40.1.2 The Groupthink Model and the Blockade Decision

In this section, we briefly review the causes and symptoms of groupthink in order to highlight how they were avoided during the Cuban Missile Crisis. We also discuss the causes and symptoms of groupthink that were present. We then discuss the outcomes associated with groupthink. The section concludes with a summary of the model's performance.

Causes and Symptoms of Groupthink Avoided

Janis (1982) discusses seven antecedent conditions of groupthink, most of which were not present in the blockade decision. Specifically, *the group was not homogeneous*. JFK brought in Republican hawk McCone as director of the CIA after the Bay of Pigs invasion, and he included individuals with diverse backgrounds. JFK also avoided becoming a *partial leader* in the deliberations about the tactical choice of a coercive response to Soviet missiles in Cuba. Hansen (2013) discusses the various ways that 'Kennedy brilliantly retooled his group decision-making process' with the intent, he continued, to 'solicit diverse viewpoints, stimulate debate, explore options, probe

assumptions, and let the best plan win on its merits' (para. 5). This points to another symptom of groupthink avoided: JFK *guarded against the lack of methodological procedure* by instituting four new procedural changes since the Bay of Pigs fiasco. Participants were encouraged to be 'skeptical generalists' rather than to speak only to their area of expertise and departmental responsibilities. Group rules encouraged 'frank and freewheeling' deliberations; the usual rules of protocol were suspended with no formal meeting agendas; the group broke up into subgroups to work independently from one another and then meet again for 'debate and cross-examination'; and there were '*leaderless sessions*' when JFK withdrew to avoid 'exerting undue influences on the way' (Janis, 1982, pp. 141–142).

Additionally, the *policymaking group was not insulated*. JFK 'brought in United Nations representative Adlai Stevenson and representatives from other government agencies along with a number of distinguished outsiders – Dean Acheson, former Secretary of State; Robert Lovett, former Secretary of Defense; and John McCloy, former High Commissioner of Germany' (Janis, 1982, p. 141).

Regarding symptoms of groupthink, there was *not a shared illusion of unanimity* related to the blockade decision. While non-coercive alternatives were not considered, there was no illusion that the blockade decision was one of unanimous consent. The group bounced back and forth between air strike options and blockade options and nearly every advisor changed their opinion about the optimal choice at least once. Kennedy acknowledged he was taking a decision where there were dissenters. He noted the disagreements and the 'lucky ones' whose proposals would not be chosen and could say 'I told you so' (Janis, 1982, p. 141).

Related to coercive options, there is *no evidence of self-appointed mind-guards* who attempted to protect the group from adverse information. Meetings of subgroups and 'leaderless sessions' allowed individuals within the group to 'meet independently to work on a policy decision ... away from the inhibiting presence of the grandees in the Cabinet Room' (Schlesinger, 1965, p. 297). Dissent was encouraged and modelled by Robert Kennedy and Theodore Sorensen who were to 'pursue relentlessly every bone of contention in order to prevent errors arising from too superficial an analysis of the issues' (Janis, 1982, p. 141).

ExCom deliberations *do not reveal an unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality*. The group grappled, explicitly, with the morality of policy alternatives through multiple meetings over several days. On day two of the crisis, George Ball rejected a surprise attack because it would 'harm the moral standing of the nation, whether or not the attack proved to be militarily successful' (Janis, 1982, p. 150). Robert Kennedy supported Ball, asserting that he did not agree with acting as the Japanese had in 1941 by sanctioning a 'Pearl Harbor in reverse' (Janis, 1982, p. 150). Robert Kennedy recalls, 'We spent more time on this moral question during the

first five days than on any single matter ... it was a question that deeply troubled us all' (Kennedy, 1969, p. 30). ExCom was also *free from the illusion of invulnerability*. There was no excessive optimism during these deliberations that encouraged taking extreme risks; 'most members thought that even the best possible alternative was fraught with the enormous danger of touching off a nuclear holocaust in which the Soviet Union and the United States might destroy each other' (Janis, 1982, p. 139).

The group did not engage in *a collective rationalisation to discount warnings*. There was what Janis (1982) called a 'vigilant appraisal' of the dangers facing the USA. Janis writes, 'After the members had decided that a blockade would be much less risky than a direct air attack on Cuba or a full-scale invasion, the members continued to discuss the possibility that the blockade might fail and leave the United States in an even more vulnerable position if the Russians succeeded in completing the Cuban missile sites' (p. 148). The decision group *did not engage in stereotyped views* of the Soviets as irrational; JFK and his team 'viewed the Soviet leaders as basically reasonable men, who could be convinced to withdraw their missile' (p. 153).

Causes and Symptoms of Groupthink Present

The following causes and symptoms were present to some extent. Related to causes of groupthink, ExCom *was a highly cohesive group* by many accounts. Janis distinguished between a kind of cohesiveness that values 'a pleasant 'clubby' atmosphere of gaining prestige' and a kind of coercion that comes from a shared dedication to the tasks at hand with a desire to function competently on work tasks with effective co-workers' (Janis, 1982, p. 247). The latter was clearly the type of cohesive behaviour in this group. Janis ties this desire

to function effectively to the dismal failure of the Bay of Pigs and the desire of the group to get it right this time around. Yet the Bay of Pigs fiasco also had a negative effect on the decision unit. There was a degree of *low self-esteem among the decision makers*. Allison and Zelikow (1999) explain that the failed attempt to overthrow Castro in 1961 ‘raised the most serious internal doubts about the president’s judgement, the wisdom of his advisers, and the quality of their advice’ (p. 329).

The group was making a decision under *high stress from an external threat*. Perhaps the most startling testimony to this is from Robert Kennedy: ‘The fourteen people involved were very significant – bright, able, dedicated people ... If six of them had been President of the U.S., I think that the world might have been blown up’ (quoted in Allison & Zelikow, 1999, p. 325). Other members of the group confirm feelings of an existential threat. Rusk expressed fear of ‘nuclear incineration’ and his surprise at being ‘still alive’ as meetings continued. Even McNamara (1969), who had argued that missiles in Cuba did not present a greater threat than missiles in the Soviet Union, recalled that these days of deliberation were, ‘the most intense strain I have ever operated under’ (quoted in Schlesinger, 1969, p. 13). Recent analysis from Vorhees (2020) concludes, contrary to much of the existing scholarship, that the risk of war was minimal. What is clear is that, in the moment, the majority of the members within the decision group believed the threat to be existential.

Of the eight symptoms of groupthink Janis describes, we find evidence of only two. ExCom performed their deliberations extremely well, but not completely free of symptoms of groupthink. Initially, advisors engaged in a degree of *self-censorship* when their opinions deviated from the apparent group consensus. McNamara, Bundy, and Rusk all favoured a non-coercive response in

the first meeting of ExCom. Each one conformed to the president’s definition of the situation by the end of the first meeting. Allison and Zelikow (1999) note that it was ‘only after President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Rusk, Taylor, and most other participants had left the room [that] McNamara restated his underlying skeptical premise, more candidly, to Bundy and Rusk’s deputy, George Ball’ (p. 341). Bundy appears to have also engaged in self-censorship. Allison and Zelikow note that Bundy had ‘steered the policy warnings that crashed when the missiles were found’ and that he became ‘uncharacteristically silent in the first few meetings of the Excom’ (p. 341).

There was also *direct pressure to conform*. Even Janis’ (1982) analysis takes this into account. He explains that it was ‘Nitze and others [who] soon convinced McNamara to accept the President’s definition of the situation as requiring a coercive response’ (p. 144). Janis brushes this aside, stating,

Perhaps the speed with which Bundy and McNamara were induced by others in the group to abandon their initial position and to conform with the leader’s stricture was a manifestation of groupthink tendencies. If so, this incipient tendency must have been short-lived. After the first day ... members of the group vigorously debated a variety of alternative coercive actions and freely voiced their misgivings. (p. 144)

However, within this sentence Janis confirms that after the first day of the debate, the group focused entirely on ‘coercive’ options. The initial positions of Bundy, McNamara, and Rusk were never revisited after that first day. The options were broad, heavily debated, altered, cast aside, and revisited. But this pertains only to coercive responses.

Kellerman (1983) notes, ‘Excom contained *no one* who pressed for a solution other than one related to some form of a blockade or air strike. The range of considered alternatives

remained, throughout the entire crisis, narrow and, once the decision-making environment had been defined, no external voice could penetrate' (p. 365). Kellerman points out that 'It was Excom's choice not to influence its leader to reconsider his rejection of a diplomatic approach' (p. 355).

Outcomes Associated with Groupthink

None of the outcomes associated with groupthink explain the blockade decision. There is no evidence of *biased information processing*. There was *not* a failure to examine risk of the preferred choice. There was not a failure to reappraise initially rejected alternatives. Both the airstrike and the blockade alternatives died and were revived and altered. There was not a *premature consensus* because of poor information search. There was not an incomplete survey of tactical alternatives, nor an incomplete survey of objectives. There was not a *failure to work out contingency plans*, as the 'group developed contingency plans specifying

what would be done if the Russians refused to allow Soviet ships to be searched or if they launched a submarine attack against American ships in retaliation' (Janis, 1982, p. 145).

Summary of Model 1 Performance

How well does the groupthink model perform? Janis (1982) and McCauley (1989) are two scholars who have argued that Kennedy's decision to blockade Cuba from Soviet military ships is a strong case of groupthink *avoided*. Our research confirms this finding. Indeed, four of the seven antecedent conditions of groupthink are not present in the blockade case, and we find evidence of only two out of eight symptoms. In terms of process outcomes of the group deliberations, we find no evidence of groupthink. We now expand on this in detail. This section evaluates how the groupthink model performs in explaining the blockade decision across three dimensions – causes, symptoms, and outcomes (Table 40.1).

Table 40.1. *Summary of the causes, symptoms, and outcomes of groupthink*

	Causes	Symptoms	Outcomes
Groupthink	(1) High level of group cohesion (2) Insulation (3) Lack of procedural norms (4) Group homogeneity (5) High stress from external threat (6) Low self-esteem among decision makers (7) Lack of leader impartiality	(1) Illusion of invulnerability (2) Unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality (3) Rationalisation to discount warnings (4) Stereotyped views of enemy (5) Self-censorship of deviations from group consensus (6) Pressure on dissenters (7) Self-appointed mind-guards (8) (8) Shared illusion of unanimity	(1) Biased information processing (2) Premature consensus (3) Failure to make contingency plans
Score	3/7 (42.9%)	2/8 (25%)	0/3 (0%)

Note: Bolded statements reflect factors present in the blockade decision.

40.1.3 Polythink and the Blockade Decision

How well does the polythink model explain the blockade decision? A visitor to the group, Dean Acheson, described meetings of ExCom as ‘repetitive, leaderless, and a waste of time’ (cited in Janis, 1982, p. 145). However, Janis also notes that the regular members did not view deliberations in this way. Was JFK’s decision unit plagued by polythink? JFK set up adversarial procedures to guard against groupthink. But how, if at all, did the group avoid letting conflictive dynamics become dominant? Does the polythink model offer a better explanation than groupthink or con-div? We analyse the blockade decision with the polythink model for the first time. In this section, we briefly review the causes and symptoms of polythink which were avoided as well as those present. We then discuss the outcomes associated with polythink and conclude the section with a summary of the model’s performance.

Causes and Symptoms of Polythink Avoided

Two important causes of polythink were not present. Most importantly, JFK was *not a hands-off leader*. Although he excused himself from many meetings to encourage free discussions and creativity, he nevertheless steered the ship. ‘President Kennedy avoided promoting a particular course of action and instead promoted a procedural norm of open questioning and criticism’ (McCauley, 1989, p. 254). The president clearly established himself as the leader of the group, setting a visible policy direction. However, he encouraged independent thinking and equality among group members in order to provide him with the best tactical options for carrying out his strategic goal. Additionally, the new decision procedures set in place by President Kennedy after

the Bay of Pigs fiasco greatly reduced divides which tend to inhibit free deliberation of group members. JFK’s procedures also *discouraged an expert/novice divide*. Robert Kennedy stated that ‘There was no rank, and in fact we did not even have a chairman ... the conversations were completely uninhibited’ (quoted in Hansen, 2013, para. 10).

Four key symptoms of polythink were also avoided. There was no *lack of communication and confusion*. The procedures set in place to avoid the failings of groupthink also played a critical role in guarding the group from spiralling into chaos and confusion. The establishment of subcommittees reduced the debate load within a large group. The review and cross-examination of the findings of the committees guarded against information getting buried. And when the group laboured too long or too acrimoniously, the president instructed Robert Kennedy to ‘pull the group together’. Robert Kennedy is often credited as playing the devil’s advocate, but he was also instrumental in keeping the group moving forward towards the strategic objectives. Another polythink symptom did not manifest in the group. There was *not a failure to reappraise previously rejected alternatives because of the fear of debate*. The decision not to re-evaluate non-coercive options after the first meeting of ExCom was because of rapid consensus and pressure to conform to the president’s strategic definition of the situation in Cuba, as discussed in the groupthink model analysis. There *were not multiple gatekeepers* shielding the president from information to promote a specific coercive option.

Causes and Symptoms of Polythink Present

We do find evidence that four causes of polythink were present to some degree. This is not an indication that a polythink dynamic dominated, only that conditions were ripe for such

a dynamic. There were *heavy political and coalitionary considerations*. The decision-making took place just weeks before the 1962 mid-term elections. The Republican Senatorial and Congressional Campaign Committee declared Cuba to be ‘the dominant issue of the 1962 campaigning’ (Neustadt, 1990, p. 4). With the discovery of surface-to-air missiles, JFK worried that ‘a new and more violent Cuban issue would be injected into the campaign’ (Neustadt, 1990, p. 337). We also identify *evidence of institutional agendas and turf wars*. JFK established a norm in which every participant was expected to function as a sceptical ‘generalist’. This was the procedural norm. But how did it play out in reality? According to Kellerman (1983), advisors still approached decision-making according to their institutional agendas:

Every Excom member saw the Russian move in light of his particular experience. McNamara feared a nuclear war and opted at first to do nothing or take a diplomatic approach. Robert Kennedy worried that his brother would be pressured into action that would permanently blacken the name of the United States. Dean Acheson, Paul Nitze, Douglas Dillon, and John McCone all initially saw a military move as the only proper response. And representatives from the military were, not surprisingly, unanimous in calling for a massive air strike ...

administration’s cognitive bias was instrumental in structuring the immediate decision-making situation. (p. 364)

Furthermore, there were *normative differences in world views*. One of the major sources of division came when JFK replaced CIA director Dullus with McCone. ‘Liberals within the administration had been appalled by John McCone’s appointment ... he had acquired a reputation as a “militant” anticommunist ... diametrically opposed to the dominant ethos of the Kennedy administration’ (Holland, 2005 p. 16). As discussed earlier under

‘Model 1: Groupthink’, the team was not homogeneous, but rather, in line with causes of polythink, *the group was heterogeneous*. Sorensen (1965) recalls that the members of ExCom ‘had little in common except the President’s desire for their judgment’ (p. 674).

In terms of symptoms of polythink manifested, we identify four of eight. There were multiple *competing frames*. McNamara initially favoured diplomacy, framing the missiles as a *political problem* rather than a security threat. For Rusk and Ball, the missiles were a *diplomatic problem*. However, President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, the joint chiefs of staff, and McCone framed the missiles as a direct *security threat to American cities*. Framing and counterframing continued beyond the strategic importance of the missile discovery and typifies the decision-making process surrounding the debate over tactical response options. We identify this in terms of the airstrike versus blockade debate, as well as in deliberations considering a blockade followed by diplomacy countered by the blockade-ultimatum option. These are major examples of frames and counterframes but are not exhaustive. With the exception of JFK’s insistence upon the framework supporting the need for coercive action, the president encouraged the group to counter each frame aggressively.

A hallmark of polythink is *intragroup disagreements and conflict*. There is evidence to demonstrate that, despite the group’s cohesive nature in terms of their commitment to their representation in, and effective work for, ExCom, JFK’s national security team was rife with internal conflict. According to a CIA analyst, ‘resentments were festering within the administration’ after the failed 1961 Cuba invasion (Holland, 2005, p. 19). Bundy and Rusk ‘believed that the CIA and the Pentagon had put Kennedy in an unforgivable bind before and during the agency-designed invasion of Cuba in April 1961’ (Holland,

2005, p. 19). Additionally, the procedural process JFK established fuelled ‘strain, lost sleep, impatience, and anger as the group argued on and on’ (Janis, 1982, p. 147).

There is at least one example of a *limited review of alternatives because of difficult debate*. While Janis (1982) does not acknowledge this, Allison (1969) does. He writes, ‘For years afterward, a number of Kennedy’s advisers expressed bewilderment and annoyance about the absence of a viable “surgical” strike option ... Acheson, for instance, complained about how “the narrow and specific proposal, pressed by some of us, constantly became obscured and complicated by trimmings added by the military ... While a drill book might call for preliminary attack on Cuban defenses, this was not necessary for the action we recommended”’ (p. 229). In short, the limited airstrike became so bogged down in debate that it was pushed aside in favour of less rancorous options.

Outcomes Associated with Polythink

None of the process outcomes of the polythink dynamic are associated with decision-making regarding the blockade decision. Polythink dynamics often result in *lowest common denominator decision-making* when a policy option is chosen, not because it is optimal, but because it is possible despite the fractious and complex symptoms already mentioned. This does not describe the blockade decision. Kellerman (1983) explains how,

Within the very narrow range of alternatives, the blockade was a logical first step. An air strike could always follow. Moreover, it did not appear to dismiss the ‘doves’ ‘fear of all-out war’ and the ‘hawks’ would not see it as an irreversible sign of weakness. No one in Excom found it impossible to go along, and the President gained a feeling of control without putting the nation at unconscionable risk. (p. 365)

There was no *decision delay or paralysis*. The group was able to move relatively swiftly – within 13 days. There was not a *lack of long-term planning*. The group understood, as Rusk reveals, ‘what we have to be concerned about is not just the missiles, but the entire development of Soviet policy as it affects our situation around the globe’ (quoted in Allison & Zelikow, 1999, p. 89). This set in place alternatives to deal with policy related to Berlin as well as missiles in Turkey (Allison & Zelikow, 1999, p. 371).

Summary of Model 2 Performance

How well does the polythink model perform? In the decisions related to the tactical decision for a blockade, we find that four of six triggers of a polythink dynamic were present. However, the group avoided four key symptoms and none of the process outcomes associated with polythink are present (Table 40.2).

40.1.4 The Con-Div Model and the Blockade Decision

In this section, we review the causes and symptoms of con-div in order to highlight their presence during the Cuban Missile Crisis. We then discuss the singular symptom of con-div which was absent, followed by a discussion of the presence of every process outcome. The section concludes with a summary of the model’s performance.

Causes and Symptoms of Con-Div

In this section we evaluate the con-div model to determine how well this dynamic explains the blockade decision. Mintz and Wayne discuss five conditions that facilitate a con-div dynamic; we describe evidence demonstrating all five are present in the blockade decision. A key condition for con-div is the presence of a

Table 40.2. *Summary of the causes, symptoms, and outcomes of polythink*

	Causes	Symptoms	Outcomes
Polythink	(1) Divides: expert versus novice; civilian versus military (2) Political and coalitionary considerations (3) Normative differences in world views (4) Heterogeneous group (5) Institutional agendas and turf wars (6) Hands-off leader	(1) Intragroup disagreements, dissent, and conflict (2) Lack of communication and confusion (3) Leaks and fear of leaks (4) Framing and counterframing (5) Selective review of information, because of information overload (6) Multiple gatekeepers (7) Limited review of alternatives, because of excessive contention (8) Failure to reappraise previously rejected alternatives, because of excessive contention	(1) Lowest common denominator decision-making (2) Decision delay and/or paralysis (3) Lack of long-term planning
Score	4/6 (66.7%)	4/8 (50%)	0/3 (0%)

Note: Bolded statements reflect factors present in the blockade decision.

leader who sets a clear policy direction. The decision JFK took prior to the blockade decision, which set the nation on the course of a coercive response to the Soviet missiles in Cuba, left no doubt in the mind of participants as to their place. President Kennedy was not interested in entertaining non-coercive responses. This bold decision focused the group and allowed for a broad and deep evaluation of possible coercive responses. While insisting that coercion was necessary, President Kennedy ‘left it to the members to make a “prompt and intensive survey of the dangers and all possible course of action” before making a recommendation’ (Kellerman, 1983, p. 355).

The team of decision makers had experienced a *defective decision outcome in a previous important case* in the Bay of Pigs fiasco. Allison and Zelikow (1999) explain, ‘After

attempting to overthrow Castro with a clandestine force but bungling the job, the President and his advisers were left feeling an even greater obligation to be decisive in the next case’ (p. 330). Janis (1982) explains the psychological transformation of President Kennedy and his team who survived ‘a catastrophically bad decision, belatedly learn[ed] the lessons of its bitter experience, and live[d] to make better decisions next time’; he defines this as ‘the legacy of the Bay of Pigs’ (p. 140).

There were *commissions of inquiry into the fiasco*. President Kennedy was quick to establish an inquiry into the Bay of Pigs fiasco to explore what had led to the failure. The Taylor Commission or *Green Board* led by General Maxwell Taylor conducted 20 hearings. As a result, President Kennedy *re-engineered the processes* of decision-making, deliberately and strategically structuring a more balanced

advisory group with processes to ensure better decision-making. Many of these changes have already been noted in the sections on the groupthink and polythink models which expand on new members brought in such as a staunch Republican as the director of the CIA (McCone), procedures to encourage new definitions of 'roles' within deliberations, changes in group rules to foster unfettered debate, and leaderless sessions. Especially important was the 'prevailing dynamic which allowed group members to test the main options, commit themselves, but then pull back and change positions if convinced the initial choice was wrong' (Kellerman, 1983, p. 355). There was a clearly identifiable *fear of electoral defeat*. Criticism of the administration's policies on Cuba abounded. According to Sorensen's (1965) memoirs, Cuba had become JFK's 'political Achilles' heel' (p. 670). Allison and Zelikow (1999) write that 'The Bay of Pigs catastrophe had taught the public an unfortunate lesson: that Cuba constituted a serious threat to U.S. security' (pp. 329–330).

We find evidence that the national security team exhibited four of five symptoms of con-div. A hallmark indicator of con-div is the presence of a *clearer policy direction than in polythink with little or no confusion over the policy direction*. President Kennedy managed the advisors and process in such a way that no one attempted to cross the boundaries he set and the strategic aim of his policy. ExCom understood that its job was to explore the best possible tactical plan to implement JFK's decision, and it clearly perceived that it was free to disagree and debate the means and ways of reaching the strategic objective.

There was *less likelihood of ignoring critical information than in groupthink*. ExCom continuously searched for relevant information for evaluating the policy alternatives: 'In response to the prod from the Attorney General, the group considerably broadened

the spectrum of alternative responses to be considered. By the end of the first day of meetings the committee had seriously discussed at least ten alternatives' (Janis, 1982, p. 143). Consistent with Janis' criteria for good decision-making, ExCom thoroughly canvassed a wide range of coercive responses. Sorensen (1965) recalls that it was up to the decision group to make 'a prompt and intense survey of the dangers and all possible courses of action' (p. 761). Robert Kennedy did intervene, yet his intervention was to encourage a broadening of the options. He challenged the group, pronouncing that 'there was some course in between bombing and doing nothing' (Schlesinger, 1965, p. 803). Each alternative was vigorously challenged by Robert Kennedy, playing the role of devil's advocate. The group 'surveyed the objectives and the values implicated. They carefully weighed the costs, drawbacks, and subtle risks of negative consequences, as well as the positive consequences that could flow from what initially seemed the most advantageous courses of action' (Janis, 1982, p. 136).

The group *solicited advice from outsiders*. A strong characteristic of balanced decision-making ensures that viewpoints from a variety of experts are taken into account. The president solicited information from outsiders, bringing in Adlai Stevensen from the United Nations, representatives from many government agencies, and officials of former governments such as former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, former Secretary of Defense Robert Lovett, and former High Commissioner of Germany John McCloy (Kennedy, 1969). And in addition to bringing in new voices to broaden the scope of information available to those surrounding the president, these outsiders were put through the same procedural group norms. To guard against reticence that visiting members may experience, 'members of the group deliberately asked them to give their

reactions during the discussions' and additionally, the 'experts were carefully questioned about the grounds for their conclusions' (Janis, 1982, pp. 141–142).

There are *fewer group information-processing biases than in groupthink*. Janis (1982) concedes that 'from time to time, there were "manifestations of groupthink"' (p. 144) as well as 'considerable cause for anger' because of the deception of Khrushchev in his assurances to Kennedy that he would not place offensive missiles in Cuba (p. 153). However, there were fewer group information-processing biases than in groupthink. ExCom 'had to undergo the unpleasant experience of hearing their pet ideas critically pulled to pieces, and the acute distress of being reminded that their collective judgements could be wrong' (p. 158). There was also 'a relative absence of concurrence seeking' as well as the presence of 'skepticism' (p. 144). Biases within the group were diluted by procedures fostering open dialogue. As Sorensen (1965) recalls,

[O]ne of the remarkable aspects of those meetings was a sense of complete equality . . . We were fifteen individuals on our own, representing the President and not different departments. Assistant Secretaries differed vigorously with their Secretaries; I participated much more freely than I ever had in an meeting; and the absence of the President encouraged everyone to speak his mind. (p. 765)

The group *engaged in planning for contingencies*. The broad discussion of coercive options and the intense scrutiny of each proposal generated a rich set of tactical options that could in fact be utilised in multiple ways. Janis (1982) describes this, noting how, 'These scenarios enable the policy-makers to specify a graded series of stronger military actions that could be taken in response to possible counter-acting moves by the Soviet leaders' (p. 145). Another important symptom of con-div was

that ExCom did *operate in one voice*. There were intense debates and even conflict over tactical options, but the group was dedicated and united behind the president's choice of a coercive response. As noted in the groupthink section, there was disagreement about the strategic need for a coercive response. Stone (1966, para 1) points to McNamara's declaration that, 'A missile is a missile. It makes no great difference whether you are killed by a missile fired from the Soviet Union or from Cuba.' Sorensen later wrote, 'To be sure, these Cuban missiles alone, in view of all the other megatonnage the Soviets were capable of unleashing upon us, did not substantially alter the strategic balance *in fact* . . . But that balance would have been substantially altered *in appearance*' (quoted in Stone, 1966, para. 2). However, the administration officials did not divert from the messaging of the administration that the missiles in Cuba greatly increased the threat to American cities.

Symptoms of Con-Div Not Present

We do not find that all of the symptoms of con-div are present. There was *not the presence of too much harmony that hinders real debate*. As Janis (1982) explains, 'The Executive Committee did not give birth to its elaborate plans without undergoing a considerable amount of subjective discomfort, sleeplessness, and protracted turmoil' (p. 147). Kellerman (1983) notes, 'The will to avoid another Cuban fiasco, plus the fact that the threat this time came from outside, drew the group together so as to rule out cliques or harsh interpersonal discord' (p. 354).

Outcomes Associated with Con-Div

We find all four process outcomes of the con-div model are associated with President Kennedy's blockade decision. While the

outcomes of the groupthink and polythink models can be determined independent of the other two models, the con-div model requires prior evaluation of the other two models. Con-div is the centre of the spectrum where neither the groupthink nor polythink dynamics dominate. After conducting an analysis of the blockade decision with both the groupthink and polythink models, we found that none of the outcomes associated with either of these two models explained the actual outcome. The con-div symptom of *less likelihood of a rushed decision than in groupthink* has a better fit than the groupthink outcome of a rushed decision. 'Indeed, the regular group members, looking back, appear to have believed that the strain of the adversarial procedure was crucial in producing the detailed recommendations and contingency planning that made the blockade successful' (Janis, 1982, pp. 145–147). The con-div symptom of *less likelihood of decision delay/paralysis* is also a better fit than the polythink outcome of decision delay or paralysis. 'Divergent views and tensions did, of course, surface but they were subsumed under a powerful small-group esprit de corps' (Kellerman, 1983, p. 354). As seen in the polythink model, the procedures and assigned roles of advisors in ExCom were not only important to prevent groupthink, but also to prevent the conflict of ideas and the adversarial process from descending into a dynamic where the objective would be drowned in an overweighted process. Had there not been the feeling that there was a critical window of time in order to respond before missiles became operational, the polythink dynamic may have overtaken the decision group.

There was a *greater likelihood of a good decision compared with groupthink and polythink*. Most scholars of the Cuban Missile Crisis credit President Kennedy for avoiding a rush to military action. His first impulse was

that there was a need for a massive air strike. However, had President Kennedy fallen victim to the polythink syndrome and allowed debate and conflict to paralyse deliberations, the outcome would have likely precluded the United States from acting within a critical window of time. President Kennedy was able to provide his team with a measure of decisiveness in the choice for a coercive response. Yet he also fostered an adversarial environment conducive to facilitating a plurality of viewpoints and aggressively cross-examining all alternatives for a coercive response. Through procedural mechanisms and a solid policy direction, the group was able to respond in a timely manner with a sophisticated set of options. This allowed the administration to exert power and flexibility knowing that they could begin with a blockade and ultimatum, yet move to a massive air and ground campaign if needed. There were detailed contingency plans in place with provisions for multiple courses of action. Thus, three out of three outcomes associated with con-div fit the outcome of President Kennedy's blockade decision.

Summary of Model 3 Performance

Consistent with prior analysis of vigilant or quality decision-making, the con-div model provides an excellent explanation. In the decision-making process related to the tactical decision for a blockade, we find all five causes of con-div. The group also exhibited four of five symptoms of con-div, and we find that all three process outcomes of con-div are associated with the blockade decision (Table 40.3).

40.2 Conclusion

In this chapter we introduced a new framework of small-group dynamics for the analysis of foreign policy and national security decisions. We presented three models of

Table 40.3. *Summary of the causes, symptoms, and outcomes of con-div*

	Causes	Symptoms	Outcomes
Con-div	(1) Poor or defective decision outcome in previous important case (2) Electoral defeat or the fear of such defeat (3) Commissions of inquiry into a fiasco (4) Leader establishes clear goals; mediates debate of ways and means (5) Leader and/or group deliberately and strategically built balanced advisory group	(1) A clearer policy direction than in polythink with little or no confusion over the policy direction (convergence of key group goals, agendas, and direction (2) Fewer group information-processing biases than in groupthink (3) Less likelihood of ignoring critical information than in groupthink (4) Soliciting advice from outsiders (5) Operating in one voice. Divergences are likely to be reconciled and fit into an overarching policy framework (6) Too much harmony that may hinder real debate	(1) Less likelihood of decision delay/paralysis (2) Less likelihood of rushed decision-making (3) A greater likelihood of a 'good' decision compared with groupthink or polythink
Score	5/5 (100%)	4/5 (80%)	3/3 (100%)

Note: Bolded statements reflect factors present in the blockade decision.

intragroup dynamic: the well-known groupthink model (Janis, 1972), polythink, and con-div (Mintz & Wayne, 2016). We then applied these models to the case study of the blockade decision made by the Kennedy administration during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The theoretical framework, which is based on the work of Mintz and Wayne (2016), offers an alternative theoretical path to Allison's (1969) well-known models of decision-making. Specifically, we argue that group dynamics within the decision unit are an important factor explaining foreign policy and national security decisions (also see Barr & Mintz, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). Our analysis as well as other important studies (Garrison,

2003; Redd, 2005; Schafer & Crichlow, 2010; 't Hart et al., 1997) demonstrate that, at a minimum, group dynamics cannot be ignored in the analysis of foreign policy and national security decisions.

Complementing Allison's work, we focused exclusively on small-group analysis. The chapter also shows how analysts should judge the comparative value of each group decision-making model in the explanation of the decision, as well as how to tether the findings of each model into an integrated interpretation of how group dynamics impacted the crisis. The work illustrates the essence of *group decision-making*.

Scholars of group decision-making have moved beyond discussing groupthink versus

optimal processes. In this chapter we offered an analysis of the type of suboptimal dynamics a group may exhibit and the various outcomes that are associated when a unit operates with a groupthink, con-div, or polythink dynamic. ‘It should be noted’, argues Kellerman (1983), ‘that the decision to respond to Soviet action with a blockade . . . was by no means obvious. It grew out of the *small-group discussions*’ (p. 355). Small groups have an important role at the apex of the national security apparatus. This chapter enables scholars and practitioners to more fully understand the essence of group decision-making across a continuum of dynamics and their influence on the blockade decision of the Kennedy administration taken during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

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41 Two Sides of the Same Coin

A New Look at Differences and Similarities across Political Ideology

Joris Lammers and Matthew Baldwin

Since the earliest days of political psychology, one of the main focuses of the discipline has been to examine differences in psychological functioning, broadly defined, between people with different political ideologies (Adorno et al., 1950; Allport et al., 1954; Lane, 1962; Smith et al., 1956). In particular, a wealth of research has tested whether there are systematic differences between liberals or those who tend to support parties on the political left and conservatives or those who are more likely to support parties on the right of the political continuum. The guiding principle behind this research is the idea that different people are attracted to different ideologies, because the political ideas associated with these ideologies connect with specific psychological functioning of these people (see Chapter 5). Therefore, the deeper aim of this literature is to uncover these basic differences between liberals and conservatives in order to identify the psychological antecedents of political ideology (see also Chapter 6). By identifying these differences, researchers hope to better understand how ideology shapes further downstream political judgement and decision-making.

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41.1 Evidence for Differences between Liberals and Conservatives

One of the most influential modern-day models summarising decades of research is Jost et al.'s (2003) model of conservatism as motivated cognition. The guiding principle of this model is that conservative or right-of-centre political ideology fits particularly well with a variety of epistemic motives (dogmatism, uncertainty avoidance, need for structure), existential motives (self-esteem, fear of death), and ideological motives (dominance, system justification). Therefore, if these motives are particularly strong, people are more likely to be attracted to political conservatism. In contrast, central to liberal ideology is the desire to change society and achieve social progress by increasing equality, diversity, and tolerance – which runs against these three motives because it brings a sense of uncertainty, complexity, novelty, and ambiguity.

Many findings collected since 2003 support the basic idea that liberals and conservatives differ not only in their ideological leanings, but also in their epistemic, existential, and ideological motives, desires, and related aspects of psychological functioning. For reviews, see Hibbing et al., 2014; Jost, 2017; Jost & Amodio, 2012; Jost & Krochik, 2014; Jost, Sterling, & Stern, 2017; Jost, Stern, Rule, & Sterling, 2017; Onraet et al., 2013; Van Hiel et al., 2010). A large literature ostensibly shows that differences between liberals and conservatives are not limited to political

psychological judgement, but extend to physiology, neurological patterns, and basic and cognitive-psychological functioning (Hibbing et al., 2014; see also Chapters 3 and 4). Liberals and conservatives have been shown to differ in their self-regulation (Rock & Janoff-Bulman, 2010); in how they deal with threatening stimuli (Shook & Fazio, 2009); in their physiological reactivity in response to threat (Hibbing et al., 2014; Oxley et al., 2008); in their communication preferences (Cichocka et al., 2016); and even in basic functioning of the brain (Amodio et al., 2007; Oxley et al., 2008). All in all, it is fair to say that few other models have made such a large impact on political psychology as Jost et al.'s (2003) model of conservatism as a motivated social cognition. Indeed, this model has served as the bedrock on which the last decade and a half of literature on psychological differences between liberals and conservatives has been built (for overviews, see Jost, 2017; Jost et al., 2009).

41.2 Evidence against Differences between Liberals and Conservatives

One potential consequence of this determined focus on finding political differences is that questions about the variability, robustness, and size of those differences have been largely ignored. In fact, two large meta-analyses testing these differences do not examine, or hardly mention, the heterogeneity of effect sizes across studies (Jost et al., 2003; Jost, Stern, Rule, & Sterling, 2017). Neither do these meta-analyses define a meaningful smallest effect size of interest (Lakens et al., 2018) that would still support the strong claims of the motivated social cognition account. As it stands, evidence for political differences is typically viewed as any correlation between politics and an outcome variable of interest that is not equal to zero at $p < 0.05$. Of course, with

large enough samples, this outcome is almost always going to emerge, no matter how small the difference.

In order to address some of these issues with the literature, Costello and colleagues (2020) conducted a more comprehensive test of the claim that, compared to liberals, conservatives exhibit more rigid and inflexible thinking that supports epistemic needs for certainty and structure (the so-called rigidity of the right model; Tetlock, 1983; see also Chapter 26). Using studies and effect sizes from the largest meta-analysis at the time (Jost, 2017), as well as a handful of new published and unpublished findings, the authors tested for the main effect of politics on rigidity, but took extra steps to formally test (a) several moderators of the effect, (b) the heterogeneity in effect sizes between and within studies using a three-level multilevel model, and (c) whether the effects could be considered statistically equivalent to a smallest effect size of interest, defined as $r = 0.10$.

Results revealed that the overall relation between conservatism and rigidity is rather small, $r = 0.16$, 95% Confidence Interval (0.14, 0.18). But digging into the data reveals more issues. For one, the power to detect small effect sizes was low, as less than half of the included studies were adequately powered to detect an effect size of $r = 0.10$. If the true effect size is smaller than that observed by the studies included in the meta-analysis, we do not have adequate power to detect it. Second, when looking at differences in the meta-analytic effect sizes across (a) measures of conservatism and (b) measures of rigidity, the effects ranged from $r = 0.00$ to $r = 0.31$, meaning that, in some cases, evidence does not favour the rigidity of the right hypothesis. Thus, the effects are not as robust as would be expected from a model purporting fundamental needs as the basis of political ideology.

Other moderator analyses revealed that the effect size is weakened in nationally

representative samples and when looking at performance versus self-report measures – in fact, the association between conservatism and performance-based measures of rigidity was very small or even negligible ($r = 0.08$). The authors also estimated an overall effect size after removing measures that conflate political ideology with rigidity. Participants were recruited to rate items from all included measures of conservatism using three items: (1) ‘A person’s answers on this measure will accurately reflect whether they hold right-wing versus left-wing political views’; (2) ‘This measure contains content related to cognitive rigidity (inflexibility in thinking, dislike of uncertainty, dogmatic thinking, etc.)’; and (3) ‘This measure contains content that is not directly related to left-right political ideology.’ The overall association between conservatism and rigidity was much smaller for non-overlapping measures ($r = 0.13$) compared to overlapping measures ($r = 0.39$).

Third, the authors report that the inclusion of moderators rarely accounted for a large proportion of variance in the effect sizes, meaning that a great deal of variance between and within studies is either systematic and due to some other variable besides rigidity or it is random. Finally, the authors define a smallest effect size of interest and test whether the effect sizes found across different measures of conservatism and rigidity could be considered statistically equivalent to that effect size (see Lakens et al., 2018). Out of 13 total significant effects, 2 were considered equivalent and 5 were considered inconclusive.

Altogether, when accounting for the structure and complexity of the data in the most complete and comprehensive way, the observed difference between liberals and conservatives on variables related to epistemic needs for rigidity is small to medium sized at best, and highly variable depending on the measures used, the sample characteristics,

and other relevant variables (see Costello et al., 2020 for the full breakdown of these moderators). Moreover, given that the power to detect small effect sizes was low in a large portion of studies, and that equivalence testing produced a handful of inconclusive tests, the literature can be described as contaminated by some degree of uncertainty regarding the true effect size. To our knowledge, this is the most complete meta-analysis of political differences in epistemic needs. It is still unclear what a similar analysis would reveal about differences (or lack thereof) in liberals and conservatives’ existential and ideological needs, as an equally comprehensive meta-analysis of these effects has not yet been conducted.

One might react to these findings with a comment that even small differences can have large implications in practice. This may be true. But so far, the political psychology literature has not defined what size effect would be sufficient to produce these large effects, nor has it defined what those implications would be. Does a small difference in rigidity across liberals and conservatives sway an election? Can such a small difference explain the massive political divide on support for issues like climate change or gun rights by members of congress? Do these small differences predict outcomes related to policy support or voting when other variables are taken into account, such as party identification or religious affiliation? These questions have yet to be answered in a comprehensive way.

The goal of accumulating evidence for small differences has also led to an unfortunate side effect, namely that the meaning of those differences has been lost. What would it mean if groups of liberals and conservatives scored statistically different from one another on a measure of epistemic or existential needs, but each scored high on the variable, for instance, above the midpoint of the scale? It is unknown from the reviews and meta-analyses of the

literature whether liberals and conservatives are different from one another on these motivated social cognitions in meaningful ways. One might predict that liberals should score low – below the midpoint – on measures of epistemic or existential needs, whereas conservatives should score high. In other words, it would follow from the motivated social cognition account that not only should the differences be large, but that the content of those differences should also be meaningful. But to our knowledge, this work has not been conducted or published in the literature.

Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, literature has until now failed to recognise what is perhaps the largest effect of all – that liberals and conservatives are mostly similar in their fundamental psychological attributes. To demonstrate this fact more concretely, consider that one way to express group similarities is to calculate the extent to which two distributions are overlapping. When expressed as a group difference, the association between conservatism and rigidity from Costello et al. (2020) reveals that liberals' and conservatives' scores would be expected to exhibit 87% overlap! Therefore, if two individuals – one more conservative and the other more liberal – were drawn from the population at random, it would be almost impossible to know who is the liberal and who is the conservative simply by measuring their epistemic needs. This point is worth more attention – if similarities, not differences, define the relation between liberals and conservatives, where does the study of political ideology go from here? The next sections aim to offer some guidance on this question.

41.3 Evidence for Similarities between Liberals and Conservatives

In the previous two sections, we argued that an impressively large literature has demonstrated

many important and robust differences between liberals and conservatives, but that there is also empirical evidence against the same idea. What can explain this inconsistent pattern? A third theoretical perspective holds that by focusing on differences between liberals and conservatives, literature has underestimated that (strong) liberals and (strong) conservatives may also show many important similarities (compared to moderates and neutrals; see also Chapter 26). In response to Jost et al.'s (2003) model, Greenberg and Jonas (2003) noted, for example, that the idea that conservatism is associated with stronger epistemic and existential needs is difficult to reconcile with the fact that, historically, communist and other far-left regimes have also demonstrated ideological dogmatism and closed-mindedness. This leads to the hypothesis that psychological processes underlying political extremism could be largely the same on both sides of the political continuum (Rokeach, 1956; Tetlock, 1983). Perhaps people with strong epistemic, existential, and other needs or motives tend to be attracted to or tend to develop stronger ideological beliefs – and that it is more or less accidental (e.g., due to friends, family, the social environment, society, or historical pressures) whether these beliefs that they adopt are on the left or right side of the political continuum. As a result, the relation between ideology (conceptualised as a one-dimensional space, between very left and very right wing) and these epistemic, existential, and other needs and motives will be quadratic or U-shaped.

In support of this idea that (strong) liberals and conservatives may be more similar than often considered, there are various findings that suggest that increased epistemic and existential needs for simplicity, predictability, and clarity can be found on both ends of the political continuum. For example, some findings show that both strong conservatives and

liberals are more biased and motivated in their social cognition (Conway et al., 2016), both appear to represent their opponents in more simplistic terms, making them more dogmatic, intolerant, and prejudiced (Brandt et al., 2014; Chambers et al., 2013; Crawford & Pilanski, 2014; van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2017; van Prooijen, Krouwel, Boiten, & Eendebak, 2015), both categorise reality more strongly and simplistically (Lammers et al., 2017), both have an increased preference for the simple solutions associated with authoritarianism (Crowson et al., 2005), and both respond more strongly to at least some forms of threat (Crawford, 2017).

If this relation is indeed quadratic, why then did earlier research report largely linear effects? One possibility is that researchers may simply have overlooked the possibility of quadratic effects. But another explanation is stimulus selection. When testing a question of the relation between two or more concepts, psychologists often first need to define and restrict those concepts and decide with what tasks, stimuli, questions, and so on, should be used to measure them. A common approach to do so is to use one's intuition to freely focus on those aspects or dimensions of the concept that subjectively appear to be most relevant (Fiedler, 2011). Especially when it comes to political topics, these intuitions may lead to a stimulus selection that is not necessarily representative of the wider population. To give an example, conspiracy theories play an increasingly strong role in the political discourse (see Chapter 33). It is, on the one hand, easy to see how belief in conspiracy theories may connect to epistemic needs for clarity and dislike for ambiguity, associated with conservatism. But on the other hand, liberals have at certain times also supported conspiracy beliefs, such as that the 9/11 attacks were an 'inside job' to facilitate a hawkish foreign policy by the Bush administration. Indeed, some recent research

demonstrates a linear relation between conservative political ideology and belief in conspiracy theories (van der Linden et al., 2020), while other research demonstrates a quadratic, U-shaped relation meaning that strong liberals also show increased belief in conspiracy theories (van Prooijen, Krouwel, & Pollet, 2015; see also McClosky & Chong, 1985). These inconsistent results may be explained by differences in stimulus selection. The latter research measures belief in a variety of common conspiracy theories, including liberal and conservative ones (van Prooijen, Krouwel, & Pollet, 2015). This stimulus selection is more likely to produce a U-shaped quadratic pattern: both strong liberals and strong conservatives express a belief in their 'own' theories. In contrast, the former research by van der Linden and colleagues (2020) measures belief in only one conservative conspiracy theory (that climate change is a hoax) and thus reports a linear difference. In addition, it administers a general measure of conspiratorial thinking. But it is possible that many of these stimuli (which refer to 'government agencies' and 'secret organisations' that 'monitor citizens' and engage in 'secret activities' to 'influence political decisions') have been interpreted as a reference to Trump's right-wing conspiracy theory about the 'deep state' (Bruder et al., 2013).

We believe that this example illustrates the difficulty in testing the relation between ideology and aspects of psychological functioning: outcomes can strongly depend on stimuli selection (see also Duarte et al., 2015). To be clear, there may be ways to resolve this issue, such as ensuring that all possible stimuli are used or using an objective stimuli selection method that ensures a representative set of stimuli (Brunswik, 1955; Kessler et al., 2015). However, this is often difficult to implement for political psychological topics, given the complexity of political reality. Given their abundance, it is not practical to include all

conspiracy theories, and objective stimuli selection methods are difficult to implement if the target population itself is strongly divided on what stimuli make up political reality.

41.4 Two Sides of the Same Coin

In the preceding three sections, we have summarised literatures showing that conservatives and liberals may differ in their needs, motives, or other aspects of their psychological functioning, but that these differences are very small and that conservatives and liberals are very similar (but different from moderates). Identifying fundamental differences in conservatives' and liberals' deep and basic psychological functioning is thus very difficult. Given this difficulty, researchers may find it more fruitful to take a different approach. Perhaps instead of looking at fundamental differences in needs and motives to work one's way up to explaining higher-order judgement and decision-making on political issues, researchers may also want to start with higher-order judgement and decision-making processes to work their way back down to map the deeper causes and antecedents of these preferences.

This idea is based on the notion that across time and place, preferences for political policies and plans have been only loosely related to ideological-political positioning. As a classic example, early conservatives have taken dramatically different sides in the same debate on the relation between the people and their monarch. Early French conservatives favoured returning to an absolute monarchy (Price, 2014), while English conservatives at the same time defended parliamentary monarchy (Eccleshall, 1990), and American conservatives simultaneously defended republicanism (Schneider, 2009). These three positions could not be more radically different. But what explains this inconsistency is that, in these three different countries at the time,

the different political positions on this debate were construed differently in the minds of people, and framed differently in the public and political sphere. Specifically, in France, absolute monarchy was construed as a return to tradition; in England, parliamentary monarchy was considered the tradition; and in the United States, the traditional arrangement was a republic. Therefore, although all early conservatives were divided in their views on the ideal relation between the people and their monarch, they were still united in their desire for returning to 'the way things were'. It was what that phrase meant to early conservatives that differed, not their fundamental needs.

This historical example suggests that, to understand how ideology shapes preferences for or against specific political policies and plans, it is important to understand how processes of construal lead people to conceptualise these policies and plans. Ultimately, this connects back to Jost and colleagues' (2003) model which explains conservatism (and perhaps other political beliefs) as a form of *motivated social cognition* and the operation of *non-directional motives*. After all, central in the social cognition approach is the notion that judgement and decision-making does not flow directly from people's underlying dispositional motives, but is an interaction between their needs and how they construe social reality (Griffin & Ross, 1991; Lewin, 1943; Ross & Nisbett, 1991). Such processes of construal can lead to radically different ways of conceptualising social reality, which can lead people to move into different or even opposite directions (Kay et al., 2004; Liberman et al., 2004). Similar insight has been gained regarding the role of interdependent and independent self-construal as a basis of cultural differences. As it turns out, these self-construals are malleable and most people can activate either construal depending on the situation (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Like culture, political

ideology is an emergent property of the interaction of individuals' needs and motives and the social world in which they inhabit. Thus, rather than viewing political ideology as fixed to underlying psychological needs, we suggest that it should be understood as something more dynamic and malleable.

There are several advantages to starting with construal and working top-down from support for specific issues down to underlying motives, rather than with individual differences and working bottom-up from motives to ideology. First, while research in the motivated social cognition tradition has relied predominantly on the correlational approach in order to connect ideological differences to deeper interindividual differences, the top-down construal approach lends itself to easy experimentation through manipulation of alternative construals which can help to establish causality. Second, the construal approach requires fewer assumptions. Whereas the motivated social cognition tradition suggests that certain basic needs and motives should fan out and affect higher-order support for many, if not most, political issues in a similar manner (through ideology), the top-down construal approach does not require such an assumption. If the causal role of a certain construal in shaping support among liberals or conservatives is demonstrated, then it is certainly possible that this reflects differences in underlying needs and motives. But it may also reflect (in part) a difference in group values or social identities; an association or alignment with the agenda or other policies that are part of the faction's broader ideology; or any other force. And such construal effects can be unique for each specific political issue or agenda. Third and finally, because the motivated social cognition tradition explains political ideology as the result of deeper motives and needs, it does not allow easy mechanisms to bridge differences between opposite political groups. In

contrast, focusing on the role of construal not only shows why liberals and conservatives support and oppose different political plans and positions, but it also shows ways to overcome opposition and find ways to form a broader coalition for political policy.

To illustrate this perspective, consider the example of climate change and pro-environmental action to mitigate it (see also Chapter 34). At the moment, climate change is one of the most divisive issues in American politics and pro-environmental action is firmly held as a liberal policy (Brownstein, 2010; Gromet et al., 2013; Guber, 2013; McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Unsworth & Fielding, 2014; Weber & Stern, 2011). But climate change was not always such a divisive issue. In fact, in the early 1970s, concern for the environment and for protecting natural resources was considered a politically consensual, bipartisan issue (Dunlap & Gale, 1974; McCright et al., 2014). One reason for this, we argue, is that the issue has been construed quite differently over time. Indeed, various findings show that conservative support for pro-environmentalism can easily be restored by construing the issue differently. First, pro-environmental action is often construed as necessarily entailing blocking and limiting the free market. This violates conservatives' values about the importance of the free market and the free pursuit of wealth and leads to solution aversion (Campbell & Kay, 2014). But pro-environmental action does not necessarily need to be construed like this and can even facilitate the free market (Bovenberg, 1999; Campbell & Kay, 2014; Cramton et al., 2017). Consistent with the central role of construal, presenting pro-environmental action in free market terms (versus government regulation terms) strongly increases support for it among political conservatives (Campbell & Kay, 2014). Relatedly, pro-environmental action is often construed as the work of international organisations such

as the UN, which entices opposition among conservatives, given their stronger patriotism and anti-internationalism. Yet, consistent with the role of construal, presenting pro-environmental action in patriotic terms (e.g., as the desire to maintain a nation's natural bounties) increases support for it among conservatives (Feygina et al., 2010). As a third example, pro-environmental action to reduce climate change is often construed as a way to care for future generations and reduce their suffering. Theories on differences in moral motives suggest that this particular moral motive is relatively stronger among liberals than among conservatives, who instead are more strongly focused on preserving what is culturally considered pure or sacred (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt et al., 2009). Consistent with the central role of construal, presenting pro-environmental action in terms of maintaining the purity and sanctity of nature strongly increases support for it among conservatives (Feinberg & Willer, 2013). Finally, pro-environmental action against climate change is often presented and construed as a radical break from the existing socio-economic order – a green *new deal*, for example. But preventing climate change is also in many ways a return to a past in which people lived in balance with nature – and, thus, to return to the past which is much more in line with a conservative focus on tradition. Indeed, consistent with the idea that support for a political issue depends on how it is construed, presenting pro-environmental action as a return to a past state increases support for it among conservatives (Baldwin & Lammers, 2016; see also Lammers & Baldwin, 2018).

41.5 Towards a Less Partisan Political Psychology

This research line is a great example that shows the value of the construal approach to

understanding the antecedents of political preferences. It illustrates the benefits of focusing on the construal of political issues. As discussed in Section 41.4, it allows an experimental demonstration of the role of causal factors shaping conservatives' opposition against pro-environmental action, without requiring the theoretical assumption that these causal factors map onto the same needs or motives. Instead, it allows a more flexible identification of the role that elements of conservative ideology (support for the free market), conservative values (patriotism and sanctity as a conservative morality), associations with other conservative policies (anti-internationalism), and conservative feelings and emotions (a desire for tradition) play in shaping support for political plans.

But practically, it may also bring benefits for the political discourse and the role that political psychology can play in facilitating this discourse. One of the most important social problems facing American society is the political divide between those on the political left and right. This divide continues to expand, with cooperation across the divide becoming increasingly rare (Abramowitz, 1973; Haidt, 2012; Westfall et al., 2015; see also Chapter 25). This hostility can undermine democracy because it prevents partisans from trying to understand each other's position and work towards pragmatic win-win solutions, thereby leading to political gridlock (McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2006; Nivola & Brady, 2008). A political psychology that focuses on identifying dispositional antecedents of political ideology may do little to reduce such conflicts because it suggests such opposition is a natural consequence of pre-existing differences.

Even worse, political psychology may be perceived as partisan and, thus, add flames to such disputes. Although we do not know of any survey that focuses on the ideological

background of political psychologists in particular, a wealth of evidence attests that social psychologists (and social scientists in general) tend to be more politically liberal than the general population (Gross & Simmons, 2007; Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Klein & Stern, 2009; Rothman & Lichter, 2008). There are many reasons why this may be the case. Some have argued that liberals are more likely to have the intellectual curiosity needed for a career in the social sciences or that exposure to social scientific research leads people to abandon any conservative ideas that they may have had (for a critical discussion of those ideas, see Duarte et al., 2015). Alternatively, the social sciences have traditionally always had a socially critical perspective on society and have been strongly inspired by the desire to help overcome social inequalities and injustices. As a result, people with a liberal perspective may be more likely to turn to, stay in, and prosper in the social sciences, while those with a conservative background may feel less at home or even face implicit or explicit criticism of their beliefs (Duarte et al., 2015; Inbar & Lammers, 2012). It may also be the case that conservatives are less likely to accept the job insecurity, long work hours, and/or relatively low wages associated with an academic career. But irrespective of the exact causes, the discipline always is at risk of being perceived as partisan if some of its conclusions are disliked by conservatives.

In contrast, political psychology may be more effective and seen as less political if it tries to find ways to reach across the political divide. By identifying the role of construal in shaping liberals' and conservatives' support for and opposition to political issues, political psychological research can help to find a way to bridge partisan differences. To return to the previous example, rather than portraying conservative opposition against pro-environmental action against climate change as the result of

dogmatism, rigidity, or other needs and motives, it is more fruitful to understand how pro-environmental action can be framed to resonate with conservative world views and values. In the end, this promises to help create a more pragmatic and respectful debate that helps to find solutions for problems faced by all.

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